

Understanding Altercations at Freeman

Merrick Mock
News Editor

School fights have been occurring for decades. However, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, many schools across America have experienced an increase in physical violence. "It would be hard to deny COVID's impact on [physical altercations in schools]," said Freeman principal Dr. Marshall. "I think that in years to come we'll see if the increase was due to time away from school, mental health, stress, or collective trauma."

Often, fights occur as clustered incidents, with multiple altercations happening within the span of a few days. Each fight is usually followed by a cooling-off period before another conflict takes place. This year, "we've had about 25 students involved in physical altercations," said Dr. Marshall. Many of the students involved are freshmen and this is often due to the adjustment period where students



DSF walkie talkies

"tend to mature and [their] teenage brain develops," said Dr. Marshall.

Physical violence typically arises for a variety of reasons, social media being one of them. "Since kids are now able to hide behind a screen, they are capable of saying anything they want through social media, [which] caus[es] more and more fights at Freeman," said Officer Medina, Freeman's School Resource Officer (SRO).

Other roadblocks exist when it comes to properly handling the

aftermath of fights. According to Officer Medina, when school administrators try to trace the origins of a fight, it often leads to a dead end since many students refuse to expose their friends. Although some fights are spontaneous, many are premeditated. In many cases, students have prior knowledge about the time and place of these altercations so someone will be able to film the fight.

Consistent filming of fights poses its own problem. When fights

break out, many students try to get the best view with the intent of recording the fight. This student-made blockade makes it more difficult for administrators to get in to break up the fight. Many of these recordings ultimately get uploaded to social media. "Posting fights on social media is another violation," said Dr. Marshall. "People get significant consequences for just being a bystander".

According to assistant principal José Flórez, kids often choose to fight at school because it's a protected environment. Students know that altercations are typically broken up quickly, which reduces the likelihood of them sustaining serious injuries.

Many factors go into deciding the appropriate disciplinary consequences for students who engage in a fight. The consequences of fighting largely depend on the scenario. "We see a difference between someone who is defending themselves and someone who has assaulted someone," said Dr. Marshall. In addition, how a student

reacts when an administrator steps in also weighs into the decision.

Generally, fighting results in a suspension from school. Additionally, students and their families work with Freeman's team to work through what happened. "That can include restorative conversations with our counselors, work with the parents, [the] opportunity to keep up with their schoolwork," said Dr. Marshall. The administrators have to "make sure that there are strong consequences but also provide support," he said. "Because the goal is that it doesn't happen again."

The ultimate goal is to reinstate the student in their classes, however, "if it continues to happen, those students may find themselves in alternative placements, because their behavior just isn't tolerated."

Although fights are still an issue, the current number of fights has greatly decreased compared to last year. This is a result of efforts made by the Freeman faculty, the counseling team, as well as students — their work improves the learning environment at Freeman.

Narcan — Now Over the Counter

Afton Hessian
News Editor

Drug overdose deaths are the leading cause of injury-related deaths in the United States according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Over 100,000 people in the United States died of a drug overdose in 2022, and around half of these deaths were from opiates, which include prescription pain medications, fentanyl, and heroin. Naloxone is a medication that can quickly reverse the effects of an opiate overdose by binding to the same receptors in the brain that opioids bind to, blocking the opioid's effects and reversing the respiratory depression that causes overdoses. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved Naloxone, better known by its brand name Narcan, to be sold over-the-counter (OTC) by late summer 2023, becoming the first opioid treatment drug to do so.

In the past, Narcan was only available through a prescription or administered by medical professionals. However, in some

countries, including the United States, Narcan is now available OTC without a prescription at pharmacies, convenience stores, supermarkets, and online retailers in the form of a four-milligram nasal spray. The approval makes Narcan more accessible to those who need it, or to those who buy it in the event of an emergency. Reclassifying Narcan as OTC is seen as a way to help combat the opioid epidemic by increasing access to a potentially life-saving medication, as well as reducing the stigma associated with buying a drug that can reverse an overdose.

According to a CDC study, in 2021, bystanders were present at about 46 percent of fatal overdoses so Narcan has the potential to significantly decrease deaths if it is carried by the populace. "I will definitely buy Narcan this summer and I will encourage my friends and family to do the same," said junior Lennon Hill. "It's better to have it and not need it than to need it and not have it."

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) recommends that Naloxone should be given when an overdose is suspected, as there is no evidence of adverse ef-



PHOTO: Reuters

Narcan's logo

fects of the drug even if a person has no opiates in their body. Effects of Narcan only last 30 to 90 minutes, so emergency responders should still be called immediately according to the NIDA.

"There's just no downside to [Narcan]," said government and sociology teacher Mr. Lewis. "If you give somebody Narcan that's not overdosing it literally does nothing, but if they are [overdosing], it can save their life."

In light of the FDA approval, some have wondered about initiatives that could be started to increase awareness about the drug and how to use it. "I think there

should be a program run by the school that tells students about what Narcan does and provides training so that students know how and when to use it," said Lennon. Training programs currently exist outside of school with the Henrico Area Mental Health & Developmental Services, which offer free, virtual training on how to administer Naloxone.

Narcan will be available in local pharmacies, but will likely cost upwards of \$40 according to health economists. The price has raised concerns about the accessibility of the drug, as people who are in need of it will face an

economic barrier to obtaining Narcan. "I think the cost will be a barrier for people that need it," said Mr. Lewis. "My hope is that now that it is approved for over-the-counter use, it'll be easier for free clinics and harm reduction organizations to get a hold of."

Although price remains a concern, organizations are already working to remedy this issue. In a statement released in March, the National Harm Reduction Coalition said, "While we welcome naloxone in any form being accessible over-the-counter, we're echoing the need for naloxone to be free and accessible for all."

Heart and Soul of Freeman's Theater Department Retires



PHOTO: Ava Flounroy

A headshot of Mrs. Spears from her time as an actress

Ava Flounroy
Graphics Editor

Freeman's theater department will never be the same after this year. Mrs. Spears has been teaching at Freeman for 25 years and has always brought light to both

the school and her students. With her retirement approaching at the end of this school year, it is important to remember some of her most impressive achievements.

Anyone who has walked the halls at Freeman has seen posters for the spring musicals and fall plays of the past and present, all directed by Mrs. Spears herself. Each

year, she puts in countless hours to ensure the shows are nothing less than perfect. Nothing compares to the dedication that Mrs. Spears has for her cast and crew.

Prior to teaching at Freeman, Mrs. Spears studied acting and dance in New York and produced original plays in Los Angeles, CA. After this already impressive career, Mrs. Spears decided to teach at Freeman and her contributions mean the world to students around the building.

The creativity that Mrs. Spears allows her students to explore is appreciated by many. "She lets us get creative with [projects]," said Dylan Becker, a junior in Mrs. Spears' Stagecraft class. "She does not have a strict rubric of the exact things you need to do which I don't get in my other classes."

The hard work that Mrs. Spears has put into the theater department at Freeman will be greatly missed. Lola Muhlenfeld, a senior at Freeman, often works alongside Mrs. Spears in creating the sets for the plays and has played a variety of roles over the years. "Mrs. Spears has taught me how much a director, especially a high school director, puts all their heart and soul into making something special for their kids," she said.

"It's a genuine love for theater that makes me so happy to have had her as my teacher and director."

For the students who work with Mrs. Spears after school, the Broadway-quality expectations she has for her creations shine through. Eva Milby, a junior at Freeman, has been in many of Mrs. Spears' plays. "The biggest thing Mrs. Spears has taught me is the significance of communication," she said. "She accepts conversations openly about any concerns and always stands ready to assist in any way she could."

Mrs. Spears has a great love for the community she has created and brought together here at Freeman. "Once you establish a rapport with colleagues and students...and if it's working...why leave?" she said.

As an influential theater teacher, Mrs. Spears leaves her current students with some words of wisdom. "My admiration and best wishes for the future...I know they will be successful because I trained them to adapt and soldier on no matter what obstacles are thrown their way," she said.

Students will miss the presence of Mrs. Spears in the auditorium and the classroom. "I'm going to miss her passion the most of all because of her dedication

to students, actors, and crew," said Eva. "The true meaning of theater was present when Mrs. Spears was in the auditorium."

The passion that comes with drama can only be expressed in a certain way. "She is very sweet [and] she laughs along with our jokes and jokes with us," said Dylan. "She's kind to us and she brings a fun energy to her classes and shows."

The effort and time that Mrs. Spears spends over the course of the show should not be overlooked. "Spears is a great director and teacher," said Lola. "She's phenomenal at what she does, even if we don't give her enough credit for her work or the hours she puts into our shows."

Some of her current students want to share their words of admiration. "I want to thank her for accommodating all of the different jobs that I've wanted to do," said Dylan. "Your work does not go unnoticed by me or the rest of your students," said Lola. We appreciate everything you have done for us. Thank you."

"She has impacted all of us," said Eva. "She has taught me so much about hard work and the importance of community and I will never forget her sincerity."



Mav Musicians Tour the Music City

Katie Hall
Editor in Chief

In April, a combined group of Maverick musicians from both the band and choral departments traveled to Tennessee, where they donned cowboy hats and line-danced in the heart of country music: the city of Nashville.

With tours of the iconic Grand Ole Opry Theater and the Country Music Hall of Fame, the group received an immersive experience in the world of country music. During the trip, they took part in a music workshop at Vanderbilt University and had an opportunity to record some of their music. One afternoon, the group experienced an iconic facet of Nashville culture with a lunchtime outing to the Wildhorse Saloon where many of the students put their skills to the test with line-dancing lessons. "All of the kids from [Freeman] were down on the floor," said Freeman band director, Mr. Blankenship.

"I absolutely loved going line dancing as a group because we all got dressed up and danced for hours together," said Allison McCullough, a junior in show choir. "It was so much fun, and it was a really happy experience." While line dancing was a big hit, the group's final excursion on the trip was also a success. On their last day in Nashville, the group attended a Lady A concert at the Ryman Auditorium.



PHOTO: DSF Band Instagram

Members of the musical department touring the Grand Ole Opry

"As a country music fan, it was a lot of fun being able to go to such a historic concert venue and listen to one of my favorite country music groups with my friends," said junior Michael King, a tenor saxophone player in the band. "It was a perfect way to cap off a great trip," he said.

The Nashville excursion served as an encapsulation of the partner-

ship between the band and choral departments. Mr. Blankenship, and Mrs. Tuck, the choral director at Freeman, worked closely throughout the school year to ensure the success of the music department. "I love being able to show off the kids [and] their hard work," said Mr. Blankenship.

According to members of the department, their success stems from

a deep dedication across all areas of the music program. "We owe the success of [the] band and show choir to our respective directors," said sophomore Elaine Jacob, a member of Freeman's show choir. Between superb leadership and an impressive group of young musicians, it is no surprise that the Freeman music department had another outstanding competition season

for both the band and show choir. Michael recognized the diligence of his peers not just in competition, but in class time as well. "Every class period, we all put our best foot forward to produce beautiful-sounding music that we can all be proud of," he said.

In the show choir program, the same work ethic was evident. "Show choir worked endlessly to perfect our songs and choreography, and Shwazz worked tirelessly to make sure they sounded the absolute best they could," said Allison. "Together, our dedication took us really far."

Recently, the department coined a new term for the partnership between jazz band members and the show choir, calling the smash hit: "Shwazz". Since show choir performances rely on finite details, the incorporation of the jazz band posed a learning curve for the musicians. "It was a new experience for me...to combine our playing with their singing and dancing, but I absolutely loved it because of the sense of community that developed between the two groups as we progressed through the competition season," said Michael.

This year, the two groups have further strengthened the music community at the heart of the Freeman Family. "With competition season, traveling with the band, and [the] Nashville [trip], the entire department has just become so much closer," said Allison. "We all share a love for music, and it binds us together."

Flying Squirrels' Future Uncertain



PHOTO: Craig Smith

The Flying Squirrels home field, The Diamond

Celia Acey
Sports Editor

After years of deliberation, the City of Richmond has finalized a deal with a developer to rebuild The Diamond, home to the Richmond Flying Squirrels. The decision came after the release of new Major League Baseball (MLB) guidelines, forcing the new stadium to be built before 2025.

The \$2.4 billion project will be developed by RVA Diamond Partners. In addition to the ballpark this group will also be constructing a nearby neighborhood. Although the deal has been finalized, the city reported that the stadium would not be complete until 2026. The remaining question is whether or not the MLB will issue a deferral, which would allow the Squirrels to remain in Richmond.

In February, a letter from the MLB said, "We are unable to provide that deferral at this time as the Club has yet to provide (MLB) with (i) evidence of sufficient funding commitments to fund the construction of a new ballpark and (ii) finalized plans and a timeline for the construction of the new ballpark." The city will not start construction until a firm commitment is reached with the MLB, according to the resolution introduced last fall.

For many, the uncertain future of the Flying Squirrels is concerning. Dating back to the Richmond Braves, minor league baseball has always been an integral part of the Richmond community, and the Flying Squirrels had the highest total average attendance in all of Double-A baseball during the 2022 season. "Having a hometown professional sports team does a lot of good for the larger community, said Freeman baseball coach Mr. Moore. "Not only does it help enhance some regional revenue streams, but it gives the community a common team to root for each summer." Richmonders of all ages, have the opportunity to see young, upcoming stars at the Diamond before they make it to the "big leagues". "I recall going to watch Chipper Jones, Andruw Jones, Javy Lopez... and countless other future All-Stars and Hall of Famers play at the Diamond while I was growing up," said Mr. Moore. "These are memories I'll always cherish because we had professional baseball in Richmond."

Not only are Squirrels games an exciting source of entertainment for many, but they also promote the sport of baseball in the Richmond area. "I definitely believe that having a professional team like the Squirrels brings more popularity to the sport," said sophomore Riley Robinson. "As one of the only minor league teams in the area, it'll drive more kids to want to play baseball." For many young athletes, the ability to watch professional baseball is a source of encouragement like no other. The Squirrels further promote engagement in the sport through summer camps and other events.

Although the development deal was finalized with the city on April 27, many are still anxiously waiting for confirmation from the MLB on a one-year deferral.

"I'm cautiously optimistic that the Squirrels will have a new home in the Diamond District by opening day 2026," said Mr. Moore. "I believe that it is time to invest in the team that has been doing a whole lot to...invest in our community for many years."

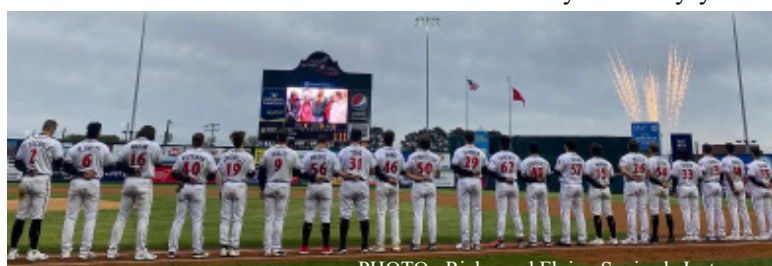


PHOTO: Richmond Flying Squirrels Instagram

DSF Show Choir 2022-2023

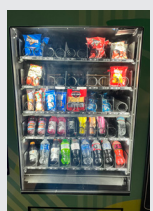


PHOTO: Megan McBride

Troop Harmony in Motion poses at a competition



DSF Vending Machines



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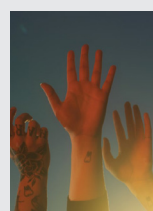
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Big Wife's Big Success on the Boulevard

Hannah Tittermary

Maverick Minute Editor-in-Chief

When you think of mac n' cheese, there's nothing better than a cheesy, and flavorful meal that will warm your heart and brighten your day. At BigWife's, their mac n' cheese is delightful, the space itself is fun and filled with friendly workers, and the space is decorated with bright colors and cute cartoons. The owners of this new take-out pasta joint, Jayme and John Taxin, absolutely love what they do and the food they make.

After Covid-19 hit, the Taxins – the owners of the high-end seafood and steak restaurant, Bookbinder's – invested in a new restaurant dedicated to mac n' cheese. "It seemed like every day [his daughters] were getting DoorDash and mac n' cheese," said Mr. Taxin, so they decided that mac n' cheese would be the direction they would take. Being exclusively a takeout and delivery restaurant with no indoor seating, the restaurant was designed to be accessible and enjoyed at home.

Each type of mac n' cheese has its own character, literally and figuratively. The flavors shine on their own and each has a cartoon character to represent them. After my visit, I received an adorable t-shirt featuring the character for their "Balboa Mac," with his boxing gloved fists raised in victory. This macaroni noodle is based on Rocky Balboa, the titular protagonist from the iconic "Rocky" movie saga. Other fun characters include the "Mac Lorraine," a French noodle holding a pot of mac n' cheese, and the "Fiesta



PHOTO: Hannah Tittermary

BigWife's storefront, located on N Arthur Ashe Boulevard

Mac," a musically-inclined noodle with a large sombrero and maracas.

My favorite dish was the "Classic Mac," simple and delicious. As I am not usually a mac n' cheese connoisseur, I was not expecting to love it, yet I stood corrected. Upon opening the container, I was greeted by a warm dish of medium-sized macaroni mixed with creamy cheese. Neither underwhelming nor overly adventurous, the dish was homey and comforting.

After savoring every bite of the homestyle "Classic Mac," I moved on to the most expensive dish on the menu: the "Truffle Mac", which is priced at \$14. The dish was tasty but, in my opin-

ion, not worth the steep price. Truffle lovers will adore this particular dish, as the flavor is strong and the cauliflower bits add an interesting texture to the dish, but when I go back, I will likely opt for the "Classic Mac" again.

Next, I moved on to the "Buffalo Mac" – incredibly flavorful and a must-buy for anyone who loves buffalo sauce and bleu cheese. This dish adds fried chicken bits, buffalo sauce, and pockets of bleu cheese mixed throughout. It was a dish with tons of flavor and some reasonable heat from the spicy, tangy buffalo sauce. Though this Mac was not exactly my favorite, my family enjoyed the flavor.

BigWife's also offers two desserts, the "Big A** Cookie" and the "Big A** Brownie." Both are delicious, with the perfect amount of sweet and salty flavors combined with flawless textures. A fantastically fudgy brownie is difficult to master, but I would say that BigWife's succeeded in doing so.

BigWife's is one of the many family-owned businesses around Richmond and the owners are dedicated to supporting the people and businesses around them. Local artist, Aaron Meshon, designed the cartoons, characters, and decorations that are featured throughout the restaurant. There's a reason behind the res-

taurant's excellence. The owners use the same ingredients for both Bookbinder's and BigWife's, meaning that their mac n' cheese is made from the best of the best. This decision was not made in vain, even though it means a higher price point for the meal, as the flavors and decadence of each dish are made even better by the high-quality ingredients.

Overall, BigWife's provided fantastic customer service, a fun atmosphere, and delicious food that anyone can enjoy. Personally, I would give this restaurant a 10/10 and would like to thank Jayme and John Taxin for sharing their food with us!

Are DSF's New Vending Machines On a Roll?

Ellie Grace Robinson

Opinions Editor

The vending machines are a touchy subject here at Freeman. They're always visible, in the corner of the cafeteria, collecting dust and taking up space. However, this year Freeman has acquired three new, shiny, glorious metal boxes to overtake the depressing scene which had previously existed. With a glance towards the cluster of machines, you'll see a mad rush of students forming a line that is easily five customers long.

So, what items are in these vending machines that make them so popular? What do students tend to get? Well, in terms of drinks, I noticed that Gatorade, Dr. Pepper, and the Sparkling ICE drinks (originally in slot #50 though not pictured because they were all purchased so quickly) are the most popular with the Kickstart Energy Drinks not far behind. Of course, there are other drinks available, but these are the most

purchased. There are also a plethora of water bottles available for purchase, but a pro tip is to not waste money buying bottled water when you can bring a bottle from home or get a sip from the water fountains at your leisure.

Given the data listed above, I took it upon myself to review a couple of popular drink items. I could have tried a Gatorade, but I've had those a million times, so I decided to brave the energy drink selection. In the end, I tried both the Orange Citrus and the Pineapple Orange Mango Mountain Dew Kickstart Energy Drinks. Below are my thoughts:

Orange Citrus

For me, this drink tasted like a Fanta and was actually quite good, but not too caffeinated to be a dangerous school sipper. The bright yellow color and slightly chemical smell vaguely reminded me of battery acid but, overall, I was pleased. I would rate it an 8/10.

Pineapple Orange Mango

If Orange Citrus was an 8/10, this one is a 20/10. It was amazing! It tasted mostly like pineapple, with

a hint of other tropical flavors. I am honestly not the biggest fan of orange-flavored substances, but I couldn't detect the orange in this drink at all. It smelled fruity and delicious. In about a month, catch me on the beach lounging in a foldable chair, with my toes in the salty ocean and my hands wrapped around one of these babies.

Now what we've all been waiting for... the food! The Hot Cheetos variety gets the most love from Freeman students, but many other foods have gained popularity since the vending machines got cool again. Here's my take:

Chocolate Chip Cookie

Going into this tasting, I had very high hopes but was sadly disappointed in this one. It was dry, flaky, and lacked flavor. You could definitely sense that its time in the vending machine was doing it dirty, as we all know it's virtually impossible for a chocolate chip cookie to taste bad when it's fresh from the oven. The cookie gets a 3/10.

Limón Hot Cheetos

Honestly, this was an all-time low snack. This would perhaps be my go-to if I was stuck in outer space and I'd eaten every other item except the leather of my shoes. In fact, it was so bad it may as well have been freeze-dried. It tasted like air, likely due to the fact that it was fat-free, and only in the aftertaste did I catch a hint of spice. Yet, even in the aftertaste, the "limón" flavor failed to make an appearance. Apparently, I do not share the same opinion as many of my classmates, who continue to subject themselves to this horrid food and seem to like it. For me, it's a NO. I'd rate it a 1/10.

Brave Souls Review the Rolls

And now...for the grand finale...THE SUSHI! Since the sushi had just arrived, I only managed to try the California rolls, and the first thing I noticed was the packaging. It was cutely presented, with the eight rolls neatly nestled in their spots and the condiments lodged in the middle. Each pack comes with wasabi, soy sauce, and ginger as condiment options. Bonus: they appeared to have not taken any damage even after plummeting to the retrieval zone. However, it was obvious that this sushi had lived a long life of plastic, somewhat refrigerated, confinement before it reached me.

What hit me next was the smell. These rolls had a smell that is almost impossible to describe. They reeked immediately once they were opened and I, full of anticipation mixed with a good dose of fear, put a bite into my mouth just for it to be immediately cold and



PHOTO: Katie Hall

One of DSF's vending machine

gross. I just wanted it to sit on my tongue and somehow be consumed without me having to bite down. When I finally did, it tasted seedy. I could taste the little yellow dots in the rice. I barely tasted the "crab", minus the sort of squishy consistency of the random chunks. BTW — I say "crab" because your typical grocery store sushi is not made with actual crab meat, but instead something called surimi. This crab substitute mainly consists of ground-up fish that is seasoned to imitate real crab. I rate it a 1/10.

Before I talk more about the taste, I think it is very important to note that I have never tried sushi before. The roll tasted almost a little tangy, but not anything like I expected sushi to taste. Additionally, I drenched my roll in soy sauce, and, looking back on it, I think that significantly bettered the experience. Honestly, I may have spit it out if I hadn't done that. Not to mention the aftertaste was even worse. To put it simply, it was as if I had just drunk borderline spoiled milk, and that putrid, sour taste lingered until I snagged a piece of gum from my backpack.

So I now sat with seven available California rolls, knowing there was no way I could stomach eating any more of them. My only option was to have other students brave the rolls as well.

Among the students who tried the sushi was junior Jacob Andrews, who gave it a 0/10. As the roll reached his mouth, you

could see his eyes go big and round. He rolled it around on his tongue, seemingly attempting to avoid the bite: "It doesn't taste very fresh. I definitely feel like I'm going to get sick."

Some other brave souls reviewed the rolls. Juniors Johan Japp and Cade Hendricks gave them a 5/10 and 6/10 respectively, the two highest ratings I have heard so far. However, I did get a text approximately 13 minutes after Cade tried a roll saying to add to this article that he and Johan felt sick — an increasingly common theme for this sushi.

The last few students to snag a bite of my sushi were freshmen Caleb Fischer, Alec Kingsbury, Grant Lugar, and Hagan Robinson. Both Caleb and Alec ranked the roll at a 3/10 while Grant opted for a little higher, giving it a 4/10. However, Hagan did not enjoy his roll AT ALL and ranked the sushi a whopping 0/10. Upon eating the roll, he was stunned speechless, and immediately looked flustered as he tried to comprehend how bad the sushi was. He could only nod and shake his head in response to questions and attested that he felt ill not long after trying it.

While the new vending machines offer a wide variety of outstanding drinks, the food ranged from lackluster to nearly inedible. Overall, I will be staying far, FAR away from the sushi, but every now and then I'll have to treat myself to a Kickstart Energy Drink

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The Commentator is a publication of Douglas Southall Freeman High School

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

‘That’s What She Said’

The Mad Mav
Staff Editor

Any great picnic, piece of fruit, or spilled syrup can all easily be ruined by one tiny thing: ants. They climb, crawl, and creep into places where they aren’t wanted, if they are ever wanted. Ants are a puny, pathetic species and if I had the power, I would wipe them off the face of the Earth.

Ants first appeared on the Earth 140 million years ago, and ever since then, my life has been a living nightmare. Just looking at their three-parted body makes me fume. You would think a creature with so many legs would have a purpose — they don’t. They are useless.

All ants do is ruin things. They walk around like they own the place, like seriously, I was here first! My kitchen is my sacred space, and I don’t need any pests around. Just looking at them makes my skin crawl — just the thought of one irritates me. If I’m admitted to the hospital any time soon, it’s because my blood pressure went up thinking about how much I despise ants.

Ants are never a temporary problem, they’re an infestation. The minute you see one, brace

yourself — only more can come. Think about it, ants have only ever been marketed as a nuisance — people seem to have ant “problems”, don’t they? Not only are they annoying just by existing, but they’re everywhere all the time! I mean, take a hint already. Just because I got crumbs of my toast and jam on the countertop does not mean it is an invitation for you to come and steal them for your colony. That, by the way, is its own problem — they’re the only active colonists. Colonizing is so out of style, and it hasn’t been in style since, like, the 1500s.

I just hate them. I know, hate is a strong word, but I hate these little idiots. They just rob and steal and make the hairs on my neck stand. They disgust me. I know we, as a society, should be doing more to save the planet, but as we’re recycling and using metal straws, let’s get rid of the ants in the process — that’s the only way to make our world better. Down with the ants!



Met Gala and Coachella: Tuning into Fashion

Jazmyn Howell
A&E editor

During the much-anticipated spring season, the world witnessed two of the most significant fashion events of the year: Coachella and the Met Gala.

Since their first year, Coachella and the Met Gala have become staples in the fashion industry as some of the season’s most controversial and televised events. As artists and celebrities reach for the top spots in fashion, they walk the fine line between tarnishing their reputation and becoming a generational icon.

Coachella Standouts

Typical of Coachella’s female rap artists, Latto shut the place down. She wore a brown matching set, similar to Megan Thee Stallion’s rhinestone cowgirl outfit, with a distressed top and micro shorts. Her outfit was accentuated with a chunky belt and beaded jewelry. Latto’s appearance prompted many to refer to the event as “Lattochella.”

Another artist on track to becoming one of the new great fashion icons is Kali Uchis, who made a statement at Coachella 2023. Her Weekend 1 outfit consisted of a matching denim set that enhanced her setlist and blew the audience away.

In the K-Pop world, the group Blackpink wasn’t on many people’s radars when it came to fashion. Weekend 1 consisted of all-black or all-pink outfits with accents of pink and black respectively. The sharp black outfits enhanced Blackpink’s style of dance and music. At the same time, the pink accents showed off the group’s femininity and overall presence.

However, the artist that stood out the most was Labrinth — dressed in an all-black outfit re-

sembling one of a psychiatric patient. The pants were latex, and the top was a plain black long-sleeve t-shirt. The accessories, including black and silver belts crossing his torso, a long black trench coat, and black circle glasses, pulled the whole look together. This outfit, while somewhat plain, ultimately represented Labrinth as an artist. He used his outfit, voice, and performance to make him one of the best artists to perform at Coachella this year.

Yet again, Coachella has shown off the future talent and fashion icons who will influence our generation for years to come.

The Met Standouts

On May 1, 2023, the annual Met Gala rolled around. The Met, a celebrity fashion exhibition hosted by Vogue, is notorious for honoring our generation’s most fashionable icons, such as Blake Lively, Lady Gaga, Taylor Swift, and Vanessa Hudges. This year, however, stood out, as it was tributed to controversial figure Karl Lagerfeld. This decision resulted in many celebrities declining to attend the event. Of those who made it to the Gala, we saw fascinating looks either in honor of or in protest against Lagerfeld.

One of the best looks this year had to be Jeremy Pope — an actor who took the cake for the best train moment at the Gala. His outfit was designed by Balmain and Cartier, featuring an extensive train with Karl’s portrait appearing on it.

Another artist who caught my eye was Viola Davis. Davis strutted down the carpet in a fuchsia-pink dress designed by Valentino. Not only did the intense color call attention to her look, but the equally impressive strapless feathered neckline was no less astounding. Interestingly enough, Lagerfeld was known to dislike pink. Whether she did this out of protest or simply to stand out, Davis was one of the most

Jazmyn Howell
A&E Editor

No experience compares to that of driving down a long country road and seeing a big blue sign directing you to fill up both your dwindling gas tank and your growling stomach. All along the East Coast of the United States, a long-debated question has swept the land: Wawa or Sheetz? This gas station rivalry has only become more divisive in recent years, and while the majority of customers are blind to their differences, I have noticed significant disparities just by walking through the doors.

To begin with, Wawa’s workers are consistently friendly and warm to any customer who comes in to grab a coffee, a snack, or a freshly-made sandwich. Walking through the Wawa doors on Patterson Avenue every morning, you’ll see a sweet lady refilling and cleaning up the coffee station. Not only does she do these tasks, but she also takes the time to come and greet every patron. What makes this an even more impressive feat is that virtually every worker on coffee (a position given at the beginning of a shift) will warmly greet you each morning.

This same kindness is seen in

all of the Wawa staff, no matter which job they’re doing. They demonstrate simple acts of kindness that set the gas station apart from its competitors like cracking jokes with you and not getting agitated if you need a minute to get change or grab your items.

However, at Sheetz, the customer service is subpar at best. Even though both Sheetz and Wawa utilize a kiosk ordering system, there is an obvious discrepancy in the execution. What may take only a few minutes at Wawa can turn into 10-15 minutes of waiting at Sheetz for an item that is lesser in quality but greater in price. To add to this, the lack of enthusiasm from the workers creates a sulen and unwelcoming atmosphere that I was not keen to return to.

Another critical element of Sheetz’s downfall is the blatant need for cleanliness. Multiple times when walking into Sheetz, I noticed that there was trash on the counters, gunk on the coffee machines, and toilet paper littering the bathroom floor. Compared to Wawa, Sheetz fails miserably in all facets of orderliness and cleanliness. Wawa’s employees are constantly keeping up with the cleanliness and stocking of the store.

To put another tick on Wawa’s side, you only have to look at the deals offered by Wawa compared

to those at Sheetz. At Wawa, after spending \$50, you get rewarded with various items such as a burrito, yogurt parfait, or sliced fruit — all of which normally cost between \$5 and \$10. Comparatively, at Sheetz, after spending \$5, you can get a fountain drink or a cookie — two options that range from 99 cents to \$5. Spending \$50 on food and gas is effortless for someone who frequents Wawa.

Even with this accessible way of earning free rewards, Wawa continues to do random coupons to attract more guests. You’ll occasionally see a free fountain drink or bakery coupon pop up on the app which helps to ensure more long-term customers. One coupon that stands out is their free coffee on Tuesdays. During random months of the year, Wawa will put on a “Free Coffee Tuesday” event for Wawa rewards members. This event brings more traffic to the store and the app.

Additionally, using the Wawa app, you can fill up your tank while getting 15 cents off per gallon. Now, after filling up my tank, I can head into Wawa and redeem a handmade burrito, not a cookie baked and shipped from a factory.

In 2022, Wawa recorded bringing in \$15 billion in revenue. At the same time, Sheetz brought in only \$11 billion. This gap could be a result of the employees’ lack of enthusiasm at Sheetz combined with the ingenious marketing tools utilized by Wawa’s advertisement team. Very few times have I seen Sheetz billboards or commercials, and, if you do, it’s usually an advertisement for workers.

While Wawa and Sheetz are relatively similar, the one thing Sheetz holds over Wawa is their appetizer menu. Sheetz’s appetizer menu has some of the tastiest road trip food, including mac n’ cheese balls, cheesy bacon tater bombs, cinnamon pretzels, and jalapeño poppers. While the rest of their menus are pretty close, Sheetz’s appetizer menu is the perfect grease-filled concoction to fill any growling stomach.

Yet, even with this slight advantage, Wawa still seems to beat Sheetz. With its cleanliness, excellent customer service, and great food, Wawa will continue to reign supreme on the East Coast.



PHOTO: ABC 27 News

A graphic published by ABC27 News

head-turning celebrities this year.

Two artists that stood out were Doja Cat and Jared Leto. They both took the same approach by dressing up as cats. Doja Cat’s prosthetic reminded me of the 2019 Cats film, which was equally unenjoyable to witness. Their goal to shock the Met worked, but both looks were ultimately forgetful.

However, the woman who won the award of best dressed had to be Dua Lipa. Chanel dressed her in a 1992 white tweed ball gown originally worn by Claudia Schiffer. The dress alone was a showstopper with a basque waist and black trim complemented by her black hair and minimalistic tattoos. Not only was the dress a showstop-

per, but she was the first person ever to wear the \$10 million Lucida Star Necklace. Her approach stayed on theme with Lagerfeld’s style, but the simplistic look made her the best dressed at the Met.

Undeniably, this year’s Met Gala and Coachella 2023 have produced some of the best fashion moments of this decade.

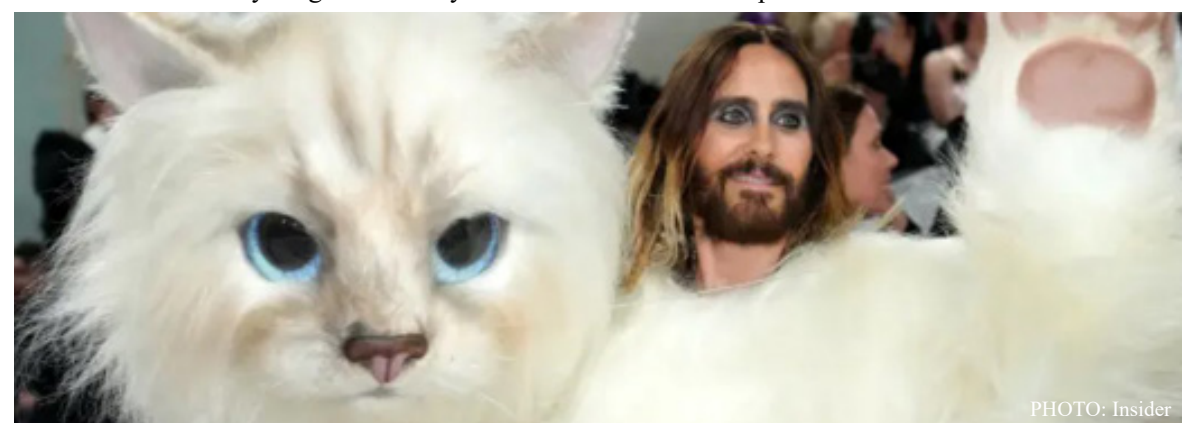


PHOTO: Insider

Jared Leto’s feline fashion

Dreamhouse or Despicable?

Shishira Nakka
Centerspread Editor

We’ve seen Barbie in her life in the dream house, as a mermaid, princess, musketeer, in charm school, and more, but we have yet to see her as one thing: Margot Robbie. However, that changes this summer with the release of “The Barbie Movie”.

“Barbie” releases July 21, 2023, and is expected to do wonders at the box office. With its stacked cast, there’s no limit to the success of this Malibu native’s film. It features Ryan Gosling, Simu Liu, Michael Cera, Kate McKinnon, Will Ferrell, and many more. If the date July 21 looks familiar, it is — Christopher Nolan’s “Oppenheimer” is being released on the same day. Regal Theaters and AMC will be home to two bombshells: one hot pink and rhinestone studded, and the other historical and custom-made for Cillian Murphy.

As a Nolan fan and self-proclaimed Barbie girl, I have equal excitement for both, but something about the Barbie movie is catching my attention from across the plastic horizon. Directed by Greta Gerwig, I have a feeling that the movie will be nothing short of a masterpiece. Gerwig is no stranger to success having previously been the creator of both “Little Women” and “Lady Bird”, and Barbie will be no exception.

The movie is about Barbie being shunned from Barbieland for being a less-than-perfect doll and her journey into the human world in her search for happiness. Each actor plays a different variation of Barbie, like physician Barbie, president Barbie, diplomat Barbie, and mermaid Barbie. Not to mention the various Kens that make up the movie, all slicked back hair and no thoughts behind the eyes — “she’s everything, he’s just Ken.”

The trailer opens with an iconic shot that the unreleased film is already gaining traction for — Barbie steps out of her perfectly pink

plastic pumps, only for her feet to replicate the ones found on the ends of a Barbie doll. This scene alone, along with all the buzz for the movie, puzzled the world. Was it CGI? Margot Robbie’s perfect arch? Was she harnessed? No one knows, but what we do know is that in a single shot, Greta Gerwig managed to rock the worlds of thousands of people, and if one scene can do this, then the movie can only reach for the stars.

The trailer plays to Joan Jett’s song: “Fun, Fun, Fun”, as Barbie dances, drives, and decides what she wants to do with her life. Just from the trailer alone, I can tell you I have never seen so many spray tans and such blonde hair in under two minutes — the impossible is apparently possible. Ryan Gosling sports a very apparent tan and carries around rollerblades that look like they came from a McDonald’s kids’ meal, Kate McKinnon is the Barbie every demon-child had with marker on her face and fear in her eyes, and Michael Cera is ... well, everything you can expect

Michael Cera to be — lots of awkward stares, but we love him for it.

Overall, from the glimpse of the movie we’ve been given, I think I can honestly say that this movie is going to be something we’ve never seen before. Somehow, Greta Ger-

wig managed to take a cult-classic icon, make her Margot Robbie, and create a comedic, yet satirical and very relevant film that though we do not have much information about, we are all dying to see. Come on Barbie, let’s go party.



PHOTO: Warner Brothers Pictures

Margot Robbie stars in “The Barbie Movie”

Lola Muhlenfeld's Life In Theater

Maggie Jacoby
Staff Writer

Lola Muhlenfeld, a senior at Freeman, has achieved great success during her time in the theater department. From taking classes at the age of six to becoming one of the leads in Freeman's spring musical, "Pippin," Lola has continuously shown her strengths on stage and does not plan to stop anytime soon.

Lola's career started when she was very young. "I started theater at six years old," said Lola. "My parents signed me up for the School of Performing Arts in the Richmond Community (SPARC) class and I got pulled into the 50th annual SPARC reunion where I played Molly in 'Annie.'" Lola was the youngest kid there by seven years and couldn't even read yet. "My family pushes art and creativity like many families push sports with their kids," she said. "I have had the privilege of growing up with parents who let me explore what I like to do."

Lola originally started out as a ballerina and danced with the Richmond Ballet in the show "The Nutcracker" and "Romeo and Juliet." After 13 years, she decided to call it quits. With her new-found free time, she decided to audition for her middle school musical, "The Little Mermaid." "I got cast as Ursula and acting [has been my] primary focus ever since," said Lola.

Since then, Lola has made memories to last a lifetime, but the most notable was last year when she performed in Freeman's production of "Legally Blonde." "I think learning the jump rope choreography and doing that twice to three times a day [got] me in the best shape of my life," said Lola.

Of all the characters she's played, Lola's favorite roles thus far have been Marcie in "Almost, Maine" and Ms. Hannigan in "Annie Jr." "Marcie just felt like such



Lola Muhlenfeld on stage in "Annie Jr."

a real person to me and allowed me to work on my acting skills," said Lola. "Ms. Hannigan was a dream role of mine that I recently got to play this past December." Lola also ended up getting paid to play Ms. Hannigan, making it her second paid role ever.

However, Lola still adores school theater and loves giving back to her community. When Lola first came to Freeman, she wasn't sure where she was going to fit in. "However, after joining Stagecraft and then really immersing myself in the theater program, I definitely found my people," said Lola. "I really do enjoy Freeman's theater program."

Freeman's theater program is directed by Mrs. Spears, who Lola

described as dedicated, experienced, and able to bring out the best in her students. Another amazing aspect of the Freeman theater department is the community of people. "The Freeman theater community is a really bright place filled with talented, hard-working kids," said Lola. "From our diligent crew (costume, stage, sound, light, and stage managers) to our talented cast, there's something about the long hours spent together that bonds our group like no other."

The Freeman theater program worked very hard on their most recent show, "Pippin," which was shown at Freeman High School from May 4 to May 7. After many long nights spent together,

the group has grown closer than ever before. Lola, alongside the rest of the cast and crew, has been staying late after school and coming in on the weekends to make sure the show ran without a hitch. "Lola is very talented and dedicated," said Lola's castmate, Hanna Piper. "Everything she does is very impressive and she rarely leaves the stage."

Around this time last year, Lola knew she was interested in pursuing theater in college. "I always wanted to do something creative in my adult life," said Lola. "Being an actress would really be a labor of love that would keep giving me opportunities to express myself and learn about different people in new ways."



Lola in "Almost, Maine"

Lola plans to attend Sweet Briar Women's College, where she will be double majoring in theater and environmental science. "SBC's acting program is really brilliant," she said. "It allows the students to get a first-hand experience in so many acting styles."

Although Lola is young in the industry, she has big plans for a bright future. "My dream goal in theater is to play a pivotal role in a movie, a tv show, or maybe even on Broadway," said Lola. "If I end up doing regional theater, I hope to hone the skills I'm gaining to become somewhat of a Renaissance woman."

Lola's love for theater continues to grow stronger every day. "I love that theater is all about finding new things to try," said Lola. "Every scene I've ever done never feels stale because it gives me the opportunity to approach it a different way." Not only does she enjoy the never-ending carousel of new experiences, but Lola also loves getting to explore the world's diversity through theater. "Theater is honestly just a lens through which people can see themselves and I love that aspect," she said. As Lola pursues theater in college and her dreams afterward, Freeman High School will be cheering her on throughout her incredible journey.

A Passion for Fashion

Anna Meiller
Staff Writer

Fashion, when done correctly, can be used in unexpected ways to create an uproar among its viewers. Ven Jahn and many more up-and-coming designers nervously await their first runway show, hoping for a big moment, a ripple in the vast sea of garments.

Ven is a freshman at Freeman High School and an aspiring designer. They are part of a Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) program called Teen Stylin'. This class spans 12 weeks, with students getting aid "from professional fashion designers and industry specialists to create innovative garments inspired by VMFA's collection," as said on the VMFA's website.

In this class, each student is given a work of art from the VMFA to be the inspiration for their garment. The sculpture, painting, or historical artifact allows each student to explore the world of design alongside deeply analyzing different skills and cultures. "We hope that students foster self-confidence and independence throughout the process," said Fionnuala Bradley, Teen Programs Coordinator for the VMFA.

A bronze statue of Sadashiva inspired Ven's garment. This sculpture showcases the Hindu god Shiva in his supreme form, Sadashiva. He is seated in meditation and shown with ten arms encircled by an areole fringed with flowery flames. "I wanted to focus on the architecture," said Ven. "There is a flaming throne around the god, and I used that as inspiration for the front piece."

Ven's favorite part of the design process is "putting the finishing touches on something" as it comes together. This year, their garment "[has] this big front piece," and they "put paper around a wire [on the front piece], and then [they] put buttons on every little spot [on the paper]" to add

an extra element to the piece. After doing this, they thought they had ruined their garment; however, "[they] just finished it and liked how it turned out."

A unique aspect of this program is that the students get to model their garments. Ven loves "being able to walk down the runway and have people see what [they]ve created from scratch." There's "a sense of community within the program," said Ven. All the students will lend materials, complement one another, and help each other produce the best possible garment.

One of the many ways this program has changed the way Ven designs pieces is their newly increased ability to make "[the garments] wearable." For example, they have made sure the wearer of their garments will "easily be able to dress and undress [for] changing outfits," they said. Last year, they had some difficulty in this aspect, and their aim this year was to make their garment more accessible. In addition, according to Ven, their time management and technical skills have improved.

This year is Ven's second year in the program, and being able to look past garments, they can see significant improvement. "I like looking at my garment from last year and saying, 'Wow,'" Ven said. "I want to improve each time, even if I do not win. Winning for me is making a better garment than I did last year."

When recalling their previous experience at the VMFA program, Ven can remember challenges with functionality and technicality. "Last year, I had a lot of technical difficulties with things like how to open and close garments and attach stuff," said Ven. "But this year, I have been more focused on creating shapes within my project... figuring that out is challenging."

Their fondness for fashion began during Covid. Ven wanted their personality to be heard and "expressed that through [their] clothes." Their inspiration stems from their "music tastes and [items of clothing] that [their] favorite artists wear, mixed with

2023 PROM COURT

- Jason Abbey
- Farah Abdullah
- Grayson Archibeque
- David Badohoun
- Ishita Bakshi
- Griffin Belding
- Peyton Borges
- Jacob Buxbaum
- Matt Danforth
- Marshall Dip

- Simone Fortier
- Peter Kriebel
- Aika Link
- Owen McGill
- Emily Pinatti
- Meg Pollard
- Anne Riley Ponders
- Angel Soto-Torres
- Genevieve Travers
- Catherine Weir

what [they] find and think is cool," said Ven. Some of Ven's favorite artists include Melanie Martinez and Lana Del Rey.

Here at Freeman, Mrs. Yeatts is the teacher of Intro to Fashion. In this class, students can "learn about self-expression in fashion, the history of fashion, fashion careers, knitting, recycling fashion to learn about sustainability, and several other creative projects," said Mrs. Yeatts.

When looking to start design, Ven's advice is to "go with your gut...[don't let others] discourage you, [or tell you] your style is weird," said Ven. "We need weird style and design, or else it wouldn't be fashionable."



Ven's dress from the 2022 program



Ven's dress from this year's program



Virginia is for Beach Lovers

Surf, sand, sun — Virginia has it all for the beach babies out there. A classic beach spot is Virginia Beach, of course — make sure to walk the boardwalk and hit up Lolly's Creamery for some delicious ice cream. Looking to live out your "Gilmore Girls"-inspired small-town dreams, but still want to get tan? Then Colonial Beach is the place for you! Try fishing on the pier or visiting the James Monroe Museum. Wherever your travels take you, make sure to wear sunscreen — dermatologists recommend one with at least an SPF of 30. Supergoop, COOLA, Coppertone, Sun Bum, CeraVe, and Neutrogena are all great brands to invest in. If you find yourself gearing up for the beach, but have no cute bathing suits, then run, don't walk to Target, Aerie, or Pacsun for a cute bikini.



Virginia is For Interns

Summer is the perfect time to take advantage of the wide variety of internships offered in the Richmond area. If you're looking for one, make sure to look local first — look to your local museums, like the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, and your local libraries for an opportunity. However, if you're searching and you end up empty-handed, you're ok. Whether or not you work in some office from 9-5 for your entire summer does not determine your value, success, or trajectory.



Virginia is For Music Lovers

No summer vacation is complete without the perfect soundtrack, and this summer, Richmond is filled with music in every corner. Brown's Island is host to countless concerts you won't want to miss — Rainbow Kitten Surprise, Young the Giant, Tank and the Bangas, and more. The National has just as many heartstopping headliners like Declan McKenna, All Time Low, and Goth Babe. If you're looking to listen to your music in the comfort of your own home, then visit Plan 9 in Carytown for records, CDs, and all things music related.



Virginia is for Foodies

Richmond is overflowing with great spots to eat, and they're all worth a visit. The Fan District recently opened its arms to a Philadelphia hoagie-inspired shop called Stanley's, which on its first day, ran out of bread for the next day - if this doesn't prove how good the sandwiches are, I don't know what will. If you're looking for something classic, then Coppola's Deli in Carytown is the way to go. Their sandwiches are a staple in the Richmond area, though their deli offers more than just that. For a fusion fix on the go, Urban Myth food truck is the one to look out for. In the North Side, Revel Market is all about the breads and spreads and specializes in tapas — the perfect way to replicate a European summer in the 23229.



Virginia is For Nature Lovers

For our forest fanatics, RVA is the perfect place to be. Richmond is surrounded by dozens of great hiking trails and nature spots. Locals rave about Belle Isle — as you walk along the trail, you get a gorgeous view of the James River. Texas Beach at the North Bank of James River Park is perfect for a day hike and has been home to colorful murals since 2014. When in doubt, the James River is the place to go — the Buttermilk trail, which also is great for bouldering, the North Bank trail, and Reedy Creek are all super spots to hit up. If you're the kind who loves to bask in the sun with the sounds of nature surrounding you, then there's no better place than Maymont.

The Pet Effect

Poppy Friske Editor-in-Chief

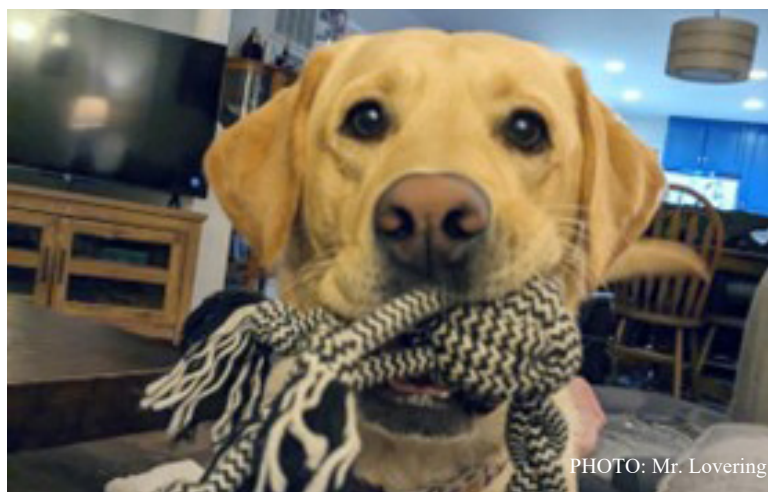
Everyone's seen it before: an older woman with a gray-streaked pug waddling by her side, a hyperactive toddler chasing its puppy's stubby tail, an introverted bookworm that spends her days snuggled in an armchair with her lazy tabby. From canines to felines, to everything in between lines, humans notoriously attain some form of resemblance to their pets.

This correlation between people and their four-legged friends is actually a result of behavioral sciences and the proclivity to gravitate toward an animal that reflects one's personality. "Humans [have] a tendency...to select animals on a subconscious level...who complement their own lives," said veterinary behavior technician, Jenn Fiendish.

Whether victims of their subconscious or simply animal lovers, four Freeman teachers exhibit these behaviors perfectly through their relationships with their favorite family members: their cats and dogs.

Two Dumb Blondes

Anyone who knows Freeman volleyball coach and teacher Drew Lovering has heard of the infamous Sadie Jolene, or Sadie Jo for short. No, not a spouse, but his best friend just the same. This yellow Labrador is a Southern belle in her own right and she shares her owner's athleticism and affinity for long naps, as well as a mutual tendency to approach any and all situations with a goofy smirk. Sadie Jo is not a stranger to the Maverick community, having made numerous appearances at football games



Mr. Lovering's dog, Sadie Jo



Mr. Abril's cat, Hobbes



Mr. Finotti's cat, Baby



Ms. Beaton's dog, Kara

and outdoor events. "She's friendly and excited to see the people that she wants to be around, which is similar to me," said Mr. Lovering.

There's an emphasis on people they WANT to be around, as both Mr. Lovering and Sadie Jo abandon their sociability in exchange for a mysteriously transient presence when spotted out of context by students.

Having a dog like Sadie Jo puts the significance of being depend-

ed upon and loved unconditionally into perspective. "[This] can make your day better knowing that something out there wants you to be around, unlike all my students," said Mr. Lovering. As always, touching words from a warm-hearted man.

The Camping Crew

Another pet lover recognized throughout the Freeman community is Jason Abril, a

devoted English teacher, yearbook advisor, and cinema enthusiast. Mr. Abril's partner in crime is his uniquely adventurous cat, Hobbes. Despite the stereotype surrounding cats' tendency to sleep all day and get stuck in trees due to lack of coordination, Mr. Abril's feline companion has been on more explorations than most humans. An avid camper, the two share a love for the outdoors. On a recent trip, the pair went for "little walks into the woods." "He just loved going exploring and being outside," said Mr. Abril.

The pair are just as outgoing in social situations. While Mr. Abril is known around school for his personability, Hobbes has never met a stranger. "I had my friend come over who [Hobbes] had never met when he was a kitten," said Mr. Abril. "My friend sat on the couch and [Hobbes] just jumped on his lap and fell asleep." It's undeniable that this duo was made for each other.

Math & Meows

From a helpless kitten rescued from the streets of New York to a spoiled feline princess named Baby, one bug-eyed cat has lived quite a tale. Thanks to the open-heartedness of Timothy Finotti, a math teacher here at Freeman, this cat's Cinderella story has her on the receiving end of affection 24/7, occasionally including double feedings when Mr. Finotti forgets that she's already had dinner. From Baby's perspective, this is the best type of mistake.

As the mild-mannered math wiz in Room 154, Mr. Finotti has a reputation for being calm, cool, and collected. Baby's personality is no different, she has "no aggressive tendencies... and [is] playful and amazing with people," said Mr. Finotti.

After a long day at work, Baby

likes to greet Mr. Finotti by cuddling and laying on any available surface, evoking an "instant mood boost," and leaving him with "no choice but to shriek in delight," said Mr. Finotti. However, when her clinginess becomes an annoyance, Mr. Finotti doesn't hesitate to project his career-based stress on her by "tell[ing] her to 'get a job.'" With a name like Baby, her best bet would probably be a profession in Freeman's Child Development course.

Supergirls

Whitney Beaton, a fellow hero of the math department, values her adopted dog, Kara, to the highest degree. Named after the fictional character Kara Danvers, the secret identity of Supergirl in the 2015 television series, this happy-go-lucky canine companion uses her powers of tenacity and extreme cuddling to win over any person who crosses her path.

During her time volunteering for an adoption rescue, Ms. Beaton fell in love with Kara after "she jumped out of [the shelter's] van and would not leave [her] side." One look in those expressive, heterochromatic eyes and the rest was history.

Having endured a rough start in a kill shelter where she was deprived of simple affection, it was obvious how grateful Kara was to have chosen such a devoted human to spend her life with. "She's a tough dog to upset," said Ms. Beaton.

A common misconception about soulmates is that they must have alike personalities. In the case of this duo, compatibility overrules similarity. While Kara "is very expressive...[and] talks a lot [in] all sorts of gibberish," Ms. Beaton's relaxed disposition seamlessly absorbs the pup's enthusiasm, making them the perfect pair.

Sun & Smiles at the Little Feet Meet

Ella Post Online Editor-in-Chief

Feelings of happiness and joy were evident at the annual Little Feet Meet, which took place at Freeman on April 20. From across Henrico County, preschoolers and elementary school students alike came together to participate in the Special Olympics activities. "Special Olympics' goal is to promote understanding, respect, and inclusion with their activities," said Terry Donohue, one of the main event organizers. At the meet, kids are introduced to teamwork and inclusivity.

This event has been going on for 16 years now and continues to gain popularity. "Our numbers continue to grow so that is one measure of success," said Ms. Donohue. A modified version of the event first took place at Freeman to test the likelihood of the event becoming a larger

attraction. Prior to the decision of making the meet a yearly tradition, Kenny Moore's baseball team held a smaller version at Freeman as a test run. Due to its success, Special Olympics offered to host a county-wide meet for the next year.

The popularity of the event was displayed by the 770 athletes, 400 Freeman students, and 350 teachers and aides who participated in the meet this year. The Marine Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) from Tucker High School presented the colors at the meet and spectators came out to watch. In total, almost 2,000 people took part in this event.

All volunteer positions were filled by Freeman students who took time from their school day to work at this event. These volunteers, or "buddies," got the chance to collaborate with children from their surrounding community and help facilitate the competition. "I

thought it was really fun and it was nice to hang out with the little kids," said sophomore Molly Levasseur, one of the volunteers at the event.

The meet would not have been possible without the help of these students. "The feedback for the event was positive thanks to the great job our students did running the meet," said Ms. Donohue.

A few of the games the kids participated in included weight lifting, softball throw, scarf toss, baseball bat, an obstacle course, bean bag toss, long jump, and a 50-yard race. From the activities offered, the "athletes learn[ed] that success is found in giving your best effort," said Ms. Donohue.

Ms. Donohue, along with the Special Olympics Organization, is determined to improve the experience of the meet each year. "My goal for next year is to work closely with the Special Olympic organization to ensure we have all the equipment, ribbons, and pencils needed," said Ms. Donohue. "I also want to change the storage of the materials, which should help them be more organized and help with the distribution of materials at the beginning of the meet." She is always open to suggestions, so if you have any inquiries about the event please contact tmdonohu@henrico.k12.va.us.

The most significant aspect of the meet was its lasting impression on the participants. "Athletes and buddies have a chance to develop friendships that hopefully will last long after the meet concludes," said Ms. Donohue. New friendships were made and important life skills were taught to the children that were at this event. "Freeman participants learn the value of teamwork, how to be flexible in a changing situation, the satisfaction found in helping others, and to look closely at each person because we all have different abilities that contribute to a fun day," she said. The volunteers also enjoyed being a part of new experiences and spreading kindness. "I learned a lot about teamwork and I would definitely do it again next year," said Molly. The Little Feet Meet is open to everyone from surrounding schools, so make sure to sign up fast to claim a spot at the next meet.



PHOTO: Ella Post

Three participants having fun at the Little Feet Meet



Fancy a Game of Table Tennis?



PHOTO: Cade Hendricks

Club members pose for a picture

Ella Post

Online Editor-in-Chief

Don't be alarmed by the loud smacks of ping pong balls emanating from the small gym when you walk into school on Thursday mornings. It is only the new Douglas Freeman Table Tennis Club starting their mornings with a few matches and lots of laughs.

Recently, the club has documented high numbers of attendance at their weekly morning meetings in the small gym. The club was formed by seniors Braeden Farmer and Nolan Crawford and juniors Cade Hendricks, Charlie Cunningham, Zach Stewart, and Carter Spalding. "We thought of the idea when Zach (Stewart) said, 'Hey let's bring back the ping pong club,'" said Cade.

Setting up for the club takes time and effort. "Each Thursday, I arrive by 8 to make sure everything for the club is ready to go," said Cade. Most mornings, they set up three tables for ping pong or, they get basketballs from the small gym. At DSF Table Tennis, there are a

few different versions of ping pong someone can play. This sport can be enjoyed with or without a partner on the court. Singles are played one-on-one and doubles are played with two people on the same team playing against two people on another team. "Playing doubles can help students learn how to be good team players and gain communication skills, while singles may help students practice strong mentalities," said Cade. "Being strong mentally can be learned from coming back from a set that they were previously losing."

According to a study on how ping pong develops good character done by PingSunday.com, "Ping pong is challenging and requires a great deal of perseverance and determination. This mindset will be beneficial in any field."

There are a number of motives as to why the members want to be involved with the club. At the meeting on April 27, they offered Krispy Kreme donuts to all participants. However, donuts are not always available. "We love donuts but we usually don't have them," said Cade. The group hopes to offer donuts more often as a motivator to join the club.

Attaining greater numbers of attendees enables the club to provide more donuts more frequently.

However, donuts are not the sole motive. The table tennis players' attitudes are just as important to the team. They are very collaborative and place a focus on competitiveness and teamwork. "My favorite part of the club is the boys who come out to play and how we always play to win," said Braeden. "Nothing is better than eliminating the enemy."

"Anybody can join at any time, all you have to do is show up"

-Braeden Farmer

Other group members display the work ethic that Braeden touched on, like Cade Hendricks. "I am motivated to come to the meetings because I love winning," said Cade.

Since the formation of the group, it has attracted students from a variety of different areas at Freeman including members of the lacrosse, track, basket-

ball, soccer, and football teams.

According to team members, the level of play at this club is highly ranked. "Our level of talent is a ten out of ten, it's the highest level there is," said Braeden Farmer. "We're the best there is."

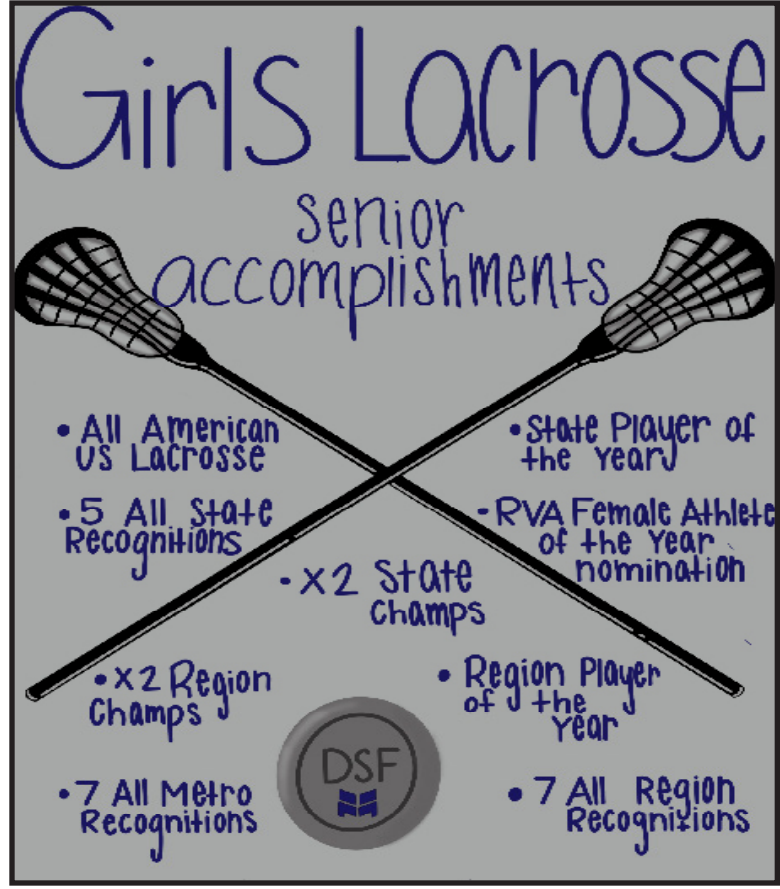
Ping pong is not the only sport offered through this club. The DSF Table Tennis club hopes to have enough attendees so they can have both ping pong and basketball games occurring at the same time.

Club meetings are open to anyone who is interested in having some friendly competition before school starts. "Anybody can join at any time, all you have to do is show up," said Braeden. Joining DSF Table Tennis is a great opportunity to meet new people and improve your table tennis skills.

The group is also trying to do some outreach in the community to gain more followers. Specifically, the club leaders are trying to see if

other schools would be willing to compete in table tennis matches or basketball games. "Currently, we are working towards getting other schools involved with the club," said Braeden. "We are planning on contacting schools, including Saint Christopher's, to see if they will scrimmage us in basketball."

Few clubs offer what the Table Tennis club does. Donuts, ping pong, and basketball are the overarching components of the club; however, its underlying traits of teamwork, cooperation, and collaboration are equally important. Participating in this club gives students the opportunity to connect with their peers in a fun and competitive environment. It also allows students to do an active task before school that can prepare or stimulate the mind for the school day ahead. In order to be energized for school, arrive early on Thursday morning to play some ping pong.



High Hopes for New Hoos

Ella Post

Online Editor-in-Chief

Freeman has a long-standing connection with the University of Virginia (UVA) with about 30 students committing each year. The Virginia Cavaliers men's basketball team is a Division I team that competes in the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA).

Three new basketball players are transferring to UVA to continue their college basketball careers. Andrew Rohde, a guard from Saint Thomas, Jordan Minor, a forward from Merrimack,

and Dante Harris, a guard from Georgetown will all be attending UVA in the spring semester. In addition to the new players at UVA, many Freeman students are enrolled at UVA for the next semester for their academics.

According to Niche.com, a college-ranking website, UVA is the highest-ranked college in the state. Due to this, its athletics program is very popular in the Richmond community. "UVA's sports culture is super spirited," said Ella Rackcliffe, a senior at Freeman who will be attending UVA next year. "We see people around here wearing all UVA stuff, so I feel like they have a really strong fan base."

Fans of the team also praise UVA's basketball coach, Tony Bennett. "Tony Bennett is one

of the best coaches in all of college basketball," said Emerson Post, a sophomore at Freeman and a big UVA basketball fan. "I hope they keep him until he retires," he said. "He has a great offensive and defensive scheme."

Alka Link, a senior at Freeman, is heading off to UVA this fall to continue her academic and cheerleading careers. "The UVA sports culture, especially surrounding the John Paul Jones Arena and the Men's Basketball Program is unmatched," said Alka. As a member of the All-Girl cheerleading team, Alka will attend every women's home basketball game and select away games for both men's and women's basketball. "I am most excited about cheering for basketball because I love being close to the court and being able to watch the game up close," she said. "Tony Bennett has curated the perfect basketball program for UVA and continues to lead the team to success."

Considering UVA's basketball performance this past season, most fans are hoping they come back better than ever next year with these new players. "I was very sad about [UVA] losing in the first round," said Ella. "I hope next year, they get it together."

The Hoos began this past season very strong, starting as the 18th-ranked team in the country and quickly jumping into the top five teams in the nation. This followed victories over both Baylor and Il-

linois. "UVA's conference play in the ACC was great," said Alka.

Despite this great start, the UVA team's performance soon worsened. Although the team earned a share of the ACC regular season championship, they fell just short in the conference tournament. Yet, fans still have hope for next season. "Unfortunately, the first-round upset in the NCAA tournament did not represent the overall successful season well, but I'm confident that the Hoos will be back again next year," Alka said.

To help the Hoos bounce back next season, Tony Bennett decided to recruit Andrew Rohde, Jordan Minor, and Dante Harris. Though even with these new players, UVA is still losing many of its current players such as Kihei Clark,



PHOTO: Alka Link

Alka with future teammate

perfectly embody the UVA Men's basketball program." The possible loss of other key players is also shocking to Alka. In particular, Kihei Clark's "leadership on the court has shown to be key during big games," she said. "The team will not be the same without him."

Despite these losses, the incoming transfers have already proved themselves at the college level with success at St. Thomas, Merrimack, and Georgetown. Fans are hopeful that the new players will help improve the team's performance. "I have no doubt that they will continue to find their stride at UVA," said Alka. As new students and basketball players arrive on campus grounds, UVA will continue to see growth within the community.

"I have no doubt they will continue to find their stride at UVA."

- Alka Link

Ben Vander Plas, Jayden Gardner, Kadin Shedrick, and Reece Beekman. The loss of Beekman is especially tough for many of the fans. "[Reece Beekman] is the player with the most experience in the program and has the potential to be drafted into the NBA, which could impact next season dramatically," said Alka. "His defensive efforts and play style

Girls Soccer Commits



PHOTO: NCAA

UVA basketball players in 2023 March Madness

The NFL Draft

Celia Acey
Sports Editor

The highly anticipated 2023 National Football League (NFL) Draft took place April 27-29, comprising 32 teams and 259 picks. The draft showcased the best college football athletes, all of whom were hoping to continue playing and turn their passion into a career.

For the first pick of the draft, which was traded to the Carolina Panthers by the Chicago Bears, the Panthers selected quarterback (QB) Bryce Young. The 2021 Heisman winner and Alabama star has been a target for the Panthers for the past few

years. Although there was some debate about whether Bryce Young or Ohio State QB C.J. Stroud would be first picked, Stroud's low cognitive test scores may have pushed Young to the front.

Junior Josh Hawkins, Freeman football enthusiast, said that the

“I had no doubt Bryce Young was the best player in the Draft.”

- Josh Hawkins

pick “wasn't [surprising] at all,” and he “[had] no doubt Young was the best player in the draft.”



PHOTO: WMBF News

The number one pick of the Draft: Bryce Young

With the second pick of the draft, the Houston Texans selected QB C.J. Stroud. Stroud's talent in the pocket and ability to swing deep passes made him a top prospect in the draft. In two seasons as Ohio State's starter, the two-time Heisman finalist passed for 8,123 yards and 85 touchdowns with 12 interceptions.

To the surprise of many viewers, the Texans traded up nine spots to select outside linebacker Will Anderson Jr. with the third pick of the draft. The two-time Southeastern Conference (SEC) Defensive Player of the Year had 10 sacks last season and 17.5 sacks in 2021. An aggressive (and expensive) move from the Texans, fans across the country are excitedly waiting to see what the Texans can do in the 2023-2024 NFL season.

As the third QB selected in the draft, the Indianapolis Colts selected the University of Florida star Anthony Richardson as the fourth pick. Richardson's size and speed made for a “dangerous, dual-threat quarterback” said ESPN.

The Seattle Seahawks made intentional moves on night one, trading up to select cornerback Devin Witherspoon as the fourth pick and wide receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba as the 20th pick. With an already successful team led by Geno Smith and DK Metcalf, Ohio State's Smith-Njigba will “create a three-headed monster on offense,” said Sports Illustrated's Adam Schultz.

Offensive tackles were a hot pick in this year's draft with the Arizona Cardinals selecting Paris Johnson Jr, the Chicago Bears selecting Darnell Wright, and the Tennessee

Titans selecting Peter Skoronski. It's clear that quarterback protection is of high importance this year.

With the last pick of the draft, nicknamed ‘Mr. Irrelevant’, the Rams selected Toledo's defensive lineman (DL) Deshaun Johnson. Through five seasons, Johnson logged 210 total tackles, 14.5 sacks, and one interception. When asked about the selection, Johnson replied that “just getting picked, final pick, first pick, middle pick, everything [is] unique.”

The 2023 NFL Draft was filled with exceptional talent and fans are excitedly awaiting the upcoming season. No matter what team you're rooting for this year, the NFL 2023 season is going to be one to watch. This draft is a touchdown!

TOP 10 DRAFT PICKS

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1) Bryce Young → | 6) Paris Johnson Jr → |
| 2) C.J. Stroud → | 7) Tyree Wilson → |
| 3) Will Anderson Jr → | 8) Bijan Robinson → |
| 4) Anthony Richardson → | 9) Jalen Carter → |
| 5) Devon Witherspoon → | 10) Darnell Wright → |



Performance Pickleball Comes to Regency Mall

Ellie Grace Robinson
Opinions Editor

Picture this: It's a beautiful, hot summer day in August. You and your friends are bored of the typical shenanigans and desperate to get out of the house. So you head to Performance Pickleball RVA (PPRVA) to try something different. You want to go outside to soak up the sun, so you play a few rounds on one of the abundant outdoor courts. But, of course, you're sweating up daggers, so you cruise inside, get an icy cold lemonade, and relax in the lounging area. It's a perfect summer day, indeed! Soon to be built in Regency Mall, a short five-minute walk from Freeman, will be the Performance Pickle-

“Witnessing the successes and failures of similar facilities really shaped our vision.” -PPRVA Spokesperson

ball RVA facility that will make this dream summer day a reality.

Performance Pickleball RVA is a company with the potential to become the largest of its kind in all of Virginia. It will be starting construction in May or June of this year and is scheduled to be finished by December.

The facility will boast 12 indoor courts, as well as six outdoor courts. Inside the building, there will also be a restaurant, a



Exterior design plans for Performance Pickleball

bar, and a lounge area. Although the restaurant has not been fully imagined in terms of the menu, a statement by the company said, “We are working actively with the Food Hall vendors of Regency as potential suppliers of a variety of different cuisine options.”

This huge project is being headed by Jon Laaser, the former football and basketball voice of Hokie Nation (for all our Virginia Tech fans), not to mention a huge pickleball admirer!

Pickleball is a game that's often compared to tennis but it is played on a smaller court. It can be played with two or four players and it uses a lightweight, typically plastic ball and paddles made of graphite, fiberglass, carbon fibers, or wood. A typical pickleball game can last anywhere from 30 to 75 minutes and is a good way to get exercise while enjoying time with friends.

The first step to starting a customer-based business is often finding a good location. “As we were researching potential sites,

Regency, and in particular the former Macy's space, worked the best for our vision. Spacious and wide open,” said a spokesperson for Performance Pickleball RVA. “Lee Warfield (our Managing Partner) is an investor in the Regency rejuvenation project which helped to finalize the decision.” Additionally, the Regency community that has taken part in this project has formed a family that helps lift each other up. “Being directly connected to the Surge trampoline park means that Surge, along with all of the tenants at Regency, will help one another in terms of driving interest and traffic to the facility,” said the PPRVA spokesperson.

If you're looking for a job, perhaps working at Performance Pickleball RVA will one day be for you. On top of the Chief Operating Officer (COO) and two director positions, “we will have a staff of 10 instructors, who will be paid on a contract basis in accordance with the volume of lessons they give, etc.,” said

the spokesperson. “We will also staff part-time employees at the check-in desk and bar/restaurant.”

To be a member at this facility, there are two membership

“If you're passionate about something and believe in it- go for it!”

-PPRVA Spokesperson

packages, priced at \$59 and \$149 per month, respectively. Two-hour sessions will be available to members at \$9. However, “Non-

members will be able to play for a session fee of \$14,” they said.

The company made sure to do its research before investing in the new location. “Witnessing the successes and failures of similar facilities that have come before us really shaped the vision for what we wanted to create,” they said. “From there it was getting the right people in the room to bring those collective visions to reality...if you're passionate about something and believe in it [like we did]- go for it! But do so with diligent research and facts rather than raw emotion.” Go check out Performance Pickleball RVA, coming soon!

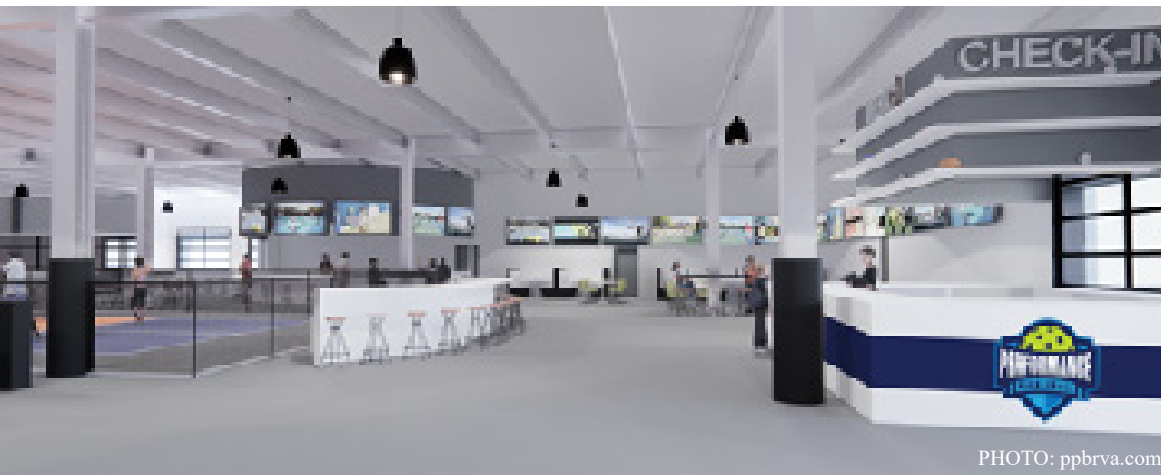


PHOTO: pprva.com

Interior Plans for Performance Pickleball RVA



A Closer Look At Boygenius' "the record:"

Afton Hessian
News Editor

In 2018, Julien Baker, Lucy Dacus, and Phoebe Bridgers released their self-titled EP, "boygenius", to mass critical acclaim. After a short tour, they went back to working on solo music, releasing "Little Oblivions," "Home Video," and "Punisher" respectively. Cementing their dominant role in indie music, boygenius reunited five years later to release "the record", an album centered around queer friendship and the love they have for each other. "the record" opens with "Without You Without Them", a natural continuation of the last song off their 2018 EP, "Ketchum, ID". The a cappella folk song puts Richmond-born Dacus at the forefront, delivering lyrics about her place in the lineage of her ancestors. In lyrics reminiscent of "My Mother and I" off of her 2019 EP, Dacus pleads to be able to thank the mothers and fathers who came before her, and to one day reciprocate the love they have unknowingly passed onto her. "Emily I'm Sorry" and "Revolution 0" are quintessential Phoebe Bridgers songs, dealing with her psyche after the fallout of past relationships. Bridgers confesses to her ex-girlfriend in "Emily I'm Sorry," "I can feel myself becoming/Someone only you could want." In "Revolution 0"



Boygenius' "the record" album cover

PHOTO: Ryan Pfluger

she spirals, eventually concluding, "If you're not enough/Then I give up/And then nothing is". "We're In Love" is a heartbreaking ode to friendship that Dacus dedicated to Baker and Bridgers. In the song she told Rolling Stone was almost too personal to release, Dacus proclaims, "I feel crazy in ways I never say/Will you still love me if it turns out I'm insane?/I know what you'll say, but it helps to hear you say it anyway." In the final verses of the song, Dacus ponders a question she first posed in her 2013 unreleased song, "Time Travel", about whether or not the person she loved would recognize her soul

in another person in an alternate life. She now wonders, "If you rewrite your life, may I still play a part?/In the next one, will you find me?/I'll be the boy with the pink carnation pinned to my lapel." The album is sonically at its biggest in "Satanist" and "Not Strong Enough", the latter of which feels nauseatingly claustrophobic with the lyrics "Spinning out about things that haven't happened/Breathing in and out." After building the phrase "Always an angel, never a god", Dacus proclaims "I don't know why I am the way I am." Boygenius is at its best when all three members are given a chance

to create a cohesive song about different experiences. The standout "Cool About It" resembles the "boygenius" EP's "Souvenir" in its structure and ability to craft a narrative that climaxes in the last verse. The song ruminates on the first time each of them saw an ex after a breakup. Baker remembers, "Wishing you were kind enough to be cruel about it", continuing the motif of her 2021 song "Ringside". In that song, Baker wishes the people in her life would stop being kind enough to offer her second chances after her relapses. The next verse shows staggering growth from Dacus' 2018 "Night Shift", with Dacus revealing "I came prepared for absolution if you'd only ask/So I take some offense when you say, 'No regrets.'" In some of the best lyricism on the album, Bridgers' verse

begins with, "Once I took your medication to know what it's like/ And now I have to act like I can't read your mind." She concludes her encounter with, "I'll pretend bein' with you doesn't feel like drowning/Tellin' you it's nice to see how good you're doing/Even though we know it isn't true." The final song on "the record" contains an interpolation from the 2018 EP's "Me and My Dog." The song catalogs Bridgers' growth in the time in-between the recording of "boygenius" and after the release of "Punisher" in 2020. She is able to refute the pedestal the person she loves puts themselves on by stating, "You made me feel like an equal/But I'm better than you, and you should know that by now." In the final crescendo Bridgers sings, "I'll go up to the top of our building/ And remember my dog when I see the full moon." This hope is a far cry from "And if I could give you the moon/I would give you the moon" of Punisher's "Moon Song". The album concludes with the droning of "I can't feel it yet/ But I am waiting," and on vinyl, a purposefully locked groove keeps the listener forever waiting. "the record" feels like waking up to a hazy sun rising through transparent curtains, languishing sideways across the bed mid-afternoon, waking up past dusk with the window open and feeling a humid breeze, and eventually, getting out of bed to go on a midnight drive with the windows down, and then doing it all again. It's playful and contemplative, resistant and forgiving, serene and headbanging. It's "the record".

Hamilton's Return to Richmond



PHOTO: Ryland Ward

Ryland's Playbill from the show

Lorelei Kelly
Copy Editor

From ballet to Broadway, the Altria Theater has hosted shows and events for over 90 years that anyone can enjoy. From April 11-23, the hit musical "Hamilton" took the stage to nearly sold-out crowds each night. "Hamilton" first made its debut in Richmond in 2019, but its popularity has only continued to rise since then, making it one of the most popular musicals in Broadway history and the fourth-highest-grossing musical of all time. In the seven years since its 2016 opening, various casts and tours have crisscrossed the nation to perform in front of thousands of adoring fans. The nearly three-hour show means that there is a broad range of understudies or 'swings' who can step in for a variety of roles at any given time. One of the swings in the current production of "Hamilton," Marcus John said, "[he] gets to fight in the war from all different sides depending on the night" since he "understudies for six total roles: Alexander Hamilton, all three Sons of Liber-

ty, and two ensemble tracks." The wide cast of characters and variety of songs offers room for every style of dance and music, from rap and hip-hop to jazz and swing. "Hamilton" offers something for everyone and "the sheer genius of the play, mixed with the abundance of hip-hop, and black cultural representation sucked me in," said Marcus. "It represents everything I believe I am; I didn't want to audition, I NEEDED to be in this show." His passion for the show is obvious in how he makes each character his own by finding similarities between the characters he portrays and who he is in real life. "There is humanity in all of us, and by honestly exemplifying that beautiful simple humanity, I can expect the audience to recognize and relate to what I am doing up there," he said. "Therein lies the nightly connection with me and 2,000 strangers." One of those many strangers was junior Ryland Ward, an avid "Hamilton" fan. She saw "Hamilton" in Richmond in both 2019 and 2023 and said, "It's honestly one of the best pieces of theater I've ever seen. Everything about the show is genius, and seeing it

live is such a beautiful experience." Ever since she first heard the soundtrack, Ryland has been obsessed with "Hamilton" and all of the characters in it. "Eliza Schuyler is my favorite character since she is such a central part of the show, and I would argue that she drives the story just as much as Alexander Hamilton himself," said Ryland. "I love that she is so fiercely loyal, and that even after her husband's death, she accomplishes so much." Additionally, she has always been interested in the costumes of the show, and she wore her Eliza cosplay the night she went to see "Hamilton." One of her favorite parts about the play is that "the ensemble is so dynamic, and as a dancer, I have such admiration for how the choreography fleshes out the story." While they were in Richmond, the "Hamilton" cast announced that they were partnering with the organization Broadway Cares. Broadway Cares provides medicine, food, financial assistance,

"It's honestly one of the best pieces of theater I've ever seen."
- Ryland Ward

etc. to people suffering from HIV/AIDS, homelessness, cancer, food insecurity, and more. "By asking the audience to donate we are just asking for help as we raise money to help those less fortunate than us," Marcus said. "Art and theatre remind us of the beauties of life and it's important to remember that there are many people who do not get to partake so freely in those beauties and help when we can."



PHOTO: Ryland Ward

The cast of "Hamilton" taking their bows

Review: "Pippin"



PHOTO: DSF Thespians

The cast of "Pippin" after a show

Merrick Mock
News Editor

Prior to seeing "Pippin" at Freeman, I was very uncertain as to what a "Pippin" was. However, thanks to five of the cast members, I now understand the complexities of the plot and purpose of the musical. Essentially, it is a play inside of a play and each actor plays multiple roles over the course of the show. Although I had no clue what was going on throughout most of the show, the talent was certainly top-tier. There were a total of 24 actors and 18 crew members. Initially, the cast spent three hours a day rehearsing after school. However, in the three weeks leading up to opening night, the time commitment was amped up to seven hours a day, in addition to weekend rehearsals. It was also mandatory for crew members to attend the rehearsals leading up to the opening show. The crew team includes many different areas, with a variety of responsibilities. The costume crew makes garments for each actor, and they are also in charge of making all of the props. The running crew is made up of the students in the wings and backstage who assist with props and ensure that the actors are on time for their cues. Lastly, the tech crew members manage the spotlights, stage lights, and sound. With help from the members of Pippin's impressive crew, the actors truly brought the story to life. One prominent actor was Lola Muhlenfeld. This girl is just outstanding. I wouldn't be surprised if she made it to Broadway one day. Her vocals, dancing, and stage presence were jaw-dropping. She looked so comfortable and professional as the bright lights shined down on her. Of all the performers, Lola stole the show. She did an outstanding job interacting with the audience and cracking jokes, filling the auditorium with

laughter. "I've learned so much production. She's an incredible role model on and off the stage and is overall so talented and creative," said junior Charlotte Holloway, another actor in "Pippin." On top of the exceptional acting, the costumes were astounding. The costume crew did an excellent job of mixing bold colors into the medieval time period of the show. Each actor had multiple costumes and it was fun to watch each actor step into a different role every so often. One of the most dramatic costume changes occurred when the ensemble went from playing chickens covered in yellow feathers to soldiers in shining silver armor. My favorite costume was during one of the more 'interesting' scenes, take that as you will. The actors were wearing different colored leotards with green vines wrapping around their bodies. This was paired with a floral headband that was reminiscent of the Greek goddess Athena. The music in "Pippin" reminded me of the Broadway show "Jesus Christ Superstar", which I saw last June. Both shows are considered rock musicals. Overall, the songs were very vaudeville-esque. However, some were very upbeat while others were more slow-paced. Overall, it was a super appealing experience and I will definitely attend next year's musical.

DOUGLAS FREEMAN • PLAYERS PRESENT
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Happenings Around the Globe



In April 2023, a civil conflict erupted in Sudan, primarily in the Darfur region and the nation's capital: Khartoum. In recent months, fighting has intensified between the rival military factions: the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Sudan's Rapid Support Forces (RSF).



From May 19-21, representatives from some of the world's leading democratic nations convened in Hiroshima, Japan for the 49th Group of 7 (G7) Summit. The G7 acts as a forum for world leaders to discuss global issues such as climate change, food insecurity and threats of nuclear warfare.



Amidst calls for his impeachment, Ecuador's President, Guillermo Lasso, disbanded the National Assembly on May 17, 2023. According to Reuters, the Constitution states that, "he will now remain in office and rule by decree." As tensions continue to rise, the military strongly discouraged protests.



Current President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan advanced to a run-off election on May 28, 2023. Erdogan has faced criticism for his handling of the February earthquake that devastated areas of the country. According to The Associated Press, Erdogan's opponent, Kemal Kilicdaroglu (pictured above), is polling within five percentage points, as the race for the presidency tightens.

Content by Katie Hall

Title 42 Expires

Hannah Tittermary
Maverick Minute Editor in Chief

Title 42, which stems from a 1944 public health law, states that the United States (US) can turn away migrants if they are deemed to be a threat to public safety. This measure was first enacted in 2020 during the Trump administration and was recently ended by President Biden. The Biden administration made the decision after the pandemic was officially declared a non-emergency. Title 42 ended on May 11, 2022.

Since the introduction of Title 42, "U.S. officials turned away migrants more than 2.8 million times" (AP). In the week leading up to the removal of Title 42, the US saw "record daily border crossings" with an average of 10,000 unauthorized entries per day (CBS News). However, since the end of Title 42, "the number of unauthorized entries along the southern border has dropped to an average of 4,400 per day" (CBS News).

Biden has also put new immigration restrictions in place to limit the number of unauthorized entries. Specifically, he has focused on decreasing the number of migrants who are smuggled across the border. Additionally, the consequences for crossing illegally have changed under his administration, making it so that illegal migrants



Migrants crossing the Rio Grande river with an infant

are unable to return for five years. These migrants also face the possibility of criminal prosecution if they break the time sentence.

Other migrants are also facing restrictions. This includes both those who haven't sought asylum in previously traveled countries and who didn't apply online before attempting to cross the border.

Under these new policies, the US will accept 30,000 asylum seekers per month from Nicaragua, Haiti, Cuba, and Venezuela if they meet three specific requirements. These requirements state that they must travel by air, apply online,

and have a sponsor. An additional 100,000 will be accepted from other countries if they have family currently residing in the US and complete the online application.

The online application can be found on the United States Customs and Border Protection (CBP) One app. Currently, it accepts 740 applicants per day; however, it may increase to 1,000 per day (AP News).

Other factors may slow with the expulsion of Title 42. The issues of kidnapping, torture, and rape of individuals near the border have become serious human rights

issues. Human Rights First said "It's identified more than 13,000 cases of [previous issues]" since Biden took office, a number that is bound to slow with the new high acceptance of immigrants (CNN).

The end of this Title puts the future of immigration into the United States into question, as 2.78 million undocumented immigrants attempted to cross the border in the past year under Title 42 (NBC). With the new wave of immigrants, history shows a larger labor force, the driving up of economic profit, along with a higher population, and the promotion of innovation.

Mass Shootings Spark Protests in Serbia

Anna Meiller
Maverick Minute Editor-in-Chief

Two mass shootings in Serbia in one week have prompted widespread protests across the country. These protests are a reaction to an increase in violence and have called for greater restrictions on firearms and other weaponry.

According to the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Serbian citizens formed some of the biggest protest parties since 2012 and adopted the name "Serbia Against Violence". In the wake of the shootings, thousands of protesters stood for an "end to what they viewed as a culture of violence." President Aleksandar Vucic called for the disarmament of Serbia as the protestors called for stricter gun control.

Following this call to action, more guns and ammunition have been turned in than in all of the previous attempts to end the illegal possession of firearms. The recent mass shootings prompted many to draw comparisons to chronic gun violence in the United States. This line of thinking has sparked advocacy for stricter gun legislation.

Another one of the protestors' fears was the culture of violence in Serbia. Many citizens hope for the resignation of more brutal officials (BBC). "We are surrounded by violence - in the public domain, political communi-

cation, parliament, and television shows," said Belgrade resident Aleks. "The culture of civilized conversation is completely lost."

The reduction of brutality in Serbia has yet to be met with as much enthusiasm as stricter gun control. According to the BBC, the government blames Western values for the violence occurring in their country, not the brutality at home.

Serbia has made great strides in controlling the flow of illegal guns into the country, with thousands of firearms turned in. However, to truly end this era of violence, the inhabitants of Serbia feel a termination of exposure to cruelty is needed.



Thousands of Serbians protest in the streets

Planet Fitness Offers Free Summer Gym Access for Teens

Ella Post
Online Editor in Chief

On May 1, 2023, Planet Fitness announced that its High School Summer Pass Program will be available from May 15 through Aug. 31. This program offers free gym memberships to students ages 14 to 19. As a part of this program, 2,400 locations across the United States and Canada will now offer free gym access to these students during each location's operational hours.

Students who sign up will have the chance to train with in-club certified trainers and use specific workouts designed for high schoolers. This pass also includes access to fitness classes offered through the Planet Fitness PE@PF program to all participants, free of charge. However, the members must work out at the specific location they signed up for and are not authorized to use other facilities.

Planet Fitness created this program with specific overarching goals. One of these is to help teens "start and stick with a health and fitness journey," said Chris Rondeau, Chief Executive Officer at Planet Fitness. The program was launched during Mental Health



Awareness Month and it seeks to showcase how teenagers can prioritize mental and physical health. They seek to motivate students to prioritize their physical health as a method of improving their overall health. The summer timeframe is meant to give high school students more time to utilize the free membership.

Other incentives to join their program include the Planet Fitness High School Summer Pass Contest. To join this competition, contestants must post a TikTok video describing their High School Summer Pass experience and must tag @planetfitness using the hashtags #contest and #HSSP23US. 10 winners will be chosen and rewarded with a \$10,000 academic scholarship. Don't pass up this opportunity. Be sure to sign up today to get the most out of Planet Fitness' Summer Pass Program!



PHOTO: CNN

States Impose New Abortion Restrictions



North Carolina Governor, Roy Cooper

isolation, abortions are banned after six weeks of pregnancy. According to the Associated Press (AP), this time period is "often before women know they're pregnant."

According to The New York Times, The South Carolina House of Representatives passed a bill after a 24-hour debate on May 16, 2023. This bill bans most abortions within six weeks into pregnancy. If this bill is approved by the South Carolina Senate and Governor, abortion access would diminish significantly across the state.

Until recently, abortions were legal in North Carolina before 20 weeks of gestation. According to the AP, "North Carolina and South Carolina have been two of the few remaining Southern states with relatively easy access." This changed when Republican politicians overrode a veto by Governor Roy Cooper to pass an abortion ban for any pregnancies past the 12 week mark, signaling a shift towards more conservative health care policies in many American states.

Governor Doug Burgum passed a law that permits an exception for abortions when the mother's life is endangered. Rape victims are only qualified for an abortion during the first 6 weeks of pregnancy. Since April 24, 2023, it is illegal to get abortions within the state of North Dakota, unless you meet the qualifications for an exception.

Currently, abortions are legal in Georgia but, under specific circumstances, and only within the allotted time frame. Under recent leg-

Lizzie Herod
Online Editor in Chief

Across the United States, new abortion laws will soon come into effect. North Dakota, Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina have all recently undergone legislative changes to abortion restrictions within their borders. North Dakota recently authorized a near-total ban on abortions.