

Read Across America — and Freeman!

Shishira Nakka
Staff Writer

Here at Freeman, we host and celebrate lots of different events — Culture Day, AP Course Fair, Club Fair, and many more. One of DSF's most popular events, judging by increased participation in the last few years, is Read Across America.

Rosemary Wheeler, a librarian at Freeman, said that Read Across America is “a national and international celebration of reading.” It is primarily directed at “third graders and younger,” but anyone interested can attend. Read Across America, while celebrating the joys of reading, “introduces our community to Freeman, [especially] the younger members [so they can] see this school and know that they could go here one day,” said Ms. Wheeler.

This year, the event will be on March 9, which is the Thursday closest to Dr. Seuss' birthday. “We ended up settling on the Thursday closest to Dr. Seuss's birthday because that day tends to have the fewest evening extracurriculars,” said Miss Wheeler. “[Since] so many of our students helping with the event are involved, it made the most sense.” In fact, interested students are encouraged to volunteer at Read Across America. “We usually [give] students that



PHOTO: MRS. KAPLAN

Reading of a Dr. Seuss book

want to help two hours of community service,” said Ms. Wheeler. “We let everybody know what stations [there are] and we let them [choose] what station they'd like to do, [and] you can sign up for that particular station or if you're willing, you can just go wherever you're needed.”

During Read Across America, students celebrate the day with a variety of activities. Every activity is designed around the theme of reading. “We do face painting and little temporary tattoos — those are always the busiest [activities],” said Ms. Wheeler. The event also has “cornhole, a coloring station,

a guessing game, books laid out in case anyone would like to read on their own, and then to celebrate Dr. Seuss, we have cupcakes and lemonade.” In the past, there has been “a frog-themed hopscotch game based on a frog book the kids got to read,” said Ms. Wheeler. “We usually do a pin the tail on the donkey game, but tie it into whatever book they're reading.” One year, they “read Pete the Cat and His Four Groovy Buttons, and the kids got to pin a button onto Pete the Cat.”

While most of the activities are based off of the book that gets read aloud, Ms. Wheeler believes that the most important activity is the



PHOTO: MRS. KAPLAN

Librarian Mrs. Kaplan with students at Read Across America

book itself. “It's a whole different experience than reading,” she said. “You get to hear it [out loud].”

The end goal of Read Across America is to get more students reading. “All the research shows that the more you read the better you do in all aspects of your life,” said Ms. Wheeler. “Reading opens you up to experiences, and through reading, you can say ‘I'm not alone — other people are experiencing what I'm experiencing.’”

At the end of the day, whether you're an avid reader or haven't read a book since the first grade, Read Across America would never say no to you. From cupcakes

to Pete the Cat, this celebration has got everything you need for a good time. Even in its 27th year, Read Across America is still a hit at Freeman. “The first couple of years we might have had 20 or 25 people that came and then when we get into talking about the different teachers and students that are involved here besides the library, the attendance just exploded,” said Ms. Wheeler.

“The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go,” said Dr. Seuss, and where else to go but Read Across America?

Maverick Scholars Takes Off

Audrey Jones
Online Editor-in-Chief & Opinions Editor

The Maverick Scholars program at Freeman aims to assist students taking an Advanced Placement (AP) class for the first time. It was started by Katie Striker, a history teacher and administrative aide, in the 2021-2022 school year. This year, after receiving a \$16,000 grant from the Henrico Education Foundation, the program is finally taking off.

“Maverick Scholars is a program to support new AP students ... in a variety of ways,” said Mrs. Striker. “We want to encourage more students to try AP classes in high school where we can provide [a] support network.” The participating students meet once a month where they can connect with a peer mentor, listen to a guest speaker, or receive advice on how to be successful in their AP classes.



PHOTO: KATIE STRIKER

Maverick Scholars

AP classes are intended to prepare students for college and even offer a way for students to potentially receive college credit, so the Maverick Scholars program also assists the participating students by familiarizing them with the college application process. Along with offering college readiness workshops for the students and their families on weekends, “we're in the process of planning some college visits this spring,” said Mrs.

Striker. “We're supporting students in AP classes currently and also assisting them with long term post-secondary education goals.”

In order to make Maverick Scholars possible and successful, it was crucial to secure proper funding from the Henrico Education Foundation (HEF). “The Henrico Education Foundation

Continued on pg. 2

In-House Writing Competition

Maggie Jacoby
Staff Writer

If you are looking to improve your writing skills, apply to the Freeman In-House writing competition. This new student-run project is an opportunity to show off your creative writing skills and participate in something new.

The In-House writing competition was started in January 2023 by Freeman sophomore Sanam Hadaf, with the help of English teacher, Wiley Hunnicutt. “I wanted to give students the opportunity to share their feelings and write about whatever comes to their mind,” said Sanam.

Sanam does not have Ms. Hunnicutt for English, but was recommended to discuss the project with

her by her own English teacher, Ms. Cuccherini. Ms. Hunnicutt referred to Sanam as “such a warm, bright, friendly human being” and explained how she was “immediately taken in by her project.”

The application process is very simple and doesn't take much time, according to Sanam. “First you answer the prompt, and add your name if you want to win a prize. Then, you put it in the box in front of the library or you can give it to Ms. Hunnicutt,” said Sanam. “Because the competition is so new, many students don't know about it. We had about ten to twenty submissions from the first one.”

The prompt differs month to month. In January, the writing prompt was “What is your favorite

Continued on pg. 2

Editorial: A Conversation on Mental Health

Abby Crowe
Editor-in-Chief

Since March 2020, global rates of depression and anxiety rose nearly 25 percent, the biggest increase ever. In a study done by the World Health Organization (WHO), one of the most endangered demographics is young people as suicide is the third leading cause of death among 15 to 24-year-old Americans. Students are expressing more and more concerns about their well-being. As a community, are we doing enough to help?

Freeman assistant principal Cara Jean O'Neal is a former school psychologist who provided mental health services to students. In her previous positions, Mrs. O'Neal worked with students during the school day when their behavior, anxiety, or depression was impacting their learning. “I feel like I can bring the lens [of a psychologist] to [Freeman's] admin team when we're having a conversation about a student who's really having a hard time,” she said.

Mrs. O'Neal believes that mental health conversations should be focused on daily well-being, not

only when a tragic event occurs. She worries about “students who are sitting in a classroom and are just wracked with anxiety, [which impacts] their ability to perform to their full potential,” she said.

Many teachers feel they are expected by both students and administrators to be a safe, social-emotional resource for their students. Freeman English teacher Wiley Hunnicutt believes that a certain level of this support is an inherent part of her job. However, “teachers cannot be everything to every student,” said Ms. Hunnicutt. “[We] wear so many hats, eventually we will collapse under that weight without adjustment in expectations and appropriate compensation.” This challenging situation can add loaded responsibility and distraction from academic learning for all involved.

Simultaneously, “Teachers are the ones who see students in their classrooms every day and know them the best as students,” said Mrs. O'Neal. Naturally, there will be some teachers that students gravitate towards and form relationships with but “teachers should know that there are other people who can step in,” she said.

Currently, Freeman has six counselors for about 1,800 kids, which is fewer than the Virginia Board

of Education recommendation of one full-time counselor for every 250 students. Counselors are also met with the demands of scheduling, testing, case managing, and other obligations that take away from their ability to be constantly available for immediate concerns. Mrs. O'Neal argues that while hiring more counselors and/or psychologists is a more challenging solution, it is critical that “we have those supports in place so that when a student is at school ready to talk, we can connect them immediately with a helping professional here at school,” she said.

According to Suicide Awareness Voices of Education (SAVE), an organization dedicated to preventing suicide, for every female suicide there are 3.9 male suicides. A large part of what contributes to this discrepancy is the way each is socialized. In many areas of their lives, boys are taught to not express their emotions because it can be seen as ‘weakness.’ This unhealthy narrative is especially detrimental to young boys who are expressing their feelings in ways that are less often associated with anxiety or depression.

Teenage boys are far more likely to express depression or anxiety as irritability and anger, which often goes untreated, or is seen as

a behavior problem rather than a mental health issue. “We spend so much time dealing with the anger piece, but anger is really just an emotion that covers other deeper emotions,” said Mrs. O'Neal.

Henrico Student Support and Wellness Specialist Amy Johnson works with school counselors, psychologists, social workers, and nurses to support students' overall health and wellness. Ms. Johnson strongly believes that “there shouldn't be a stigma attached [to mental health] and [although] we very much promote physical health, our mental health is tied to our physical health as well,” she said.

Destination 2025 is Henrico County Public Schools' strategic plan for the coming years and much of the language talks about creating safe, nurturing, and supportive environments that are built on relationships. Some of the strategic goals include the following: foster an inclusive, safe, and supportive climate for all stakeholders. It also strives to recruit, retain, and reward educators who nurture the whole child, cultivate and maintain meaningful, as well as collaborative partnerships to enrich the student experience and provide relevant learning opportunities. Ms. Johnson said that

addressing the mental health crisis “starts with teachers having strong relationships with students because that opens up the door for students being able to express what it is that they need, or what's what would be beneficial to them.”

In October of 2022, The New York Times reported that the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommends kids ages 8 and up get screened for anxiety during annual checkups. The goal is to help reduce the number of mental health conditions that go undetected and unnoticed. Ms. Johnson fully agrees with that notion. “I'm a huge proponent of anything that we can do to help,” she said. “We check up on all of the other components, why not do a mental health checkup?”

We are facing a mental health crisis. It's time we re-evaluate the way mental health is viewed and discussed. As the “Freeman Family,” we have a responsibility to uphold the integrity of that title and work to make sure that all students feel a part of something larger than themselves. “More mental health professionals and counselors should be a priority,” said Ms. Hunnicutt, “Our community as a whole must take responsibility for supporting young people in their social and emotional maturation.”



The Billy Madison Project

Ella Post
Staff Writer

The Billy Madison Project is a program that was introduced to Freeman in 2019 and is now being brought back to life in hopes of seeing habits around the school that often go unnoticed.

Katie Thayer, a math teacher here at Freeman, has been running this project for multiple years now. "Originally, there was a student shadow day that was a national initiative," she said. "That's what we originally started [the program] with; but when I brought it back in 2020, I brought it as the Billy Madison project because I wanted it to have a fun name ... it evokes a sense of fun and learning, which is what it's all about."

One of the project's main goals is to bring what the students experience into a teacher's perspective. "I go, I put on my jeans and sneakers, I put my backpack on, and I follow a [student] around all day; it's actually really fun," said Ms. Thayer. Teachers will experience being a highschool student for the day. "When I shadow a student, it reminds me what our students go through on a daily basis," she said. "It shows how quick the transitions are, how much those student's brains have to be on, and if they



PHOTO: ROLLING STONE

Adam Sandler playing Billy Madison in the 1995 film.

have too much downtime in one class but not enough in another."

Ms. Thayer noted how this can find things in the school that may need to be readjusted. "We don't find big, outright issues, but a lot of what we see is 'oh, there's some really good stuff, how can we make more of that happen?' or 'here's some stuff that's not as awesome, how can it be adjusted,'" she said. By doing this, the school community will recognize what needs to change for a better, more sustainable way of teaching.

An analysis for research purposes will be completed by teachers who participate. "After everyone is done shadowing, I will take all of the reflections of the day, do a narrative/qualitative analysis,

and pull out different trends that we see," said Ms. Thayer. "That can help inform [us] about the climate of school and what the teachers are doing well." The information received from teachers who shadow is reviewed for tendencies seen in classrooms. "The data will be shared at one of the faculty meetings and we'll also make it available to the community for them to see all the things we noticed," said Ms. Thayer.

In previous years, observations have been found in each level of academic classes. "The last time I did this, I shadowed a student in all AP's and I remember being utterly exhausted that day because the student was always thinking and there wasn't a lot of

time for a break due to the nature of those classes," she said.

Not only does this reveal how students learn at school, it can also give the teachers new ideas for instruction purposes. For example, "[A] history teacher did something [in their class] that is really cool and I asked myself if I can work that into my math classroom," said Ms. Thayer. "English teachers seem to be really good at leading discussions, and after seeing this, I want to work them into my math classroom," she said. From looking at a variety of classroom settings, teachers can see different forms of teaching methods. "It really is just about making our teaching practices better as a whole and to help find out what it's like [to

be a student]," said Ms. Thayer.

Tiffany Floyd, a new art teacher at Freeman, is going to be a part of the shadow program. "I imagine a full day of shadowing a student to be going to their classes, going to lunch with him/her, and trying to do their work, which I'm a little bit nervous about because I've been out of grade school for a while," she said. "It would be nice if it were a day where we have some type of event or assembly so I can get an idea of all of the unique transitions students might go through," she said. Overall, Ms. Floyd is "looking forward to seeing what students have to go through to get from class to class."

Teachers can also shadow students who are in Multilingual Learners (MLL). MLL students have either recently moved to the United States or have a weak foundation in English. "I'm also curious to shadow a MLL student because when they go into their rooms, they are completely immersed in English," said Ms. Floyd. "I wonder how they learn that way if they're not sure what the English terms are." Shadowing MLL students could offer teachers a once in a lifetime experience of what its like to be introduced to an American high school. If staff members or teachers want to join today, Ms. Thayer said, "The more the merrier."

Maverick Scholars Takes Off

Audrey Jones

Online Editor-in-Chief & Opinions Editor

(Continued from pg.1) is a group that provides grants to various staff members throughout Henrico County that are in different schools trying to support students," said Kyle McCollum, a history teacher and administrative aide at Freeman. "We applied for an innovation grant because the program is doing new things that haven't been historically done here at Freeman." The HEF grant secured the program \$16,000, which will be put towards staff pay, transportation for college visits, meals for participating students and families, prize incentives, tutoring, guest speakers, and other matters to help run the program.

Mr. McCollum also helps run the staff equity team at Freeman, and he considers the Maverick Scholars program important to Freeman because it fits into the school's quality plan. "Every high school has what is called a school quality plan, which are different goals for the school to try and better itself in one way or another," said Mr. McCollum. "One of our goals for the last few years has been to make all of our classes demographically representative of the student body." Specifically, the school hopes to increase the number of Black and Hispanic students in higher level classes.

So far, students' response to the program has been relatively

strong with a core group of about thirty students attending the meetings. However, "it does fluctuate month to month depending on the topic and whether or not a student feels like they need the information," said Mrs. Striker.

"The students who have been active participants ... have seen a lot of growth and support," said Mr. McCollum. "We don't have a ton of data yet but that will come later on in the year." A key part to the success of the program is assessing the results at the end of the year and reevaluating what adjustments can be made for the coming year to get better results in the future.

The college planning and application process can be daunting for many students, and the work the Maverick Scholars program is doing helps eliminate some of the confusion. "It has cleared up my idea of what college is and how to get there," said Lucas Hawes, a sophomore AP Human Geography at Freeman. "The program has taught me a lot about how to choose a college based on what I want to do and how to consider the price. They also taught me a lot about financial aid, so I know how to fund college and find the money I need."

Maverick Scholars is "a very good opportunity to get students together to share ways to do better in challenging classes," said Carlos Galvez-Colon, a sophomore AP Human Geography student at Freeman. "I have gotten better with my time management skills and getting assignments done quickly."

In-House Writing Competition



PHOTO: NITYA KUMAR

Winners of the In-House Writing Competition

Maggie Jacoby

Staff Writer

(Continued from pg. 1) DSF memory?" Sanam comes up with the prompt, sometimes relating to the time of year, but sometimes it's random. Ms. Hunnicutt then chooses the three winners, but occasionally Sanam helps her read the submissions as well.

The three winners each get a prize, "It could be something I made, candy, or really anything I can think of," said Sanam. In January, the three winners were

Shishira Nakka, Laury Gamez, and Hana Mansour. They each got a unique prize, Shishira's being a painting of a sunset.

Hana Mansour thought very highly about the experience. "Sanam is energetic, talkative, and social. It was a good experience and I encourage others to apply," she said. When answering the prompt, Hana wrote about her positive ninth grade experience here at Freeman. She believes it was the best year full of special moments.

Shishira told a meaningful story about the night of the Leadership Center open house. She wrote

about her personal experience of how Freeman has provided her with such great and supportive friends. "I wrote about the leadership center open house in October because it represented what Freeman was all about, people coming together to talk about what they love," said Shishira.

"The goal of this competition is to support students. I want them to share their feelings and write them down. I believe it will help them with their emotions," said Sanam. "I just want to let everybody know it is not something to be scared of. It should be fun and helpful."

Lori Collier Waran's Ride to the Raceway

Adair Reid

Editor-in-Chief

In June of 2022, Lori Collier Waran became the first female president of Richmond Raceway; a significant role in the Richmond community-- but she would have "never seen [herself] in that position" years earlier.

On Feb. 9, she spoke to Freeman students about her journey from working in local media like Style Weekly and Virginia Business Magazine, to the Raceway, and how her background in media has shaped her leadership style.

Audience development is a focal point for Waran, whose experience confronting challenges in expanding engagement throughout all of her careers made her a

candidate for the Raceway. "In any of my media, it was all about growing audiences and... growing our brand and that doesn't change in sports," she said. "Any sports related executive knows that you have to grow your audience in order to keep growing."

As an over 1,000 acre property, the Raceway has many capabilities when it comes to hosting events outside of 2 yearly NASCAR race weekends. Waran looks to use the "five expo hall buildings" and "concert venue in the amphitheater" to host even more diverse events, adding to the typical "200 events like dog shows, sneaker fests, Comic Con, craft shows, and home shows." Further, Waran intends on increasing audience engagement through concerts, as "[Richmond Race-

way] usually puts on ten concerts and we're going to grow that to about 18 or 25 or so."

The role doesn't come without its challenges, as the size and age of the Raceway needs constant upkeep. "The track is 77 years old, so... we need to make sure that the facility is up to par." However, maintenance doesn't weigh the Raceway or Waran down. "That's an easy thing to solve for, so if that's the hardest [part of the job] right now, then it's a pretty good job."

As a plus, the community surrounding Richmond Raceway makes running and updating the facility far worth it. "The [fans] are incredible, they are the ones that drive our sport forward," Waran said. "Especially on race weekends even though it's

crazy and hectic... it is so exhilarating to be around the fans because they energize you."

A Richmond native herself and graduate of Atlee High School, Waran's family has deep roots in central Virginia-- her mother was even the principal of Freeman High School. "Even if I don't know someone [in Richmond], I have a tie to them because they are either a student at Freeman, or they taught at Freeman with my mother, or [were coached by my father at Henrico or Highland Springs High School]."

As one of four female NASCAR Raceway presidents, Waran holds a unique position within the organization and emphasizes the importance of inclusion for demographics previously unfamiliar with the sport. "It's not just

one note, and I think it's important for women to know that the decisions that are being made at the executive level or in upper management are not just coming from one demographic," she said. "It's always helpful to understand that we're all learning the sport together through lots of different insights and viewpoints."

But when it comes to advice for high schoolers, Waran had more to say. "It's okay to evolve, and in fact, that's the good stuff, the evolution, and where you go from into where you go to," she said. "I would never have seen myself in this position when I was a senior in high school and I certainly don't expect anybody... to know exactly what they're going to do for the rest of their life. So, I'd say don't worry."

SZA Album Review

Page 3



Groundhog Multiverse

Page 4



Sustainability: A Guide

Page 6 & 7



Damar Hamlin

Page 9



Voting Age

Page 12



Harry and Megan: Everything You Never Needed to Know

Morgan Strudgeon
Editor-in-Chief

The royal family: we all have our opinions about them. For most of us, these opinions were formed when we saw them on TV or heard about political and social happenings across the pond. On the other hand, some of us probably never give them much thought and see them as simply social figures in a far away country. However, it has become harder and harder to be indifferent about this family, as they have become increasingly covered by American media since Meghan Markle became a household name in 2017. When news of Meghan's relationship with Prince Harry became public knowledge, it was the start of a series of events that eventually led to both of them leaving the royal family and (allegedly) retiring from life as public figures in 2021. Despite leaving what they refer to as 'the institution,' both Harry and Megan have been busy. Most recently, this took the form of a Netflix docu-series entitled "Harry and Meghan" where the couple and those close to them detail the experience that Harry and Meghan had within the royal family.

The show discusses much from both of their early childhood experiences before detailing the history of their relationship as well as some content about their lives and relationship now. The part that I found intriguing was the way they interviewed many close friends and family to help tell the story, which I think helped to make the show more interesting to watch and not be one-sided. In addition to detailing the lives of the famous couple, the series also went into extreme depth regarding how the royal family operates and what it is like to be a part of it. For me, the most interesting part of watching the documentary was learning more about the role of the royal family within England. As someone who has only left the country once — to go to Canada — I had little to no knowledge of how people outside of the US view the British monarchy. While watching this, I learned more about how the royal family serves as a cultural symbol within England and how they interact with the general public because of that. I found that the series did a really good job detailing just how much the media and press play a role in the relationship between the royal family and the people.

Even though I thought I went into watching this documentary knowing at least a little bit about the royal family and how it operates; it is fair to say that, by the end of the second episode, I realized that I actually only knew the tip of the iceberg when it comes to British royals. While there is no way the documentary could have covered EVERYTHING there is to know, and there is without a doubt some bias present, I do think that there is a lot of interesting information within the series. While I think that the documentary was well done and really gave an interesting perspective on what their lives have been like for the past seven years, I don't know if making the documentary was the right move on their end. When the couple stepped back from public life in 2021, many believed that it was because they wanted to leave the spotlight and live a quieter life with fewer camera lenses. By making this docu-series in addition to the various interviews and memoir, both Harry and Meghan have revealed more to the public than probably ever would have come to light via the tabloids. Additionally, while I DO think it is important for both Harry and Meghan to have the right to tell

their stories and reveal what their lives have been like, by doing this there happens to be a lot of collateral damage. There will always be some unintentional bias

when it comes to autobiographical books and documentaries. My final verdict: do this again with William and Kate. I need to know the whole story.



The Netflix preview poster for the Harry & Meghan Documentary

A SZAling New Album

Jazmyn Howell
A&E Editor

Five years and six months or two-thousand and nine days: the amount of time that millions of SZA fans have waited for one of the biggest albums of our generation to drop. On Dec. 9, 2022, SZA dropped her long-awaited album, "SOS," on all streaming platforms. Since the release, she's broken record after record on her second album to date. SZA is known by her fans as an artist that makes music that speaks to the wants and needs of a generation — music that seems most can relate to. SZA has accomplished something few artists can anymore: she has catered to her current audience by employing elements of classic R&B, while showcasing her versatility in several other genres. SZA poured a level of skill and talent into this album that amassed over 405 million streams in its first week, also breaking multiple different records, even ones held by Janet Jackson and now Taylor Swift. Over the course of the "SOS" album, fans will notice a shift through the various stages of a doomed relationship. This fluctuation begins with the anger of an initial breakup, followed by feelings of loss, the development of coping mechanisms to fill the void, and finally, a stage of self-forgiveness and acceptance of a future without the person the artist has lost. This rollercoaster of emotions is one that is perfectly embodied by these songs. No matter what kind of relationship we are



The SOS album cover in, healthy or otherwise, there is a song on this album for everyone. To begin with, my favorite song on the album would have to be "Snooze." This song talks about the feeling of not being able to let go of someone, even though they are only staying in the relationship for ulterior motives. The song insinuates that the singer doesn't care if their partner is cheating, as long as she stays their "day one." In addition, "Snooze" has quickly risen to the number one spot because of its classic R&B style. It brings listeners back to early 2000s R&B, when you really had to pay attention to the lyrics to find meaning and motive. Nonetheless, anyone who feels the need to be wanted should be able to relate to this song. My number two spot easily went to "Nobody Gets Me." It tells the story of a passionate relationship that ended when the lovers had to choose different paths in life. SZA seems to want them back, but ultimately understands why they had to go their separate ways. This song showcases SZA's vocals in a way that listeners may not have heard before and it tells a beautiful story. Number three on my list is "Far," which takes a turn, stylistically, away from the other previously mentioned tracks. "Far" speaks about how the narrator's significant other has driven her so far from who she thought she was, that there may be no turning back. The song explores a relationship that has "burnt [her] out." The song differs from the other songs on the album by making

it clear that the artist is ready to move on and that she has chosen to stay away from people who force her to change who she is. Number four goes to "Smoking on my Ex Pack" — the song that starts with SZA rapping, which made my ears perk up swiftly when listening to it for the first time. The song examines a precarious situation that the artist finds herself in — her ex wants her back, but she's moved on. This song seems to empower both the singer and listener, urging us all to move on and find inner peace. Taking the number five spot is the tenth song on the album: "Gone Girl." Instantly, this song became another of my favorites. Once again, SZA looks at the notion of restrictive relationships that have made her lose her sense of identity. The song beautifully illustrates the inner turmoil of the artist. But, she doesn't seem to want others' opinions or help and instead wants to break free. This song in particular should speak to anyone who has been in the dilemma of wanting to leave a relationship but feeling trapped instead. The bottom five songs of the album, in my opinion, have to be "Kill Bill," "Low," "Too Late," "F2F," and "Conceited." I ranked these songs low on my list because they are not done in SZA's traditional style. "Kill Bill" is probably the best one out of the group, but the chorus feels repetitive and almost pop-like. I don't necessarily think "Low" is bad, it is just not a song I would want to listen to on repeat. "Too Late" sounds similar to an Ariana Grande song, as the

lyrics feel very saccharine and redundant. "F2F" is towards the bottom of my list of tracks because of the melody. It sounds like a "Camp Rock" song, to put it simply. I think "F2F" with SZA backed by a live band would be phenomenal, but the studio version is definitely not one of my favorites. Lastly, "Conceited" first sounds like a pop song, and it made one feel like they should 'douce' to it. The beat is not my favorite out of all of the tracks, but the lyrics are witty and just as phenomenal. I think that if the song was done in a more R&B style it would be amazing. Generally speaking, these songs are at the bottom of my list because I tend to dislike the genres that they become beholden to. While the success of SZA as an artist has grown tenfold, she has stated that she won't release any more music after this album. However, if you are a long time SZA fan, you will already know she is prone to exaggeration. It has already been confirmed she will have music released with Lizzo. Personally, I feel that SZA likely won't release another full album, but perhaps she will continue to release singles and feature in other artists' music. With this album's success, it is not a surprise that SZA's concert tickets are selling out in seconds. If you are one of the lucky ticket holders, you may be witnessing SZA on her last tour ever, supporting an album that is a must-listen because of its genre-bending style and its inherent relatability.

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The Groundhog Multiverse: Money, Lies, and Meteorology

Adair Reid
Editor-in-Chief

Groundhogs: America's most underrated rodent, loved for its beaver-like looks, weird tiny claws, and annual usefulness that keeps them from being shot by disgruntled North American farmers. While we only revere one of them — Punxsutawney Phil who, apparently, “drinks an elixir of life” to stay alive since 1881 (yikes) — groundhogs are everywhere. First celebrated on Feb. 2, 1887, the real action of Groundhog Day happens in Gobbler's Knob, a rural area within the town of Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania. As the legend goes, if a groundhog leaves its burrow and sees his own shadow, he will get scared and run back in, foretelling six more weeks of weather. If no shadow is present (or if the groundhog just gets over itself), spring is fast approaching. But Phil isn't the only weather predicting groundhog: there are many regional variants — a Groundhog Multiverse of its own.

Birmingham Bill- Birmingham, Alabama

The least concerning thing going on in Alabama, the city of Birmingham has their own groundhog, with the really creative and inspired name Bill (government name Jamie Bill). Prioritizing his wellness, in 2018 the Birmingham Zoo decided to no longer interrupt Bill's hibernation process, choosing instead to use other animals as stand-ins to make the prediction, which is just as stupid as it is relatable. I wouldn't want to wake up to appease the masses despite them literally having a daily forecast on their weather app either. As a result, the Eurasian owl, Bilbo, and a Virginia opossum named Birmingham Jill have picked up Bill's slack. With quotes like “the iconic groundhog Birmingham Bill isn't afraid of seeing his shadow; he's just exhausted” surrounding Jamie Bill, I honestly just hope he is doing well and that he continues to raise awareness for everyone who just doesn't want to do anything. I would skip school on Feb. 2 in solidarity if it didn't count against the exam exemption attendance requirement. Sigh.

Staten Island Chuck- Staten Island, New York

My personal favorite out of all



PHOTO CREDITS: FLICKR

Punxsutawney Phil the groundhog posing majestically for his onlooking fans

of these groundhogs, Staten Island Chuck has been throwing out amateur meteorology predictions since 1981. Also known as Charles G. Hogg, Chuck lives in the Staten Island Zoo as the official groundhog meteorologist of New York City. He also has his own Wikipedia page. Some of his most memorable moments include biting the then-mayor of New York City, Michael Bloomberg, in 2009, leading to him being replaced by his granddaughter Charlotte for a few years. However, in 2014, another disaster struck — the then-mayor Bill de Blasio DROPPED Charlotte during the ceremony, likely causing her death a week later on Feb. 9 — and leading to a total cover up by the Staten Island Zoo. The next year, de Blasio watched the ceremony led by Charlotte Jr, Chuck's daughter, six feet away from her hutch. The former mayor never returned. With an 82 percent success rate, Staten Island Chuck and his children have had a storied career, and his consistent disagreements with Punxsutawney Phil are a wakeup call for some scientific integrity throughout the groundhog world.

Shubenacadie Sam- Nova Scotia, Canada

By far the crunchiest groundhog on this list, Shubecanadie Sam resides in Nova Scotia and

apparently “[his] predictions have never been wrong, sometimes, the weather is wrong” (yeah right). A fan of yoga, puns, and a decisive Taurus, Sam is clearly a product of his Canadian upbringing. He is noted for making the first prediction of groundhog day as a result of the Atlantic Time Zone he lives in, clocking in at 8AM. While Shubecanadie Sam is the least dramatic groundhog on this list, he did bite a reporter's finger in 2018 after they tried to stop him from climbing out of his own enclosure — an escape attempt that begs the question of basic groundhog liberties. But with an accuracy rate of about 45 percent, Sam clearly can't be trusted with meteorology, much less, his own freedom.

Wiarion Willie- Ontario, Canada

Another Canadian on this list, Wiarion Willie lives in South Bruce Peninsula and is albino, but like, don't make it a big deal. It's not. Surprisingly morbid and a refreshingly honest addition to the groundhog canon, he is one of the few who admits that his predecessors have actually died — unlike the media that maintains Punxsutawney Phil is immortal. He also has the best origin story: in 1956, a resident of Wiarion Mac Mackenzie threw a party and titled his invitations as a “Groundhog Day” gathering. A reporter for the

Toronto Star came by an invitation, and assuming it was for an actual ceremony with a legitimate groundhog, found the party and instantly forgot about the groundhog to join. The next day, the reporter realized he needed an excuse for his travel expenses — so Mackenzie took his wife's fur hat, dug a burrow in the snow, and declared a prediction while the reporter took a photo and ran the story in the Toronto Star. The next year, around 50 people actually showed up for the festival, leading Mackenzie to capitalize on the opportunity. In the early years, a “mythical” (not my words) trio of groundhogs Grundoon, Muldoon, and Sand Dune (great names) made the predictions, and Wiarion Willie himself appeared in the 1980s. After the original Willie's death in 1999 at age 22 right before the holiday, organizers somehow decided it would be a good idea to reveal Willie in a coffin, wearing a tuxedo and holding a carrot. This ‘Willie,’ of course, was fake, as the real deceased Willie was occupied. He was busy decomposing. Willie's supernatural powers are attributed to his position on the 45th parallel, between the Equator and the North Pole, an assertion just as legitimate as his purported 90 percent accuracy rate — that scientists estimate is actually 25 percent. For the 137th year, Punxsutawney

Phil woke up early in the morning

The Results

Punxsutawney Phil

in Gobbler's Knob, Pennsylvania, and promptly predicted six more weeks of winter. While this may have seemed appropriate directly preceding a random snow day in Richmond, Phil's prediction has been taken far too seriously so far. Disparaging other groundhogs, inner circle member Harry ‘Butch’ Philliber said that “the groundhog is above science and we expect impostors to try to get in [on] the act,” — a bold statement for a groundhog with a 46 percent accuracy rate.

Wiarion Willie and Shubenacadie Sam

Amid much controversy, death, and drama, two Canadian groundhogs remained split on the morning of Feb. 2. The night before, Quebec's groundhog Fred la Marmotte sadly passed away in hibernation, leading to a bitter-sweet day of predictions. Wiarion Willie went for an early spring — a bit of a stretch — while Shubenacadie Sam saw her shadow, aligning with Punxsutawney Phil.

Birmingham Bill

As mentioned earlier, Birmingham Bill decided to sleep through this year's prediction, with another animal filling in his place. As a result, Bill has been disqualified from this list.

Staten Island Chuck

For the eighth year in a row, Chuck decided on an early spring for the state of New York — a certain kind of delusion only a native New Yorker would share. Punxsutawney Phil's inner circle is particularly bothered by Chuck, with one saying they have “no respect for the Staten Island groundhog or any of the other imposters.” For that reason, I have to side with Chuck.

While a few other whistle pigs had to be omitted for space constraints, my deep dive into the groundhog multiverse left me with one takeaway: they are everywhere, and they are coming for all meteorologists that attempt to discredit them. They burrow, they dig, they predict, but above all, they plan like masterminds. While groundhogs may be a few continents short of world domination, every February presents an opportunity.

Glass Onion Lacks Layers

Peter Kriebel
Sports Editor

“The Glass Onion” is the epitome of Hollywood laziness. Why labor over a witty script or an intricate story when you can clumsily shove stars into a film and still experience success?

Plot is everything in a murder mystery, but in this movie it is anything but compelling. All of the characters are cartoonish, uninteresting, and lack any of the complexity that would make viewers root for them. Directors seem to think that acquiring stars that people recognize gets them out of developing intriguing characters.

They treat viewers like school children picking out a backpack. In the same way kids say, “Ooh, I like Spiderman, so I like this backpack,” they think we say, “Hey, James Bond, the narrator from ‘Fight Club,’ and the guy from that Marvel movie. I know these people, so I like this movie.” It's the same thought process that led to Netflix's “Red Notice,” a movie so bad theaters handed out purple hearts to anyone who watched the whole thing.

What baffles me is that unlike Red Notice's deservedly terrible 36 percent score on Rotten Tomatoes, “The Glass Onion” has been critically acclaimed with a 92 percent rating. Have the critics been bought? Blackmailed?

Drugged? What could have possessed them to write such rave reviews because they couldn't have been watching this movie?

One thing that made it such a challenging watch was the humor. To the writers' credit, a couple lines were very funny, but the incessant pandemic humor was at best played out and at worst cringey. Remember when we all wore sweatpants? Hahaha! That counts as a joke, right? A movie can still be decent with hit-or-miss writing, but without a solid plot it is nothing. This felt like it was thrown together in 20 minutes.

The all-important “twist” that's supposed to be a sharp but plausible turn from the line of breadcrumbs the viewer has been following was blah. Netflix just spun the wheel of overused tropes and landed on “the identical twin.”

The murder itself is boring and unimaginative. They acknowledge as much in the movie, calling the plan “so dumb that it's smart.” What a self-aggrandizing way to attempt to circumvent the fact that no one at Netflix felt like trying to actually come up with anything creative.

I realize it's a silly movie, but that doesn't mean you can put any piece of half-baked crap out there and call it a comedy. The best comedies have witty writing that's put into hilarious action by talented actors. Writing comes first. It always has and it always will, despite what certain people in the industry appear to believe.



PHOTO CREDITS: NETFLIX

Movie poster featuring the star-studded cast

HE SAID SHE SAID

SPORTS EDITOR
Peter Kriebel



GUEST CONTRIBUTOR
Maggie Newton

I'd rather strangle a turtle myself than use one of these



Paper Straws

Turns everything into cardboard smoothie

A gamechanger for stalkers



Electric Cars

No thank you!

Shameless government overreach



Recycling

I still don't know how

Your calves will thank you



Riding a Bike

I can get on board with this

Do I look like a socialist?



Reusable Bags

Only moms remember to bring these to the grocery store

Freeman Musician is Le-Jitness

Poppy Friske
Staff Writer

With just a brief glance down the halls of Freeman High School, it's apparent that music is an integral part of teenage culture. From headphones trembling with bass chords to radios blasting a country chorus out of car windows, most can agree that their favorite tunes get them through the day. For Senior Alec Archer, it wasn't enough to simply listen to other artists; he utilized his creativity and talents to break into the music industry as a high schooler.

Alec, better known as "Jitness" to his fans, has been on the road to music-making since his childhood. "Back in elementary school, I used to hear famous people's beats," said Jitness. "So I started off covering and then in seventh grade I made my first [song]." In an effort to expand his range of audience, Jitness varied the types of music in which he drew inspiration. "If I spent the whole day listening to one person, I would start to sound like one genre," said Jitness. The songwriter tries to "hit every zone, therefore becoming [his] own genre."

Before fully diving into the mechanics of his career, it's important to clear any questions regarding Alec's stage name. The story is, there isn't one. "It just kind of popped into my head," said Jitness. "I didn't really think too much." While the name may be random, Jitness, along with his music, has become a well-known title



PHOTO: ALEC ARCHER

Jitness' profile on Spotify

within the Freeman community.

By a stroke of luck, Jitness was placed in a directed study classroom right next to Ms. Buchbinder, the supervising teacher for Maverick Media. With his trademark swagger (and a few connections to Ms. Buchbinder's students), Jitness landed himself a spot on the morning announcements. Since his Maverick Media debut, Freeman has gone wild for the appearance of a true icon every week.

While Maverick Media provides light, supplementary promotion, a passionate creator such as Jitness wants to display his talents on a bigger stage. With the help of his producer, Kyng Prince, CEO of the RVA-based music studio

Super House Records, Jitness has released albums and singles on Spotify, Apple Music, and Soundcloud, complete with professional cover art. His most popular releases include "The Jitness Express," "POWER PACK," "The Jitness Effect," and "Mission Impossible."

Kyng Prince first became part of Jitness's musical journey after hearing him recording a track at Super House Records. After getting a taste of "the Jitness effect," Prince "picked up on his vibe and knew [they] were going to make something special." Jitness's drive for success and devotion to his craft made him an ideal artist of whom to collaborate. As his producer, Prince helps direct

Jitness's music videos, which are available on YouTube, and work with him in the studio. "It's dope working with Jitness," said Prince. "He's a really good story teller; he can literally rap about anything and make it a good story."

While he enlists the expertise of a producer, the young musician takes on a great deal of initiative on each of his projects, leaving "... the creative process... in [his] hands," said Jitness. From getting a feel for filming locations to editing videos, it's crucial that the final product wholeheartedly reflects the Jitness brand. "I'm not going to be satisfied," said Jitness. "I'm a visionary, so I already know what I'm trying to do."

To avid listeners, such as junior Lennon Hill, rap-style beats "... just give [people] energy [and] really put [them] in the mood." Lennon was enlightened at the skatepark when his friend "... put on possibly the greatest song [he'd] ever heard: 'Klondike,'" which he described as being "super fun, super awesome, and having great energy." He's also very enthusiastic about the hit "Active," which can be found on Jitness's latest album, "The Jitness Express." "'Active' is just the best song ever. The flow is beautiful," said Lennon. Since then, he and his friends have "been bumping Jitness every chance [they] get."

Although musician and performer Jitness will be graduating this spring, Freeman should count its time with this determined and innovative student artist as a preview of his future success. Lennon summed it up best, "He's



PHOTO: ALEC ARCHER

Album cover for "The Jitness Effect."



PHOTO: ALEC ARCHER

Jitness in the studio

just an exciting man making some exciting music." From his fans at DSF to the listeners across social media, Jitness has truly made an impact on the music-loving youth, sharing his spirit and taking in the support. He may be projected onto whiteboards today, but there are megatrons awaiting his presence tomorrow. Next stop on the Jitness Express: fame.

Uncovering and Rediscovering Buried History

Maggie Newton
Staff Writer

When Freeman Junior Millie Grymes wants to relax after a long and difficult day at school, she doesn't hop on her couch and grab a bag of Doritos. No — she drives down to Richmond's Hollywood Cemetery. Sometimes she cleans graves, and sometimes she basks in its nature and expansive history.

Hollywood Cemetery was established in 1847, and it is the resting place to three U.S. presidents, six Virginia governors, and two Supreme Court justices. It is also home to Douglas Southall Freeman and his wife. The sprawling 130-acre cemetery is rich with history, which is a large part of its appeal to Millie, who is a self-proclaimed history nerd. She first came to Hollywood Cemetery as an eighth grade student as a part of a history project. She now comes every week, often armed with her grave cleaning supplies. Although she does have family members buried there, those are not the graves she normally takes care of. "There are a few little headstones ... that draw me to them," said Millie. "I like to clean them up because sometimes they're kind of forgotten."



PHOTO: MAGGIE NEWTON

Hollywood Cemetery in Richmond

The cemetery is the resting place of over 18,000 confederate soldiers. The area has a tall and thin pyramid shaped monument, sponsored by the daughters of the Confederacy. "This statue was built completely by hand, probably by enslaved people," said Millie. The cemetery also has a memorial for WWI veterans. "There are some plaques for World War Two,"

said Millie. "It has many names of different people from different platoons. It's pretty cool."

Because Millie had spent so much time in Hollywood Cemetery, she gained a pretty extensive knowledge of the legends and lore surrounding the cemetery. One of Millie's favorite stories is the Iron Dog. "A little girl who died in the late 1800s or early 1900s

of scarlet fever loved dogs ... after she died they raised enough money to put an iron dog next to her," said Millie, "Legend has it that if you come here at night you can hear the dog barking, guarding, and playing with her."

Millie also spends a lot of her time volunteering at the East End Cemetery, which was a formerly abandoned African American cem-



PHOTO: MAGGIE NEWTON

Graves of Douglas Freeman and his wife

etry established in about 1890. Grymes said she digs "underneath years worth of dirt and rocks and everything that would have piled up" to clean plots, and sometimes even searches for graves. "One great thing about East End is that they try to find out who these people are, and try to connect them to their current descendants," said Millie. "This brings a lot of people back to Virginia."

To many, hanging out in a cemetery might be frightening and morbid, but Millie doesn't focus on the death. "It's really not scary because it's just people that like to commemorate the people that they lost," said Millie. "It's just very beautiful."

Freeman Senior Starts Her Own Nail Business

Celia Acey
Staff Writer

Rachel Stanton does it all: Black Student Union (BSU) President, Co-president of Equity Ambassadors, Girls For a Change volunteer, and more. One of the more recent additions to this impressive resume is entrepreneur. While most Freeman students have a traditional job in the retail or restaurant industry, senior Rachel Stanton has worked to form her own business creating nail art.

Rachel started doing nails at the early age of four years old and has continued to further her passion in nail art. However, her recently has she started incorporating acrylics into her repertoire. "I started doing nails because I saw all my friends were getting their nails done at the salons, so I decided to do them myself," said Rachel. "And since then, I've found it to be a great way for me to be creative."

Not only is designing nail art a creative outlet for Rachel, it's also been a productive way to spend her time. Rachel is currently enrolled in nail school, is an apprentice at ATiR Natu-



Rachel's nail designs

ral Nail Care, and runs her own nail business out of her house.

"I'm still in nail school right now, doing an online program," said Rachel. In addition to asynchronous quizzes and tests, Rachel goes into the school once a month to do some hands-on workshops.

Even with her busy schedule at Freeman and countless projects as BSU president, Rachel still finds time to work in the salon about three times a week. During the summer, she was working full time, adding up to about 40 hours a week.

Many of Rachel's clients are Freeman students, teachers, and parents. "My first ever of-



ficial client was a Freeman student, she actually gave me a lot of confidence," said Rachel. "They're always super creative with their ideas so they've really helped me expand and hone in on some of the popular trends." Social Studies teacher, Ms. Roberts is one of the many members of the community who have supported Rachel's business. "I really just like supporting students and what they're interested in. She's one of my students and it's something that she's really passionate about," said Ms. Roberts. "Rachel's determination and hard work gives me hope for the future, that there are students who not only can dedicate



PHOTO: RACHEL STANTON

their whole life to the betterment of their school, their community, and just the world, but they can also still take out time for themselves to do what they are interested in."

Additionally, Freeman senior Takala Johnson is also a regular client. "[Rachel] is very bubbly, smiley, and positive," said Takala. "She's such a strong willed and determined person, and she helps me know that I can do hard things. She's done really well, and it has inspired me, just knowing that I can do it because I like to do hair."

For Rachel, nail art isn't just a hobby, but rather a passion. Her love for this creative venture is perpetual. "I love how it's differ-

ent every time and how even if you're trying to recreate something, it's never gonna look the same. I think that's true of all art," said Rachel. "You can always tell when there's a unique spin on something and there's still a kind of personal touch."

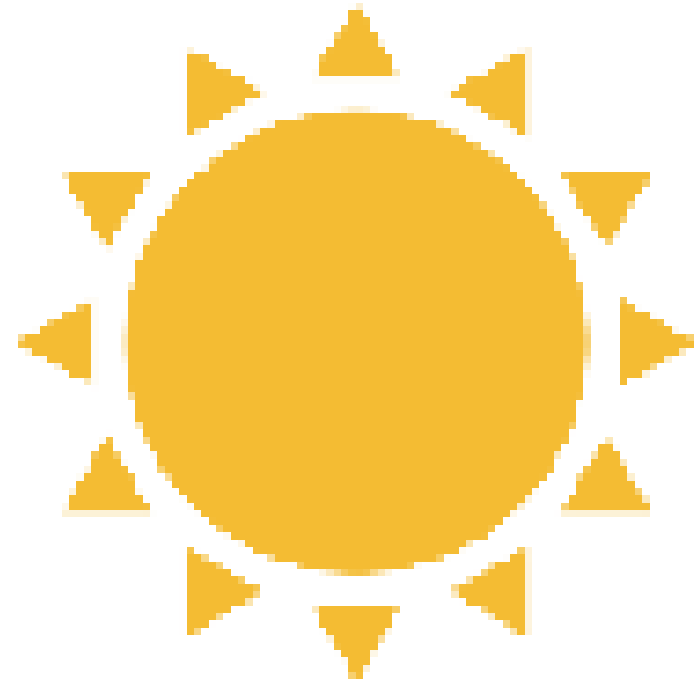
Although Rachel doesn't plan on staying in the nail industry forever, it will always be an important part of her life. After she graduates, she

"I love how it's different every time and how even if you're trying to recreate something, it's never gonna look the same."

- Rachel Stanton

plans on going to college in DC. "I want to go into either law or public policy. Maybe I'll come back and work during the summer, it just depends," said Rachel. "[ATiR salon] is definitely a home, I won't forget it, it'll always be there."

For more information regarding Rachel's nail business, visit her Instagram account @rachelstailnails.



RVA Climate Activists Promote Sustainability



GreenTeenz Student Volunteers

Katie Hall
Staff Writer

Although climate change initiatives are typically presented on a global scale, many local groups are working to help tackle the issue. GreenTeenz is a student-run, non-profit organization in the Richmond area. It was founded by Collegiate School student, Maia Zasler, and two members of the Freeman Class of 2022: Kristina Kang and Camille Kidwell.

Dedicated to environmental advocacy, their primary focus lies with educational initiatives. “We believe that practicing sustainability requires an adequate understanding of your effects on the environment, not just going through the motions. We focus on encouraging curiosity and [...] we create opportunities for intellectual stimulation,” said GreenTeenz board member Macy Cafritz, a senior at Collegiate School.

Through blog posts and social media presence, GreenTeenz aims to educate the public about sustainable practices. They emphasize that anyone can make an impact, even with smaller actions. “Limiting meat and plastic consumption can drastically reduce your ecological footprint without completely changing your style of living,” said Macy.

GreenTeenz co-founder Camille Kidwell explained that major contributions to sustainability can also be made through political participation. “[People can] register to vote and [...] elect representatives that prioritize environmental issues,” she said. Freeman junior Sastha

Tripathi is also involved with GreenTeenz, serving as a board member since 2022. According to Sastha, “the single most daunting environmental challenge facing the Richmond area is environmental racism.” She explained that these disparities are clear in many Richmond neighborhoods, dating back to the practice of redlining in the 1930s.

Cornell University defines redlining as, “the systematic denial of services such as mortgages [or] insurance loans [...] to residents of certain areas, based on their race or ethnicity.” Historically African American neighborhoods were often designed with fewer trees and “heat trapping pavement”, while predominantly white residential areas were designed with the comfort of its residents in mind. “This is an issue

I and the other members of GreenTeenz find incredibly important to discuss,” said Sastha. “We cannot fully address the climate crisis unless we first acknowledge that it affects [the black community] disproportionately.” As a large city, Richmond experiences additional challenges in the fight for climate justice. “Our biggest challenge is fighting against local corporations that don’t prioritize sustainable living,” said Macy. “Companies like Dominion power plant continue to dump coal ash into the James River.”

GreenTeenz is not the only local group concerned about river pollution. Since its founding in 1976, the James River Association has fought for the preservation of Richmond’s main water source. The James River Association focuses

on policy activism, river clean-ups and educational efforts. They host a variety of service events open to volunteers, including a river patrol program called RiverRats. According to these local organizations, public engagement is vital to their efforts.

Lewis Ginter is another organization in Richmond that promotes sustainability through connections with the local community. Most commonly known for its decorative holiday lights, Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens is a popular attraction in the Richmond area. While enjoying the lights, members of the community are able to experience the gardens at Lewis Ginter. The property stretches over 50 acres, displaying almost 6,000 different types of plants.

Lewis Ginter’s sustainable practices are evident through their water conservation system. In recent years, they have replaced invasive species with native plants to revive the ecosystem within their gardens. To reduce water waste, rainwater is recycled and paired with efficient irrigation practices that support the gardens. Aside from the holiday festivities, Lewis Ginter welcomes children and adults year-round to visit the gardens for on-site educational opportunities. While at Lewis Ginter, visitors learn about the gardens while observing a multifaceted approach to local sustainability.

Each individual can make an impact in the climate crisis, even with a minimal time commitment. For ways to help, check out GreenTeenz, The James River Association, and Lewis Ginter for a variety of volunteer opportunities.

Hannah Tittermary
Staff Writer

We’ve all heard ‘reduce, reuse, recycle,’ but what else can we do to help the planet? These days, personal sustainability seems more difficult than ever, but it might be easier than many think.

The phrase “Think globally, act locally” is an embodiment of how we can support our environment. Simple things such as carpooling, thrifting, managing the thermostat, and buying organic can make massive impacts on our carbon footprint and pollution.

Freeman teacher Mr. Foltz saves “a couple 100 pounds of CO₂ [from going] into our environment” by simply riding his bike to work.

Additionally, fast fashion is a quickly growing trend with its impact on the environment growing even faster. Companies such as Shein, Zara, and Forever 21 market inexpensive, trendy items; however, the turnover from

their production leads to a massive overuse of natural resources, along with a staggering amount of pollution. According to Earth.org, “fashion production comprises 10% of total global carbon emissions.” Instead of giving in to these companies, sophomore Cate Woodrum believes that we should “get a full life out of everything we [buy],” she said. “[Because fast fashion] is such a damaging industry.”

Carbon emissions don’t only come from large corporations. They can come from the smallest things, and they are far more devastating than we may expect. According to “Count Us In,” a household reducing their temperature by one degree can reduce their personal carbon emissions by 340 kilograms annually. The Department of Atmo-

spheric Sciences has noted that if every household in America were to reduce their temperature by one degree it would reduce national carbon emissions by 7.2 teragrams a year. Science teacher Melissa Gostel said that by doing this you are “still comfortable, but you’re using dramatically less energy.”

Also, though overall pretty dramatic, the VSCO girls of 2020 did have something right: the issues with single-use plastic. In fact, over 50% of our plastic pollution comes from single-use sources, according to Plastic Oceans International. The danger doesn’t come specifically from the plastic items themselves, rather the microplastics that come from them. These microplastics

are consumed by oceanic fish, then consumed by the three billion people who eat fish on a daily basis. Junior Nicholas Gavin said he tries to “limit the use of plastics ... and stay away from [single-use plastics] that are easily thrown away.” The best way to avoid these issues is as simple as reverting to multi-use items instead of the common plastic bags and plasticware.

Another simple yet effective way to help the environment is to limit unnecessary purchases. “Everything we buy takes natural resources, whether it’s a metal or ... fossil fuels or energy that are used to produce it,” said Jeff Meador, Freeman’s AP Environmental Science teacher. Although one sim-

ple purchase may not seem like much, the culture of buying every new thing as they come out has had detrimental effects to our environment. Overall, “if we can reduce consumption, then we can improve air quality... [and] free up more land to protect biodiversity,” said Mr. Meador.

Not only is the next option environmentally conscious, but it is also a fun weekend activity. Attending local farmers markets and buying organic meat and produce is fantastic for the environment as it saves crops from herbicides and pesticides. “The most direct effects of herbicide pollution are decreased condition, growth, and reproduction, and increased mortality of plants,” according to the US EPA. Along with this, herbicides kill

wildlife around the crops and “contaminate soil, water, turf, and other vegetation,” according to the National Institutes of Health. Additionally, herbicides can get into food and be potentially hazardous. The simplest way to avoid these issues is to look for organic markets.

If you are looking for a less expensive way to achieve a sustainable meal plan, at-home gardens are a simple way to eat organically. Sophomore Cate Woodrum’s family grows peppers, strawberries, raspberries, arugula, tomatoes, and rosemary. Cate notes that organic food can be “so expensive for no reason [but, it’s] really easy to grow,” she said. “[And] if you ... do your research, you can get around that cost barrier.”

Being a better supporter of the environment means committing small acts each day to help lower your carbon footprint. As Mr. Foltz said, “this planet is our home. If you think about it in those terms, then, you can wrap your head around the fact that small changes lead to big changes.”



Wear and Tear on the Environment



For Days “Take Back Bag”

Ava Flournoy
Staff Writer

The fight against climate change is an ongoing battle between what people do to help the environment versus what people do that is harmful to the earth. Today, many laws and regulations are being put into place nationally, but what are they really doing?

The United States has been making progress on Climate Change since 1964, when President Johnson put the “Land and Water Conservation Fund” into place. According to the U.S. Department of the Interior, this fund protects natural resources all around the country, and protects things such as trees, mountains, and other national parks for people to enjoy recreationally.

The US has remained proactive in fighting climate change. In late August, President Biden signed the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022, which plans to cut U.S. carbon emissions by 40 percent. The law will incentivize new forms of transportation and promote using cleaner energy, increasing electric car usage and making solar and wind power increasingly available. The law allots about 369 billion dollars to invest in clean energy.

Despite this progress, America is still a leading country in harmful greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, contributing to more than one-quarter of the world’s total GHG emissions. America is the top country that emits GHG which shows that the day-to-day

activities people like to do, like going for a drive, grocery shopping, and even donating clothes can cause large amounts of pollution.

Many conservation organizations, like the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), recommend that people should try walking more whenever possible, since walking gets the body moving in a healthy way and saves gas, helping both the earth and wallet. The NRDC also recommends that if someone must travel long distances, use a train, because they are more environmentally friendly.

Another way to reduce GHG emissions is changing the way we shop for groceries. Grocery shopping is a common occurrence and any day of the week, there will be people filling the aisles of any supermarket. In reality, about 40 percent of the food bought ends up in landfills.

Growing food, processing it, packaging it, and finally shipping the items takes about 10 percent of U.S. energy. By limiting the amount of food being bought, buyers can limit the amount that is wasted, leading to less energy being used. Some grocery stores have also switched to biodegradable shipping containers when possible to reduce the production waste. Overall, stores are taking steps in the right direction but the customers are what really drive the production levels.

Moreover, the overproduction of clothes and textiles has become a major issue when it comes to saving the environment. Donating clothes to thrift stores is a great

way to get old clothes into new homes. Unfortunately, only about 10 percent of the clothes donated makes it onto the racks in-store. So using companies that specialize in used clothing, such as For Days, is a better way to make sure old clothes are going to be used.

For Days sells a “Take Back Bag” that will be shipped to the customers house where they will fill the bag with old clothes that may have stains, rips, or items that would not be sold in a thrift store. The company then takes the bag of old clothes and makes it into new items varying from house insulation to cleaning materials.

For Days states on their website that 95 percent of trashed clothes could be recycled and made into new materials. It also says that the average person in the U.S. will throw away around 81 pounds of clothing each year. There are many ways that Americans can step up to

“The average person in the U.S. will throw away around 81 pounds of clothing each year.”

- For Days

the plate and help the environment, but much of the progress we hope to achieve depends on big companies and the government remaining involved and active in the fight against climate change.

Henry Haggard Sings to the Sea

Ellie Grace Robinson
Staff Writer

Music is enjoyed by roughly 93 percent of the US, according to a Nielsen's Music Study. It's easy to listen to, but much more difficult to create. Henry Haggard, a senior at DSF, has been a lyricist since middle school. Aside from creating lyrics, he also records his own songs and posts his music on many major streaming networks. His first album, "Songs of the Sea," is out now.

Henry considers his album predominantly folk, which is his favorite genre. However, "there are definitely some rock and indie elements to it, but since it's just mostly me and an acoustic guitar; it's primarily folk music," said Henry. His musical inspirations are John Prine and Justin Townes Earle, both "really good folk singers and musicians [that] write really good music," he said.

Freshman year, Henry was part of a band with Lola Mühlenfeld and Logan Parrish. Lola, a fellow senior at Freeman, is a featured vocalist on "Songs of the Sea." Lola said, "Junior year we did a [musical] project together for AP US History ... and we've kind of been working together all throughout school, so he [said], 'I know you record stuff and we [work] well together ... Can you help me with vocals?'" She agreed, and the rest is history.

Henry has performed two official concerts, both at the Lewis Ginter Recreation Association in Richmond. Mr. Durrett, one of Henry's former English teachers at Freeman, attended one of these concerts. "It was a really, really, really good show from a bunch of different standpoints,"



Henry's album, "Songs of the Sea"

he said. Mr. Durrett is also a musician, and is currently in a band where he plays bass. He thoroughly enjoyed a cover that Henry performed of an original song by Bright Eyes. He thought Henry's version was unique. "It wasn't just singing melody and playing guitar. There was yelling and emotion, and it was just a very dramatic performance," he said.

Henry had a nice turnout at his concerts. According to Mr. Dur-

rett, around 50 to 75 people attended, many being other Mavericks. "I noticed Freeman people there," he said. "You can tell the people that were there really loved his music, but also really loved him as a person and an artist."

Mr. Durrett shared a tip for up-and-coming artists: to appreciate one's audience. "When the show was over, [Henry] was in the crowd, talking to everyone, and connecting with everyone;

the people that were around were all talking about him, the event, the night, and how wonderful it was," said Mr. Durrett. "His music is great. He's a super artist, but what elevates him beyond that is the person that he is and how that kind of comes out of him and you can feel it and sense it."

Lola believes songwriters should, "get down as many ideas as possible because even if it sounds like it's not gonna work,



Henry singing

you can always take something and use it for later." She also referenced Henry, encouraging others to "try and put yourself out there and find as many other artists that you want to play with as possible, because that's how I met Henry."

Despite enjoying creating and sharing his music, Henry doesn't see himself pursuing music as a future career. "I don't want to be forced to do something that right now I'm having fun doing," he said. "I like that it's something I can put my heart into and not have to worry about [it financially]."

However, if you are planning to go after a career as a practicing musician, consider Henry's advice — "Go for quantity over quality every time. If you're so worried about making sure that it's good stuff, you're not going to make any art," he said. "If you make a lot of stuff, some of it's going to be good and you can polish it, so don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good."

Check out Henry's album, "Songs of the Sea," on Spotify, iTunes, Amazon music, or YouTube Music.

All About Bob: The Happiest Staff Member at Freeman



Bob Daly, Freeman's Security Guard

Merrick Mock
Staff Writer

Every morning, Bob Daly, the security guard at Freeman, welcomes students with a friendly smile and warm-hearted "good morning." Bob started working here at Freeman last year, and since then has made a significant impact on the school community. Freeman is the first school Bob has been a security guard for, however, the job has certainly come easy, especially the socializing part.

Just based on Bob's accent, you can tell he's a New Yorker. He grew up with one brother, however, their dad sadly passed away when the two boys were younger. Since then, Bob has tried his best to make his father proud, mentioning that his father is definitely his biggest influence. Bob's oldest son moved to Richmond in 2019, and after visiting his son a few times, he made the move himself in 2022.

Bob enjoys that Freeman feels like "one big family," unlike other schools where students don't even know their security guard's name. You can always find him chatting with students in the hallway or parking lot. Leo Schulman, a student here at

Freeman said "Bob is always smiling, and when I talk to him, I can tell he genuinely cares about me."

However, something that Bob dislikes about Freeman is all

"Bob is always smiling, and when I talk to him, I can tell he genuinely cares about me."

- Leo Schulman

the fighting. Freeman hit a record high of fighting, with eight fights in one day, in December of 2021. However, this year there has been much less violence in the hallways of Freeman. On the bad days, the friendly faces of students and teachers around the school help Bob stay positive. Thanks to him, Freeman has felt much more comfortable and safe.

Every student here at Freeman knows that between 8:45-9 a.m. and 3:50-4:10 p.m., the parking lot is a dangerous place to be. Nevertheless, at the end of the day, Bob stands proudly at the jumbled exit, waving goodbye to each and every student. "The most interesting thing I have found

ROCK CLIMBING CLUB

WHAT IS IT?

Rock Climbing club is a great place for any all rock climbers! At meetings, members learn new rope techniques and watch climbing videos and movies. About 1-2x a month the club meets at peak experiences RVA to climb as a group and practice what they've learned.

Club President, Senior Catriona Flynn, said she started the club because "climbing is really expensive and I wanted to bring down the barrier to entry by teaching at school rather than having to pay for expensive lessons from climbing gyms."

The club Meets every Friday Morning in Room 160!
Check it out for a rocking good time!

in the parking lot is cars being left on," said Bob. As some cars have push-to-start buttons, many are left on during the school day, and Bob is tasked with figuring out who the cars belong to.

Principal Dr. Marshall is very fond of Bob. "Bob was a great addition to our staff last year. He has a very hard-working attitude and he does a lot for our school and students," said Dr. Marshall. "Our school is safer because of him." Bob is loved by the whole Freeman family.

Surprisingly, Bob hasn't had any previous jobs that include interacting with teenagers. Yet, he has excelled in his new role. Be-

fore working as a security guard at Freeman, Bob worked for the United States Postal Service (USPS) for thirty-seven years.

Bob is a pretty simple guy, with vanilla being his favorite flavor of ice cream. Something that brightens his day is a sunny sky with no clouds. His favorite food is chicken parm and his favorite color is green. He enjoys watching professional hockey and baseball, and, yep, you guessed it, his favorite teams are the New York Rangers and the New York Jets.

Some could say Bob's biggest accomplishment is finding the perfect job with people who adore him, however. Bob would

have to disagree. Bob said his greatest achievement was finding the perfect wife. He and his wife have three children: two sons and one daughter. In the future, the number one thing on his bucket list is to either win the lottery or a trip to Hawaii.

Bob is one of the many staff members at Freeman that makes a lasting impact on the students. Bob tries his best to make a connection with every student at Freeman either by saying hello, or smiling at them. Bob's reminders for kids in highschool are: "The days last forever, but the years fly by," as well as "give respect, get respect."

Damar Hamlin's Impact

Peter Kriebel
Sports Editor

We view NFL players as superheroes, invincible entertainers who routinely endure car-crash hits and spring up like it's nothing. So when Bills safety Damar Hamlin suffered cardiac arrest as a result of a seemingly ordinary tackle during the January 2 game against the Bengals, suddenly everyone watching the game saw their heroes as humans.

It's an unfortunate part of the game that every once in a while a player will get knocked down, stay down, and require a cart to scoop them off the field. In rare instances, an ambulance is needed to transport the player to a hospital. Freeman offensive lineman Alex Brann had to take an ambulance ride of his own after he broke his ankle last season on "the nastiest play" junior wide receiver Roddrey McWilliams said he's "ever seen in person."

But no matter how bad the injury looks, it seems every time the player gives a thumbs up or a report is issued shortly after that assures fans the player has "movement in all extremities." This is the green light for action to resume as if nothing happened. But when Bills trainers began administering CPR on the field, it became apparent this wasn't a typical situation.

The reaction of the players



PHOTO: PEOPLE

Damar standing on the sideline before a game

said it all. Some of the toughest men on the planet began to sob just seconds after warring with one another. Fortunately, Hamlin's heartbeat was restored on the field, which enabled him to remain neurologically intact and able to watch the Bills' divisional round playoff game in person two weeks later.

But just because the miracle-workers at the University of Cincinnati Medical Center were able to save Hamlin's life doesn't mean we should close the door on treating athletes like human beings. I recognize that the pros are paid handsomely, and high schoolers play out of love of the game, and every player at every level knows the risks involved. But regardless of motivation, these players are putting their bodies at risk for fans' entertainment — which can't go unrecognized.

Roddrey McWilliams knows

what it's like to weigh his passion for the game against the danger the sport poses. While he's able to suspend any fear of injury each week, his mom has a harder time. "My mom's the one who's really scared," said Roddrey. "She gets everyone to pray for me before every game so I won't get hurt."

Roddrey missed a game last season with a concussion, so he knows how frustrating it is to be sidelined with an injury. "If a player gets hurt, and they decide not to play through the injury, while those injuries can be really serious — the fans think they should [play]," he said.

A player's decision whether to play through injury is one that's lost on some fans. We commend athletes for toughing it out and playing when they're hurt, praising them as warriors. This glorification of athletes' abandonment of their

long-term health is how we get situations like Robert Griffin III's 2013 ACL tear, or Tua Tagovailoa's back-to-back concussions earlier this season.

It seems some fans are fi-

nally recognizing that players' health and wellbeing is more important than their fantasy teams. But it's a shame it took a player nearly dying on the field to open their eyes.

SAVE THE DATE



MARCH 25th, 2023

9:00 AM

5K and Fun Run

Benefiting the Athletes at Freeman High School

Ready to Sign Up??



DSF Gymnastics Team: Tiny but Mighty

Afton Hessian
Staff Writer

The DSF gymnastics team may look normal at first glance, but they have one quality that sets them apart: their team size. With only nine members, their self-described 'tiny team' competes against schools in the Henrico area in weekly meets.

The decision to call themselves a tiny team was a mutual one. "It was a group decision," said junior Eva Hodges. "The team used to be really big, but as more people have graduated, it's gotten smaller, so the name is a special circumstance of this year."

There are complications with having a smaller team. "If one person is out, then everyone has to compete in every event, which is a lot," said senior Alka Link.

Additionally, "there's a lot more pressure to be better because there's no backup option," said senior Jordanna Silverman.

At the heart of the team is Coach Kelly, who has been coaching gymnastics for 42 years, 27 of which have been at DSF. "I did gymnastics when I was in middle school, high school, and college, so I wanted to keep on with the sport, and coaching is the best way," she said. "I started off in Chesterfield but [the county] got rid of gymnastics so I came to Freeman, and I've been here ever since."

Throughout decades of gymnastics at Freeman, the tenacity of the gymnasts has not faded. "All of the teams that I've coached at Freeman have always had the sweetest, most hard-working girls," said Coach Kelly. "The team this year has extremely driven, talented girls."



PHOTO: COACH KELLY

Coach Kelly poses for a picture with her team

Alka cited Coach Kelly's recruitment style as a reason for her initial involvement in the gymnastics team. "Coach Kelly would come to the gymnastics meets in middle school to scope out who was coming to Freeman and she was always extremely nice," said Alka.

High school gymnastics' scoring differs from USA Gymnastics (USAG). "In high school gymnastics, we can pick the skills we do and every skill has a value, but in USAG there are levels so the routine you do is predetermined," said Eva. "Certain skills are only worth so much so, for example, my vault's starting value is a nine instead of a 10, and I get deductions off of the starting value."

USAG's fundamental differences are not a hindrance to the enjoyment of the sport for many members of the team. "USAG is very individual, but in high school there's a lot of focus on the team element which is really fun because we can win as a team together,"

said sophomore Abby Johnson.

Because seniors comprise half of the team, there are plans to recruit more rising freshmen in the coming years. "I know there are

a lot of eighth graders at Tuckahoe Middle that want to compete, so they will hopefully [join] the team next year," said Alka.

The team strives to constantly

improve their scores and maintain the well-being of the members. "Since there's no girls to spare, we try to stay healthy to improve the team score each meet," said Coach Kelly.

Though the seniors are the captains of the team, the relationships between teammates are not strictly hierarchical. "The seniors have done a great job of taking in the freshmen and sophomores," said sophomore Abby Jordan. "Jordanna and I will go out to eat before meets and it's a positive community."

Above all is the relationship between teammates. "The most fun part about the team is how close we are," said Alka. "Just being together is always fun because we just hang out and laugh without any stress."

A similar sentiment was shared by Jordanna. "I love all of my teammates, and it's just so fun to get to spend so much time with them," she said.

WINTER SPORTS CAPTAINS

GIRLS BASKETBALL



Left-Right: Ella Davis, Meredith Stoneham, Genevieve Travers

BOYS BASKETBALL



Marshall Dip, PJ Moore

GYMNASTICS



Left-Right: Jordanna Silverman, Alka Link, Lauren Mielke

WRESTLING



Left-Right: Luke Liberatore, Braden Sweeney, Reid Garnett

SWIMMING



Left-Right: Griffin Belding, Will Kurz, Nicolas Chesup, Cat White, Lillie Deaton Connor, Morgan Strugeon

WINTER TRACK



Charlotte Gardner (left) Avery Edmonson (Right)



PHOTO: COACH KELLY

The team poses together

Ukrainian Ballerina Dances Across the Globe

Lillie Deaton Connor
Features Editor

Over 5,000 miles from home, Kristina Kadashevych, a 33 year old Ukrainian ballerina appeared in the roles of both the Sugar Plum Fairy and the Snow Queen in the Richmond Ballet's annual rendition of the 'Nutcracker'.

Born in Ukraine, Kristina began her ballet training at the Kharkiv Ballet School in 1998. After graduating from the Kharkiv College of Culture, she joined Kharkiv National Opera and Ballet Theatre in Ukraine, dancing with the company for 13 years as a soloist and principal. She performed as lead roles in classic ballets such as Giselle, The Nutcracker, Swan Lake, and Cinderella.

"It was too dangerous to stay."
- Kristina Kadashevych

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Kristina, her three-year-old son, and her parents were forced to flee their home city of Kharkiv in the beginning of March 2022. "It was too dangerous to stay, so we moved to [the] western part of Ukraine where my family is staying now," said Kristina.

Joining the Kyiv City Ballet as a guest principal dancer, Kristina was set to travel with the company to Paris for a planned two-week tour; however, because of Russia's invasion, the dancers were temporarily stranded. Despite this setback, months later, the Kyiv City Ballet performed for sold-out crowds in Paris and all around Europe. And in September, Kyiv City Ballet embarked on a U.S. tour that included a stop in Suffolk, Virginia.

Dancing throughout this difficult time has been an outlet for Kristina in the midst of the ongoing trou-



PHOTO: Richmond Times Dispatch

Kadashevych performing with the Richmond Ballet

bles in Ukraine. "Rehearsing and dancing on stage helps to forget for a minute about all the horrible things that happen. And it's also my work, the way to support my family and friends," said Kristina.

Because the Richmond Ballet was missing a member due to maternity leave, Igor Antonov, artistic associate with the company and director of Richmond Ballet II, reached out to Kristina to temporarily join the ballet company. "We have a dancer on maternity leave and as soon as I knew she was going to be out this winter, I started thinking about a temporary replacement," said Artistic Director of the Richmond Ballet, Stoner Winseltt. "The mission of

Richmond Ballet is to awaken, uplift, and unite human spirits through the power of dance, and I thought that bringing a ballerina here who is unable to dance currently in her home country would be another way that our organization could further this mission."

During her time with the ballet, Kristina has stayed with various members of the Richmond Ballet, exploring and enjoying her time here. "I [have] met a lot of incredibly nice people with big hearts," she said. "All the teachers and dancers surrounded me with care and help, and they are all great dancers as well."

While the ballerina has spent the majority of her time in the stu-

"The whole performance for the sugar plum fairy and the snow queen is so elegant."

-Ann Haden Payne

dio practicing and training, she made time to stroll around Richmond. "I had time to walk around this beautiful city, visited VMFA, and traveled to the countryside with my friends," said Kristina.

Having danced in 'The Nutcracker' countless times before, Kristina Kadashevych has plenty

of experience with the show, but nothing quite like the Richmond Ballet's version. "I had danced before in this ballet many times, but the Richmond Ballet production of Nutcracker was absolutely new for me," said Kristina.

Freeman senior Ann Haden Payne has made a tradition of going to the Nutcracker every year. "The whole performance for the sugar plum fairy and snow queen is so elegant and she's such a good dancer. I also love the bears in the bright red heels that do the splits, so iconic," said Ann Haden.

While Kristina will be taking her leave in February, be sure to check her out in "Firebird with Serenade" from Feb. 17-19 located at the Dominion Energy Center.

Freeman's Booster Club Boosts DSF Athletics

Lizzie Herod
Staff Writer

Thanks to The Booster Club's help, Freeman athletic teams have both equipment and much-needed support. The Booster Club is a volunteer organization designed to support, recognize, and enhance all of the athletic programs and facilities at DSF. The club works closely with Vance Harmon, Freeman's activities director, to provide financial and volunteer support to repair, replace, and enhance all athletic equipment and facilities that are not budgeted by Henrico County.

The Booster Club aims to benefit all athletes here at Freeman. It "focuses on providing the best available resources for each team and coaching staff in order for our student athletes to perform at the highest level," said Tad Davis, the president of the club. "This comes in a variety of ways, including specific team training and equipment needs and uniforms, as well as field and facility maintenance and upgrades."

With the help of the committee and sponsors, the Booster Club has the ability to host events to raise money for Freeman sports. "The parents are the key volunteers that drive our fundraising efforts, our communication with each team and the coaching staff," said Davis. They also "[play] an organizational role that provides the

"The parents are the key volunteers that drive our fundraising efforts."

-Tad Davis

necessary structure for the Booster Club to address specific athletic department and athletic team needs in a timely manner," he said.

Fundraising efforts provide financial support for both the Booster Club and to specific teams based on their participation. "One of our long-standing fundraisers is the 'Maverick Miles 5K and 1 Mile Fun Run' that takes place on Saturday, March 25," said Davis. "Many of the teams also do



PHOTO: Bill McClure

Freeman's baseball team huddles up

their own fundraisers that allow them to put funds into the individual team budgets that are, in turn, managed by the Booster Club."

If you have gone to any sports game at Freeman, you have heard of the 'booster pass' which offers admission into all home games. With the new Gofan app, booster passes can now be used virtually. "We are fortunate that another of our key volunteers on the Booster Club, Kathryn Shourds, worked tirelessly on this project throughout 2022 in preparation for this transition," said Davis. "Kathryn has spearheaded our Booster Club Pass program for years and her input was a key reason the move to Gofan has been successful."

The Booster Club has many goals and plans for upcoming seasons. It is constantly evaluating various team needs and seeking improvements. In the coming months, they will be addressing uniform replacement for certain teams and working with the ac-

tivities director to address facility issues. This to-do list includes painting projects in the main gym and upgrading equipment for the concession stand. The Booster Club will also continue to look at potential fundraising event opportunities. "We would also like to expand the scholarships that we currently award our student athletes at the end of each school year," said Davis.

Without the Booster Club and its parent volunteers, the athletic equipment here at Freeman would be inefficient. One of the current equipment solutions that the Booster Club just approved was the purchase of two goals for Freeman's boys and girls lacrosse teams. "Because the county owns the school property, club and recreational teams use Freeman equipment throughout the year, which creates an enormous amount of wear and tear on the current goals ... this has led to [various] in-game repair issues

over the last two seasons," said Davis. "With the direction of two Booster Club committee members, Jackie Moore and Cheryl Escobar, and the Activities Director, Vance Harmon, we identified the right type of high-performance goals, determined how they will be used, and how they will be stored, in order to protect them long term." These new lacrosse goals will be here just in time for the spring season, all because of the Booster Club's support.

As demands arise, the club receives many contributions that help them support the various teams and facilities. "Individu-

"We would also like to expand the scholarships that we currently award our student athletes."

-Tad Davis

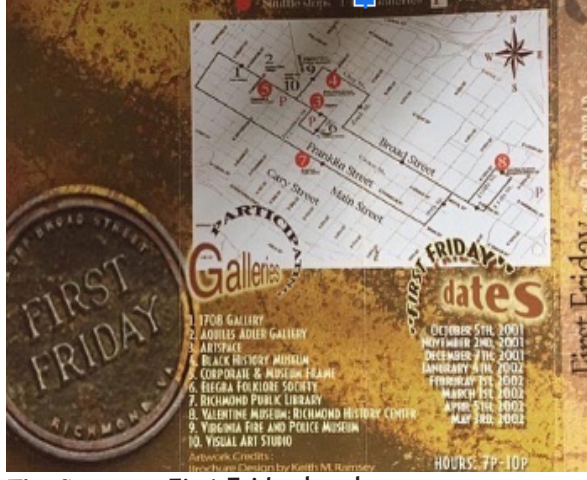
als and companies can become sponsors at various levels, which include areas like the scoreboard sponsors on the main field, signage sponsors that you see on the tennis courts, and program sponsors for the football season," said Davis. "Individuals and companies can also become sponsors for events like the 'Maverick Miles.'" Fans can purchase DSF Spirit Wear, which is another area managed by several key volunteers, including Booster Club committee member Alfreda Beach.

With so many expenses to take care of and organize, the club's treasurer, Brian Aker, "plays a vital role in the financial management of all Booster Club funds, including cash flow, distribution, allocation, and expense payment," said Davis. The Freeman Athletics Booster Club is a crucial resource for the school's athletic department and continues to provide support in order to help athletes do what they love.

First Fridays in RVA



PHOTO: @rvafirstfridays Instagram



The first ever First Friday brochure

Lorelei Kelley
Staff Writer

Growing up in the city of Richmond is synonymous with being surrounded by art of all different kinds and access to world-renowned museums like the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) and historical sites that cannot be found anywhere else. First Fridays, which started over 20 years ago, highlight the small businesses in Richmond along Broad Street and are open to anyone and everyone. Elaine Neous, a self-proclaimed “small business hype woman” said “one of the best ways to connect the community to local artists,” as well as being “a great way to explore your own city, and support local artists.” Another important aspect of First Fridays is that they try to incorporate a diverse array of artists from different backgrounds and walks of life. “They’re really showcasing local artists but they’re talking globally or showcasing global work and all different kinds of cultures’ art as well,” said Elaine. “They really try to expose you to something new.” Over the past few decades, downtown Richmond has been working to rebuild itself, and “First Fridays are a big piece of downtown finding its identity again,” said Elaine. “[I] really encourage people to go down-

town, take part in First Fridays, and connect themselves to the art scene.” First Fridays try to promote the diversity in Richmond through its local artists because, “art brings people together and most importantly it brings people that probably wouldn’t talk otherwise or want to hang out together,” said Elaine. These events bring the community together and give them a common connection to spark conversation, start friendships, and inspire further exploration. While First Friday is located in downtown Richmond, Todd Hale, a Class of 1992 Freeman graduate and owner of the gallery Antennae, encourages people from all across the Greater Richmond area to come and explore the city because he said that “it’s like a whole new world.” Mr. Hale started doing First Fridays in 2003 and has had openings, bands, and other artists in his studio. To Mr. Hale, First Fridays are “like a great melting pot of Richmond,” where “people from all walks of life and all backgrounds come together under the umbrella of art.” Another local artist, Anne Hart Chay, has been participating in First Fridays since it began and was one of the first ten shops to be a part of the event. In her 22 years with First Fridays, Anne has served on the Art District Task Force, helped create the First Friday Artwalk, and was one of the people who helped brainstorm the Culinary

Festival in Richmond. Anne continues to do her part in the “revitalization of downtown” by holding over 15 art shows per year where “[she] never charges a fee for artists to display their art and has never turned an artist away,” she said. When she first began her studio, Anne decided to focus on local art and artists and has never strayed away from supporting local artists right here in Richmond. “I’ve got a very diverse type of work and very culturally diverse artists,” said Anne. “I try to do as much as I can, I try to do as much as I can with what I have.” Due to the pandemic, First Fridays took a big hit in attendance, funding, and the ability to host the event. In recent months, the leading artists who take part in First Fridays have banded together to help get this incredible event back on its feet. A popular opinion among both artists and attendees was that live musicians should be brought back to make the experience more enjoyable for all. The most recent First Friday, “Something Indie Water”, featured many local artists, and the upcoming February event is set to do the same. So, if you enjoy live music, art of all kinds, and delicious food, First Fridays are for you as a way to experience what Todd Hale called “one of the most fun things to do in Richmond.”

Cobra Burger Strikes in Church Hill



PHOTO: Cobra Burger Instagram

Anna Meiller
Staff Writer

When seeking a dining experience at a punk rock restaurant with a fresh and funky air, look no further than Cobra Burger. A locally owned burger joint in the Church Hill neighborhood, Cobra Burger produces an array of smash burgers. Upon arrival at this burger restaurant, a line from the register greeted me and my party. As we were newcomers to Cobra Burger, we wondered why this small restaurant was receiving so much attention. Little did we know, we were about to uncover the wonders of Cobra Burger and, more importantly, the Cobra Sauce. When you step into Cobra Burger, a candelabra and noises of heavy metal rock greet you at the door. By using elements of a diner with purple, black, and gold theming, Adam Musselman and the other owners of Cobra Burger created what they call a “Dracula burger shop.” They lined the walls with “black sparkly cushions,” and an enormous Cobra Burger logo covers the back wall. My dinner mates and I ordered several burgers: the Cobra Burger, ACAB (all cheese, all bacon), Marky Parky, Ohio Burger, and Clawdette. The burgers are super thin with crispy edges, so customers can layer up and get two or four. They serve each of their burgers in a soft potato bun with a

variety of toppings, including cobra dills (pickles), iceberg lettuce, bacon, and pickled red onion, to name a few. All of their sauces pair incredibly well with the burger, and all their flavors come through without being overpowering. Their fries come unseasoned or with salt and vinegar seasoning. Even though I am not a fan of salt and vinegar, the rest of my party raved about them. You can tell the fries are hand-cut and fresh and are the perfect warm addition to their burgers. They come with the same delectable spicy sauce appearing on the Cobra Burger: Cobra Sauce. If you want to save money, I recommend ordering one or two large fries to share with your party. Co-owner, Adam Musselman, states that they “source [their] meat locally” and “work with a small farm.” In addition, they “grind [their] beef fresh in-house every day.” When chewing down on one of their burgers, their high-quality beef elevates the food and provides the consumer with a quality dining experience. In addition, they make all of their pickles and sauces in-house. Adam said a key aspect of the restaurant is making everything “by scratch, and as ethically as [they] can.” Cobra Burger satisfied us with their meals. Everything tasted fresh, and we downed our food in less than 5 minutes. The Cobra Sauce added an appreciated spice to the burger and tasted like a combination of mayonnaise, barbecue sauce, and hot sauce. A member of my party thought their patty was a little too smashed, but I would say the crispiness is preference based. Adam finds one of the most impressive achievements of Cobra Burger to be “the community that has come up around it.” They have been able to do multiple fundraisers and they always “[make] sure [they] are as involved as [they] can be.” When it comes to being a “place for everyone” Cobra Burger delivers.

Saturdays are for Cars & Coffee



PHOTO: Cars & Coffee website

Farah Abdullah
Copy Editor

Every two weeks, members from all over the community gather at Regency Mall on Saturday mornings from 8-10 a.m. for Cars & Coffee Richmond (C&CR). The car meet event is largely what it sounds like — car enthusiasts showing off their best rides while enjoying coffee and breakfast from vendors including, but not limited to, Chick-Fil-

A, Richmond Roast Coffee Bar, and McCormack’s Whiskey Grill. Cars & Coffee has been a worldwide event for several years, but it was not until 2011 that it was hosted in Richmond, VA. The event started off with 15 to 20 car enthusiasts, but today, according to the C&CR website, each meet has an average of “110 cars on show and has gathered 135+ cars from various classes of cars” including cars like “the McLaren MP4-12C, Porsche GT, Ferrari Scuderia, and Lamborghini’s flagship, the Aventador.”

Former James River High School student Kenny Holder is one of the four founders of C&CR. “We started [C&C] here because we had ... a car community here in Richmond,” said Kenny. “When we found out about it in Northern Virginia, where it was a really big and very popular event [...], we wanted to see if there was [potential] in Richmond just like up there.” In addition to having a larger car meet event, Kenny emphasized that C&CR allows for the Richmond community to “have a place where we can come hang

out, and ultimately build that bridge between the community around us with our local auto community.” People from all ages and backgrounds are welcome to attend Cars and Coffee. “[One] of the most interesting things you see [here] is two people talking to each other that you’d never expect to be talking,” said Kenny. “People are just that nice out here.” Kenny has noticed “people having so many conversations that it almost sounds like we’re indoors,” he said. “You hear kids chatting, talking in the background, and you hear just all the various people just enjoying life, enjoying cars.” Freeman senior Grant Brockenbrough is a regular attendee of Cars and Coffee. He started going in order to connect his passion for photography with cars. “I started going [in] January 2021,” said Grant. “I had been doing photography for a while, and I wanted to kind of combine that with cars and just give it a shot and meet some people.” Since 2021, Grant has gotten many photography opportunities through the car community. “Through [C&CR], I’ve had a lot more connections,” said Grant. “[For example] my friend John kind of manages

his friend’s collection and we took pictures of his BMW.” The pictures Grant and John took were then reposted by the official BMW Instagram. Overall, Grant has noticed that C&CR has allowed him to find “other photographer friends” and “a group that’s formed with different people.” Bridger Giddings is another Freeman senior that attends C&CR. “I started going to cars and coffee right before COVID hit [because] I heard about it from my two older brothers along with my friend Grant,” said Bridger. “I go because I love everything about cars ... working on them, driving them, and just watching them drive.” Bridger advises those who “enjoy looking at cool cars or want to get into the car community” to “definitely bring some friends and come to a meet.” Kenny encourages those interested to attend Cars and Coffee Richmond. “The best thing to do is just come out here and just walk around and see how many smiles are out here,” he said. “If you’re intimidated, you gotta take that first step of being uncomfortable and take that step into a world where you can meet other people who have the same passion as you.”



Cat White
Online Editor-in-Chief & Opinions Editor

Think of a choose your own adventure book, the ones that we all loved. Now imagine that ... but with cheese. What you are thinking of is a charcuterie board, the food craze currently taking over everyone’s Instagram explore pages. A charcuterie board is typically an appetizer, served on a wooden board or slab which is filled to the brim with all your favorite finger foods. This assortment of meats, cheeses, crackers, olives, nuts, and so much more has become a staple for gatherings of all kinds. This recent food trend has been all over social media, but it originated in the 1400s in France. Though it began as simply meat, over time breads, cheeses, fruits, and vegetables joined the boards as accompa-

iments to the meats, culminating in the charcuterie board we are familiar with today. Senior Emily Pinotti, an avid supporter of charcuterie boards, speaks to the importance of an appealing board. “My favorite thing to add are pickles because they add a pop of color it did not have before,” said Emily. She cites sources like Pinterest and TikTok as her main sources of inspiration but “you can’t really plan them and they all end up coming out differently,” she said. If you find yourself unsure about the concept of a board, a great place to start for everything charcuterie would be RVA Cheese Girl. Emmie Lewis is a graduate of the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Business and the owner of RVA Cheese Girl, a local business specializing in the creation of the perfect charcuterie board. “I had been building cheese and charcuterie boards for my friends and family as we attended wineries and breweries over the years,” said Emmie. “Finally, a friend asked me, ‘why don’t you sell these?’” The business makes and sells everything from grazing tables to charcuterie cones to bagel boards. “I love the idea that charcuterie boards can bring a group of people together,” said Emmie. “Whether you’re meeting new people at a friend’s baby shower, hanging out with family, or simply enjoying a girl’s night at home, this unique appetizer has a way of sparking guest’s conversation and taste buds.” RVA Cheese Girl starts their boards with “a variety of domestically sourced cheese and charcuterie and pairs it with accouterments like local honey, local jam, flavorful mustard, fruits, veggies and more.” A few of Emmie’s favorite additions include “pickled mustard seeds, cornichons, jalapeno mustard, flavored honey and chocolate.” To find out more about her business visit her instagram, @rvacheesegirl or website www.rvacheesegirl.com With the large variety of food options that are being displayed on these boards comes the responsibility of mixing and matching to discover the perfect charcuterie bite. The perfect charcuterie bite takes craftsmanship. It takes a connoisseur of flavors and textures. It’s finding that impeccable combination made out of, in theory, simple ingredients. Meat + cheese + crunch + acid + sweet that adds up to so much more than one might expect.

ARTIST OF THE MONTH

RACHEL STANTON

What she does:
Rachel is a home-based nail tech who does acrylic nails and gel polish manicures. She is also an apprentice at Atir Natural Nail Salon in Short Pump, where she does all-natural manicures and pedicures.

Why She Started:
Rachel started doing nails mainly because she wanted to have her own nails done. It quickly became a creative outlet and then a productive hobby and small business.

What she likes about nail art:
She loves that doing nails gives her the opportunity to be creative. “The canvases may be small, but the possibilities are endless! I love all things long nails, bright colors, and blooming gel!” said Rachel.



To book an appointment, Follow Rachel on Instagram [@rachelsnailtable](https://www.instagram.com/rachelsnailtable)

Some of Rachels Nail Designs!



NBA Shakeup: Trades Made, Records Broken

Adair Reid
Editor-in-Chief



LeBron James Breaks Scoring Record

On Feb. 7, LeBron James broke Kareem Abdul-Jabbar's nearly 39-year scoring record of 38,387 points in the third quarter of a game against the Oklahoma City Thunder. James has achieved a feat even legends like Michael Jordan and Kobe Bryant have come up short for.



Kyrie Irving Traded to Dallas Mavericks

In an unexpected move, Kyrie Irving was traded to the Mavericks from the Brooklyn Nets for three future draft picks and two current players. Public opinion of the trade is skeptical because of Irving's often erratic behavior off the court.



Kevin Durant Traded to Phoenix Suns

Another trade from the Brooklyn Nets, Durant joins Devin Booker, Chris Paul, and Deandre Ayton in Phoenix. The move is widely viewed as a boost for the Suns, who could contend for a championship title with the newly-formed quartet.



Los Angeles Lakers Try Out Roster Makeover

Following a 25-30 record, the Lakers sought to change up their roster midway through the season by adding six players to their roster and acquiring two second-round future draft picks. The six additions are D'Angelo Russell, Rui Hachimura, Mo Bamba, Malik Beasley, Jarred Vanderbilt, and Davon Reed.

Content by Afion Hessian, Katie Hall, Poppy Friske, Henry Haggard, and Adair Reid.

Hermès Wins NFT Trademark Lawsuit

Celia Acey
Staff Writer

On Feb. 8, luxury fashion brand, Hermès, won a trademark lawsuit after suing artist, Mason Rothschild, over the NFT project he called "MetaBirkins". The trial was the first to examine intellectual property transgressions by NFTs, according to Bloomberg Law.

The decision came after a jury of nine found the 28 year-old artist's colorful faux-fur Birken inspired bags to be infringement on the luxury company's trademark and deceitful toward potential Hermès customers. It was decided that the MetaBirkins were more closely related to commodities rather than artwork, therefore subject to tight trademark laws, allowing the verdict to come to a close in Hermès's favor.

This case comes with a landmark decision after longtime debate whether or not NFTs are an art protected under the First Amendment as free speech. This decision has set a new precedent as more trademark lawsuits begin to transpire, continuing to test the strength of trademark rights.

Following the trial, one of Rothschild's attorneys spoke out saying, "We will appeal. We will take every legal avenue that we have. It's a great day for big, luxury brands and a terrible day for artists and the First Amendment."



PHOTO: Mason Rothschild

A MetaBirkin NFT

Bill Proposed to Lower Voting Age to 16



PHOTO: Flickr

Virginia state capitol building

Henry Haggard
News Editor

A bill was proposed in the Virginia General Assembly to lower the voting age for local elections from 18 to 16 years old. The proposal, submitted by Delegate Sam Rasoul (D-Roanoke), must pass through the Virginia House of Delegates and State Senate before being sent to voters in a referendum. If the majority of voters approve, then the state constitution will be amended to lower the voting age.

Many Freeman students could be affected by this amendment if it passes, but it is unlikely that it will, as similar bills failed in 2019 and 2021.

However, considering the possibility, DSF staff have a range of opinions about the idea to lower the voting age.

Social studies teacher Ben Fabian believes in the importance of voting access. "I tend to be a fan of things that expand people's right to vote," he said. "Having the opportunity to choose the people who make laws for us is a bedrock American principle."

One of Mr. Fabian's arguments for lowering the voting age is that many 16 year olds have jobs, and taxes on income are "withheld from every paycheck in America," he said. Quoting the motto of the American Revolution, Mr. Fabian said that there should be "no taxation without representation." What this means is that "if you're going to tax people's income, they have the right to say what

you do with the money," he said.

Mr. Fabian said that lowering the voting age "would be a very controversial idea," in regards to the maturity levels of that age group. "[But] it's entirely possible that the reason that 16 year olds don't concern themselves with local issues is precisely because they're told [not to] worry about it," he said. Mr. Fabian suspects that lowering the voting age will increase civic participation. "Every time we've expanded the right to vote, we've seen a dramatic increase in participation," he said. School board representative and Freeman teacher Marcie Shea seems to disagree. "When I was running for office," Mrs. Shea said. "I found it both shocking and disappointing, just the volume of people who are registered to vote and don't regularly vote." In her mind, this is a question of "turning informed voters out [to vote]," she said, so she has "mixed feelings" about lowering the voting age.

Mrs. Shea "want[s] more people to be able to be part of the democratic process," she said. "[But] we also have to make sure that the people engaging in the democratic process truly understand the candidates, the issues, and ramifications." She believes that some 16 year olds have that knowledge and maturity, but many do not. "There are 16 and 17 year olds who are ... more knowledgeable than many adults," she said. "[But] the question there really is the average."

The average 16 and 17 year old is not informed enough, according to Mrs. Shea, because "students don't take government [class] until their senior year, so students who are 16 would not have had a government class explaining the nuts and bolts of how our democracy works," she said. These students, if the voting age is lowered, "would be relying on either eighth grade civics class, or just what they've heard," Mrs. Shea said.

If this voting age legislation passes, many 16 and 17 year olds will not get the chance to vote until they are already 18. "The resolution is only applicable to local elections," Mrs. Shea said in an email, and since "local elections will not occur again until 2027, anyone who turns 16 after Nov. 7, 2023 would not be able to vote in a local election until ... after they turn 18," she said. This basically means that "only half of 16 and 17 year olds would actually have expanded voting access," she said. Despite their differing views on lowering the voting age, Mrs. Shea and Mr. Fabian agree that "voting is a central part of our society," as Mrs. Shea said.

Mr. Fabian teaches many seniors who turn 18 before election day, and he "help[s] them get registered to vote," he said. "The minute that people are eligible to register to vote, they need to do it," Mr. Fabian said. "Voting is a principle part of civic participation in our country and everybody needs to vote as often as possible."

Rep. Ilhan Omar Ousted

Katie Hall
Staff Writer

On Feb. 2, House Republicans (GOP) expelled Congresswoman Ilhan Omar from the Foreign Affairs Committee in a 218-211 vote, sparking outcry from House Democrats. House Republicans claimed Omar was unfit to serve on the Foreign Affairs Committee due to previous comments she made that were deemed anti-Semitic by both Democrats and Republicans.

According to National Public Radio (NPR), "Omar, who [...] has faced anti-Muslim bigotry since taking office, told reporters last week that the move to remove her from the committee was 'purely parti-

san.' In [a][...] speech on the House floor [...] Omar said she is being targeted [...] as a Muslim immigrant from Africa."

Omar, a Democrat, represents Minnesota's Fifth District. When she was sworn into office in 2019, Rep. Omar became one of the first Muslim women and the first African refugee to serve as a member of Congress.

Omar is also a member of "The Squad" alongside Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (NY), Rep. Ayanna Pressley (MA), and Rep. Rashida Tlaib (MI). This group emerged following former President Trump's targeted criticism of the four Democratic Congresswomen, all of whom are women of color. NPR reported "In 2019, then-President Donald Trump tweeted that Omar and her colleagues often



PHOTO: NPR

Rep. Ilhan Omar (D. Minnesota)

known as 'The Squad' should 'go back and help fix the totally broken and crime infested places from which they came.'"

Although Republicans cited Omar's commentary as the sole cause for her removal, Democrats illustrated alternative factors behind her ousting. In a speech on the House floor, Rep. Ocasio-Cortez said,

"This is about targeting women of color in the United States of America." According to The Hill, many Democrats equated the GOP's actions with political revenge, noting Republican promises to respond after Reps. Marjorie Taylor Greene (GA) and Paul Gosar (AZ) were stripped of their committee assignments in 2021.

Devastating Earthquakes Hit Turkey and Syria

Afton Hessian
Staff Writer



PHOTO: CNN

Kahramanmaraş, Turkey

being aid workers were obstructed by damaged or destroyed roadways. Additionally, electricity, and drinking water were not widely available for Turkish residents. In Kahramanmaraş, Turkey, displaced families were left to wonder about potential aid, as it had no discernable patterns of distribution.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan acknowledged the "shortcomings" that impeded the response to the quake, but criticism of the government's response and fading approval of the president comes just months before Erdo-

gan's journey to reelection in May.

The effects of the earthquake were felt across national borders, with thousands dead and injured in Syria and at least 298,000 Syrians forced to leave their homes. Aid to Syrian people was complicated due to their decade long civil war, though there were efforts taken by the European Union and the United Nations to provide resources and support for both the government-controlled and opposition areas of Syria. Though relief efforts were taken, according to the State Health Ministry and the White Helmets relief group, upwards of 3,000 people died in Syria.

The earthquake was so detrimental partially because of the poor infrastructure in Turkey. Following the 1999 İzmit earthquake, new building codes were enacted so that developers could not continue to build brittle structures. However, the new building codes had not been utilized as a majority of the structures in Turkish cities predate them. However, with extensive funding and public outreach, there is hope for safer buildings to be constructed in the future.

Chinese "Spy Balloon" Found in U.S.

Poppy Friske
Staff Writer

On Jan. 28, the North American Aerospace Defense Command detected a surveillance device suspected to be a "spy balloon" orchestrated by the Chinese government. From Alaska to the Carolinas, this mysterious technology fascinated the public and forced the U.S. military into a high alert.

While the device posed no threat to the safety of citizens, as it floated above the altitude of commercial air traffic, it added further tension on U.S. and Chinese diplomatic relations. The Pentagon tracked its path by collecting information from on-ground sites, ensuring that the device was unable to pick up the sensitive data beneath.

Officials say it lingered near missile sites in Montana on Feb. 1, prompting President Biden to initiate a plan to take the balloon down.

While the Federal Aviation Administration grounded flights in the Carolinas, namely Wilmington, Myrtle Beach,

and Charleston, the military mobilized its machinery. Their assets to eliminate the surveillance device included an F-22 stealth fighter, F-15s, and various tanker aircrafts. In a carefully executed procedure by the Langley Air Force Base in Virginia and Barnes Air National Guard Base in Massachusetts, the device was shot down on Feb. 4.

Plummeting from approximately 65,000 feet, the balloon was retrieved by divers from the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard in the Atlantic Ocean later that day. Its debris was taken in for examination by the FBI and counterintelligence authorities, who will analyze its surveillance capabilities to determine why it was launched to begin with.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry expressed extreme displeasure with the news of the device being shot down, persisting with their claim that it was merely a weather balloon strewn off-course. While it is still not confirmed if this was a fluke incident or intentional Chinese espionage, further investigation will determine how this incident will affect North America's political relations with China.