

# the Commentator

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Douglas Southall Freeman High School

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## Rebels on Probation after Football Clash

Caroline Tyler  
Staff Writer

In an official letter of warning received the last week of November, the Virginia High School League [VSHL] placed the Freeman football team on probation after reviewing the altercation that broke out in the handshake line of the Oct. 19 Freeman-Hermitage football game. The letter cited an "excessive sportsmanship violation" and mandated a one-year probation from the date of the incident and a \$300 fine to the Athletic Department. Immediately after the incident, the school administrations were left with the authority to investigate and punish individuals involved since the conflict began after referees had blown the final whistle signaling the 37-0 Freeman victory. Four Freeman football players, several Hermitage players and a Hermitage coach were suspended. Both school administrations worked collaboratively to investigate and address healing the 64-year rivalry.



PHOTO: LANEY VAN LENTEN

The new Freeman football field, where the altercation occurred.

The fight broke out during the handshake after the final whistle had already been blown. Game cameras and spectator phones alike captured the chaotic minutes that went viral on local news and social media.

In order to draw conclusions on the event and the role of the Freeman team and players, Mr. Marshall said that the administration had to "look through and see exactly what happened, by whom, and to what level."

He described what that process: "We looked at all of the film and talked to the people that were there to try and get factual info on what occurred. We worked with Hermitage the whole way."

Mr. Marshall also explained the administration's considerations for determining the suspensions and punishments.

"We look at the Code of Conduct closely and then measure that against the actions of an individual. It was really im-

portant for us as we started the investigation to know that these were individuals and individual actions. This wasn't a group vs. a whole group."

The Code of Conduct designates first offenses of "fighting with no/minor injury" as a category 2 violation. It states, "this category may result in minor consequences, or a suspension for a maximum of three days." The administration has the authority to implement this punishment, including designate the possible "minor consequences."

The Freeman football players that were suspended ranged in punishment from a couple days out of school with a one game suspension, to a week out of school with a two game suspension.

When asked about the impact of the incident on the remaining season, including the Godwin game the following week, Captain Liam Simpson did not want to allow the distraction to be "an excuse for the tough loss." Head Coach Henderson also emphasized moving forward, saying, "the season is over now so hopefully we've learned."

Coach Henderson will con-

tinue to instill important values in his players next season, "Sports is really about trying to build structure and discipline in people's lives so incidences like that don't happen."

After the receipt of the VHS letter, Mr. Mey and Suzanne Criswell, Director of Student Activities, met with student leaders and captains of all varsity teams to let them know of the athletic probation status. "As a school we are choosing to handle the situation in a proactive way," Mrs. Criswell said.

Mrs. Criswell emphasized that DSF athletics and fans will face more scrutiny. "We are asking that they continue with their positive vibe and attitude at games," she said.

Principals of both schools, Mr. Mey and Mr. Turpin, emphasized the importance of healing the relationship and maintaining sportsmanship in a joint letter that was issued to Freeman and Hermitage parents.

The letter stated, "It was not representative of the athletic pride and tradition of our two schools, and we expect better."

## SCA Organizes Christmas Can Drive



PHOTO: CAITLIN MCSORLEY

SCA officers Easton Chucker, Leanne Larkin, and Will Lynch pose in front of the cans collected for the Henrico County Christmas Mother. This year the SCA made the can drive a grade-level competition instead of organizing the competition by teacher.

A total of 2982 cans were collected in a competition between the classes. The Junior Class collected 1484 cans and will be rewarded with a pizza party.

## Sophomores Claim Powderpuff 2018 Victory

Annie Stephens  
Staff Writer

The annual 2018 Power Puff game, a Senior Class fundraiser had minor changes that made it a success, especially for the Sophomore Class.

Typically, the game was held after school on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving break. This year students were able to purchase a \$5 ticket to attend the games which were held during fourth period on the baseball field. According to Sophomore Class sponsor Christie Cabell, this "allowed many more students to attend, which was a great change."

Two games were played at the same time. The first game was the freshman v.s. the seniors and on the other side, the sophomores v.s. the juniors. Although the scores were close, the seniors and sophomores were victorious.

A student suffered an injury in



PHOTO: MARCUS RAND

Sophomore Kerry Nease charges past junior defenders.

the first game. An ambulance arrived but became stuck in the mud on the field. Students pushed the ambulance in an attempt to get it free, but were unsuccessful. A second ambulance was called, and a tow truck pulled the ambulance out later in the day.

The final game was between the sophomores and the seniors. After 15 minutes of play time, the sophomores defeated the seniors with touchdowns scored by Lauren Hargrove and Lacey Fisher and took home the title of Powder Puff champions.

## Freeman Remembers Carter Sommers

Caitlin McSorley & Mark Graff  
Editors-in-Chief



The Freeman Family gathered at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church on Monday Nov. 12 to mourn the loss and celebrate the life of junior Carter Sommers, who took his own life on Nov. 7. A visitation was held Saturday, Nov. 11, for friends and family. He was buried at Historic Christ Church in Weems, Virginia.

Carter is survived by his mother, Renita Sommers; father, Stephen Sommers; brother, Taylor Sommers; half-brother, Stephen V. Sommers, Jr.; half-sisters, Allison Whitney, Darby Rose and Savannah Grace Sommers; step brother, Johnathan Ulloa Terrell; step mother, Sandra Ulloa; and maternal grandmother, Evelyn Lorenzen Tinsman.

Carter's mom, Ms. Sommers described Carter as a "good friend, a good listener, another

sense of humor and his kindness. "He always made me laugh. He made everybody laugh. If there was ever a bad situation, he just made it happy," said junior Harrison Terpak.

Carter could be recognized around school for his signature red hair which he kept under the baseball cap that he "always had on," according to Anne Trexler, history teacher. In class, Carter was known as a "positive presence. He wasn't a troublemaker," said Mrs. Trexler.

Junior Katie Wilson spent many summer nights with Carter driving along Route 1 or Route 4, blasting country music (especially "Dirt Road Anthem" by Jason Aldean), in Carter's red Chevrolet Silverado pickup truck, which he bought himself last spring. Carter loved "anything that he could drive," said Katie.

Katie believed Carter "lived on the edge," always driving around with an empty tank of gas but somehow managing never to run out. His truck and his golden retriever, Gunner, were his "ba-

bies," according to Katie. Carter would pat his chest and Gunner would lay his head on him.

Carter also had a passion for hunting, fishing, sailing, star watching, and sunsets. "I think he was happiest when he was outside in the middle of nowhere at sunset. Either on an ATV, a boat, driving his truck, on a farm, [or] in the mountains. He would send pictures of sunsets. I think it was calming for him, grounding," said Ms. Sommers.

Carter could be found exploring the James River, quarries, or lakes with his friends, often in his American flag bathing suit. "He had a special thing for the Rappahannock... he would go down there and just sail," said Katie. Carter was featured in article in the Commentator last year about his love for sailing. Carter was quoted, "Sailing allows you to rely on yourself and fully trust another person...there cannot be one without the other."

Carter even took his love for sailing to the classroom. "The day he passed away he asked if we could do a project on sailing -

The America's Cup. I have never done a project on sailing before, but will until I leave teaching, in memory of Carter," said Sabrina Rabon, marketing teacher.

At country concerts, like Travis Tritt or Billy Currington, Carter would wear his cowboy hat, boots, and a big belt. He also liked rap music, but "he'd listen to any music," according to Katie.

One thing most people don't know about Carter's love for music is that he "had an amazing singing voice and played the guitar a little bit. He loved to sing," said Ms. Sommers.

Following his passing, Freeman students were offered a safe space in the library. Students additionally signed a banner in the hallway with messages for the Sommers family.

A Go Fund Me page was started to raise money for a meaningful gift for the family. The fundraiser far surpassed its original goal, raising above \$9,000 in support of the Sommers family.

### Special Features

Rebels get active, outside of athletics

### Opinions

Living with more "L's" than "W's"

W's & L's

### Features:

She Is DSF empowers Freeman girls



### Sports:

Rebel Swimmers take over Signing Day



### A&E

Picnic at Hanging Rock Play Review



# HCPS Addresses Mental Health

Greer Peacock  
Sports Editor

"Students who are struggling with their mental health should know that they are not alone, and there are resources out there to help them," said Henrico County school psychiatrist, Emily Zaleski.

Dr. Zaleski's first piece of advice is for students to talk to a trusting adult. "Most often it will be a parent or guardian, but sometimes it may be a teacher, coach, administrator, or counselor," Dr. Zaleski said. After students talk to an adult, the next step is to work collaboratively with parents/guardians and connect families to community-based resources to start exploring treatment options.

"Everyone feels sad, down, or anxious at times; however, when it starts to interfere with someone's ability to function in their day to day life, when they are withdrawing or isolating themselves, when it lasts more than a few days – that is when you want to reach out to an adult," Dr. Zaleski said.

"When you are not feeling well, the body will tell you. We need to be able to listen to the mind as much as the body in that regard," Freeman counselor, Kevin Steele said.

Rebecca Shigley, Community Engagement Manager at the Cameron Gallagher Foundation, advises that everyone have three to five coping skills.

Some examples of coping skills

include: adequate sleep, exercise at least 30 minutes a day, write in a journal, connect with a friend, listen to music, take a social media time out, focus on the positive, and spend time in nature.

"A great resource for students at school is their school counselor," Dr. Zaleski said. School counselors can connect families with community-based resources, and coordinate with teachers, parents, and students to address areas of concern or provide additional support in the school setting.

"Often times taking that initial step and letting family know that you have not been feeling well emotionally, can be a relief," she said.

If you have a friend struggling with their mental health, "listen to them with empathy and open ears and express your concern and support," Dr. Zaleski said. "Find out if your friend is getting the support or treatment they need, and if not, encourage them to speak with their parent or any other responsible/caring adult in their life. Remind them that help is available and that mental health problems can be treated. Reassure your friend that you care about him or her. If they want to talk about how they are feeling, the best thing is to just listen," she said.

"You could also offer to help your friend with everyday tasks and continue to include or invite your friend in your plans, even if they decline," she said.

"It is extremely important to not pass judgement or to say things like 'it's not a big deal'

or 'my friend has it way worse.' Often times, the person who is struggling just needs to feel heard and loved," Ms. Shigley said.

While you can be helpful to your friend, professional treatment is usually required to properly address mental health problems - so the best thing is to encourage them to talk with an adult. If they are reluctant, you can also speak with an adult about your concerns - including a school staff member.

"You are not betraying the trust of your friend if you are trying to get them the help they need," Dr. Zaleski said.

Dr. Zaleski said that students should never ignore someone's comments about death and suicide, even if the friend seems to be joking or being overdramatic. "Talking about suicide is not just someone trying to get attention and should be taken seriously," she said.

"Do not promise anyone that you will keep his or her suicidal thoughts a secret. Make sure to tell a trusted family member or an adult with whom you feel comfortable," Dr. Zaleski said.

If you have a friend or family member that you think could be struggling with their mental health, these are a few indicators to look for: withdrawing from activities or interests they used to enjoy, isolating themselves from friends or family, becoming more irritable or short tempered without it fading within a few days. If they seem to lack energy or motivation to complete tasks, changes to eating or sleeping (e.g. sleeping frequently or stay-

ing in bed all day, but still seems tired). An increase in feelings of hopelessness, or any indication they feel that life is meaningless, or having no reason to live.

Signs regarding suicidal thoughts may include: "refusing help, giving away possessions,

withdrawing from activities, aggressive behavior (fighting, arguing), decline in appearance and hygiene, sudden positive change in mood, expressing thoughts of death/suicide in direct or indirect ways or in themes in writing/art," Dr. Zaleski said.

## Helpful Resources

**Henrico Mental Health:** Provides assessment and services for adolescents.

- <https://henrico.us/services/adolescent-services/>

-Intake: (804) 727-8515

-Emergency line: (804) 727-8484.

**Side by Side:** resource for LGBTQ+ youth in Richmond

-<http://www.sidebysideva.org/>.

-Main: 804-644-4800

-Youth Support Line: 888-644-4390.

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**

-<http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

-1-800-273-TALK (8255)

**The Crisis Text Line:** a free, confidential resource available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

-Text "HOME" to 741741 and a trained crisis counselor will respond to you with support and information via text message.

-<https://www.crisistextline.org>.

**Stay Strong VA:** provides help for eating disorders

-[www.staystrongvirginia.org](http://www.staystrongvirginia.org)

-804-874-9003.

**McShin Foundation:** focuses on addiction recovery.

-[www.mcshin.org](http://www.mcshin.org) 804-249-1845.

**Children's Mental Health and Resource Center at VTCC**

-[www.mentalhealth4kids.org](http://www.mentalhealth4kids.org) 804-828-9897.

**Cameron Gallagher Foundation**

-[www.ckgfoundation.org](http://www.ckgfoundation.org)

-804-528-5000

# The Band Faces Challenges Playing 'CW'

Megan McDonald  
Staff Writer

In 1979, Freeman senior Chris Wiggins created the cadence for the Rebel Brigade to play at football games and pep rallies that he named "the CW." This cadence became a Freeman tradition that students have participated in for the past 30 years.

However, according to Laura Hollowell, the administrator overseeing school safety, student participation in the CW has changed in the past ten years. "The pushing started about ten years ago and has gotten progressively worse," Ms. Hollowell said.

At the beginning of the year Ms. Hollowell regarded the CW with these concerns in mind.

"We tried educating the freshman at Rebel Camp how to properly do the CW. We also made an announcement before the CW at the first pep rally about the safety concerns we have," she said.

According to Ms. Hollowell, some students reported "minor injuries and a possible concussion" after doing the CW. Ms. Hollowell told the marching band director, Rob Blankenship, to eliminate it from the pep rally and football game set list.

"We are no longer doing the CW because we must ensure stu-



PICTURE: CAITLIN MCSORLEY

**Cheerleaders, staff, and members of the band do the CW during a pep rally.**

dent safety," Ms. Hollowell said.

Therefore, after the first couple of games and pep rallies the Rebel Brigade was told not to play the CW.

"The concern wasn't about [the band], it was just that the student section wasn't handling it well," Mr. Blankenship said.

"During the middle section, the dance part, whereas it used to be shaking your shoulders back and forth, shaking your fists, it has now turned into basically a mosh pit," he explained.

Freeman principal Andrew Mey has also noticed these concerns. "I do feel it's appropriate to say specific to the football stands, given the nature of the

football stands, it's probably not the safest place to do," he said.

Mr. Mey specified why the stands increase the danger of the CW. "My problem with the football stands is because [they] go so high up and because we don't have faculty supervision standing in the stands," he said.

However, Mr. Mey assured that despite these concerns no action has been taken against the CW.

"Let me just say that there is no standing policy that says we'll be done with CW. It's a part of this school's tradition and we're happy to support it, provided it's done safely."

"Administrators may have some opinions about it, but cer-

tainly that does not mean that those opinions are withstanding across school leadership," Mr. Mey said.

Traditionally, the CW is played at the end of the third quarter by a group of students in the third quarter band.

A leader of the third quarter band, senior Amari Lewis, spoke about the CW. He said, "We've been doing it forever. It's a simple song, but it's enjoyable."

Amari noticed some of the concerns of Ms. Hollowell, "People would push each other a little bit, but that's just kind of how it works," he said.

Senior Jackson Albrecht spoke about some of the safety con-

cerns. "Yeah, it's the best part... it gets pretty rowdy," he said.

During the Hermitage football game, the third quarter band was wrapped up in the excitement of senior night and some members decided to play the CW despite Ms. Hollowell's previous request that they should not. Mrs. Hollowell was not working the night of the Hermitage game.

"I was pretty upset, because they knew they weren't supposed to do that," Mr. Blankenship said.

"The punishment was that the third quarter [band] wasn't happening for the time being," Mr. Blankenship said. Mr. Blankenship made this decision after John Marshall, vice principal, instructed him to "handle it." The students were also sent to apologize to Ms. Hollowell, Mr. Marshall and Mr. Mey.

Two weeks later, Mr. Mey visited the band students, informing them they were not in any sort of trouble, and the CW was not banned. However, he would prefer that they do it less often.

Mr. Mey reaffirmed that the CW is not banned and will continue to be a tradition. "Am I ... saying that we'll never do them in the stands? No I'm not saying that. We'll play that by ear. If we come to a point where we need to do that, then certainly we'll act appropriately to address it."

# Yearbook to be Published and Distributed in the Spring

Sarah Echols  
Staff Writer

The 2018-19 yearbook staff plans to publish and distribute the yearbook, The Historian, in the spring instead of the fall as has been the tradition.

"We have a problem here with surplus yearbooks left over year after year, taking up every closet at Freeman," said Nicole Arnold, yearbook adviser.

Most of the yearbooks left over are from seniors who do not return to pick up their book in the fall, so The Historian editors-in-chief senior Emma Loro, junior Quinn Phillips, and senior Catherine Tate, brainstormed a way

to solve this problem.

"When seniors graduate they often want their yearbook immediately," Quinn said.

"I like it because I won't have to come back and pick it up," said senior Sam Fee.

"Even a bunch of parents have requested that we find a different way to get the yearbook to students," Catherine said.

Before the start of this school year senior editor Trip Hickman sparked the idea to have a spring release instead of a fall release, and the editors-in-chief agreed.

This will require a little more work on the part of the staff.

"We have to work a lot harder than we have in past years, just because we have even more of a time crunch" Emma said.

They have expedited deadlines and coordinated staff members to use their time effectively.

In order to publish in the spring, the staff sacrificed a few spreads, including the graduation spread, but as their publisher, Jostens, explained, "It will increase sales in the end," Quinn said.

"I like that it's earlier, but I don't like that the senior end-of-year activities won't be in there," said senior Catherine Breeden.

Although they do not have an exact date for the yearbook publication, "We are submitting the pages to our publisher towards the end of May" Emma said.

Quinn hopes the earlier release date will allow seniors to "enjoy the memories of their senior year with signatures from their

friends which is a really special thing to a lot of people."

Catherine Breeden said getting the chance to sign yearbooks in the spring "outweighs" the fact that some activities will be missing.

"Cause that's what the yearbook's for... looking back on the friends you had and reading the notes they left you," she said.



PICTURE: ZOE COSTELLO

**Senior yearbook editors Maggie Yarborough and Catherine Tate look through yearbooks from the past.**

## INSIDE OUT

*An Introvert and Extrovert Weigh in on the Issues of the Day*

Kate Yarbrough  
Opinions Editor

Braxton Berry  
Opinions Editor

Got genuinely emotional watching the "Aladdin" trailer.

**Disney Movie Remakes**

If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

Necessary. Shine bright, starlight!

**Tacky Christmas Lights**

The only time I'll be caught doing something tacky.

I was born for the ice. I'm basically Tonya Harding (scandals included).

**Ice Skating**

Not with this dislocated knee...thanks Powderpuff.

I love my family. I love bread even more.

**Family Dinners**

Please stop asking me if I have a girlfriend.

I will be gently aerating my sparkling apple cider in a champagne glass while watching Pitbull's "World-Wide NYE."

**New Years Eve**

Can't wait to not have a boyfriend to kiss this year!

Not convinced. Who needs that much arch support?

**"Dad" style shoes**

Got the dad bod to match.

## Mental Health and the Internet



Under an Instagram photo of a current Twitter meme, they write, "I'm so depressed," or, "I want to die," a hesitant "lol" trailing at the end of the caption in order to lessen the implications of their words.

When the people behind these accounts make captions such as these, we know that they probably aren't actually contemplating their own suicide at the moment, regardless of whether or not they actually struggle with mental illness. It's human instinct to hyperbolize, to joke about heavy topics in order to trivialize their own minor issues.

And it's okay to joke about these things. Joking makes it easier to get a point across without being completely serious, or tell people how you feel without feeling awkward or alienated. But, in the long run, is making jokes actually a beneficial way to erase the stigma surrounding mental health?

It seems as if there is no clear way to tell.

On one hand, joking about the "12 mental breakdowns I had last night" opens a window of conversation to some extent. It creates a less serious tone to delve deeper into the issue of mental health, albeit one that merely scratches the surface of discussion.

On the other hand, the humor can act as a sort of impenetrable curtain. It is fluff that sits in the way of real, open conversation about mental health—so comfortable that it becomes impossible to progress past it.

Sure, talking about mental illness has become somewhat more mainstream as time progresses, but that doesn't mean that those actually struggling feel any more comfortable speaking publicly about it. Someone could feel like

they have to add the obligatory "lol" at the end of a caption, if just so that they would be considered normal.

As the internet fluctuates as time passes, so does the stigma around mental health. While mental illness may not be romanticized in the

way it was during the mid-2010s, we should still be aware of the way that it is discussed on the internet. Does joking about mental health to seem relatable and funny destigmatize it, or is it another form of glorification?

Perhaps it's not the internet's job to erase the stigma around mental health. Instead, it is the job of your family, school, and ultimately, yourself.

We aren't saying don't joke about mental health, because that would be extremely hypocritical, and it is no one's place to determine what you can and can't say on the internet. However, jokes on the internet should not be the only discussion surrounding mental illness in everyday life; it is important that we continue to destigmatize mental health and support those who are affected by it.

The internet's importance to our society continues to grow. As it does, we hope it will continue to open a door to discussion about mental illness.

Maggie Flournoy  
A&E Editor  
Kate Yarbrough  
Opinions Editor

"Stressed, depressed, and boyband obsessed," reads the millionth Instagram bio of the millionth antisocial fourteen-year-old. Her Tumblr is linked below, where she writes stories imagining what it would be like to have Harry Styles fall in love with her.

She also writes about how each member of the boy band would react if she killed herself.

In its time, coming across a profile such as this was not a rare occurrence.

Scrolling through popular social media platforms in 2014 was an entirely different experience than it is today. In turn, it created a completely different attitude towards mental illness on the internet. One minute, you would be smiling over a grumpy cat photo or laughing at a rage comic, only to scroll down and be met by a blog glorifying self-harm and eating disorders the next.

These types of bloggers were performing for a specific audience. They created a toxic romance with mental illness for those who sought it out—for those who so deeply interlaced their mental illness with their identity that they couldn't help but bury themselves in the fabricated environment. And for those stuck in the cycle, it seemed normal.

There was a backwards encouragement in this community. They drew so many young teens in individualized ways that they, themselves, were drawn in by: to trigger vulnerable teens into harming themselves, they posted pictures of their own self-harm. To encourage anorexic teens to meet their next goal weight, they posted pictures of skinny models with hashtags such as "#thinspo." These influencers and their followers didn't have anyone else to turn to—thinking, as many adolescents do, that their parents and friends wouldn't begin to understand.

These exact types of communities do still exist today, but to a much lesser extent than they used to. Nowadays, a new sort of attitude towards mental health on the internet has emerged—one that uses humor to act as a veil over serious mental health issues.

Now, looking through Twitter and Instagram, influencers with thousands of followers post memes with captions entirely irrelevant to the post's content.

**"Is making jokes actually a beneficial way to erase the stigma surrounding mental health?"**

## The L Diaries: How I Overcame Humiliation



Braxton Berry  
Opinions Editor

From splitting my pants in front of my middle school crush to dislocating my knee in front of the majority of the student body, I have a perpetual (unwanted) need to completely humiliate myself for no reason. Life could not be any better for me.

Growing up I was extremely shy and in many ways I still am; however, I have learned to mask my shyness by being overtly energetic and willing to do things that make me a public spectacle—whether my anxiety likes it or not.

Out of all of my embarrassing moments, these are my top three:

1) There I was in my PE class, outside on the track with my besties, living my absolute best life. I noticed that my crush was playing football and me being the socially awkward and idiotic person that I am—I did a split. I know, totally normal and conventional. I ran into a cartwheel and ended it off with a split.

The good news is I got the guys attention. The bad news was I split my pants from the front to the back, had to wrap my waste with a pink jacket, and exposed my highlighter yellow and pink Hollister underwear for my entire class to see.

2) The second most humiliating experience of my life happened in the eighth grade. I had just finished my lunch and without thinking I threw the napkin away that had my retainers in it. There I was, in the cafeteria with the biggest dilemma I had faced since I split my pants.

It was either embarrass myself by fishing in a dirty trash can in front of the entire cafeteria or go

home to a raging mom. I chose not to take that 'L'. Not only did I have to fish through nasty concoctions of liquid and chunky uneaten food, but I never found the retainers. I made the mistake freshman year, but I learned my lesson. My dignity is worth way more than disappearing by the hands of my mother.

3) Last but not least, the most embarrassing moment of my life has to be when I dislocated my patella during this year's powderpuff game. Cheering with only two other seniors, I decided it was a great idea to cartwheel for the first time since kindergarten. I didn't just do one; I did a cartwheel competition with the other cheerleaders. In front of hundreds of Freeman students, I fell and screamed in pain.

Although that knack for completely humiliating myself may never go away. I wouldn't change a single thing about myself. I appreciate the bruises, laughs, and complete humiliation, because it has made for some of the best experiences I have ever had; and are memories my friends and I will forever reminisce on.



Cartoon by: Cole Ryland

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

# Grant-Funded 'She is DSF' Empowers Girls



PHOTO: NICOLE ARNOLD

'She is DSF' mentors and mentees participate in a yoga class after school

Piper Finkelson  
Staff Writer

There is no better time than now for "women to unify and provide advice for each other as well as the entire community," said Junior Ellie Williams. Ellie calls herself a "proud and courageous" member of one of Freeman's newest clubs, "She is DSF."

"She is DSF" seeks to create mentor-mentee relationships between junior and senior girls and those in the freshman and sophomore class. The club is the brainchild of four teachers: Wiley Hunnicutt, Sarah-Henning

Snellings, Gilma Steele, and Nicole Arnold. Ms. Hunnicutt explained that the goal is to "provide a support network" and to bring the "disparate parts of Freeman together" in a unified community.

New environments open the door to new stresses, and students clear these hurdles more easily with support. "She is DSF" provides a framework for offering that support. The club is designed to benefit not only the mentees, but their mentors as well, who will have opportunities to connect with younger students and to offer leadership and advice. At the club's third meeting, members discussed internet safety and the dangers of

technology. In addition, the club discussed bullying and how to be more conscious of their behaviors. Officer Proffit attended the meeting as well and answered questions the girls had regarding these topics.

Initially, mentors in the club are asked to complete an application that addresses their life experiences, personality traits, and ability to be a beneficial mentor. Once the mentors were selected, they had training on what it means to be a role model. In order to make a positive influence, it's important to "understand what to do and not to do," said senior Anisa Chowdhury. Anisa explained that the mentors must act as "listeners," rather than

**What?** "She is DSF" is a new female mentoring club

**When?** Every other Tuesday after school

**Where?** Ms. Hunnicutt's room

**Why?** To build trusting relationships between mentors, mentees, and their sponsors in a supportive and welcoming environment

"counselors or therapists." The mentees then are paired with mentors and gain immediate access to this support network. At the first meeting of "She is DSF," Natane Balsom, a freshman, was paired with Gretchen Neary, a junior. Natane already describes Gretchen as "a person I can go to if I have issues. She is an amazing person."

In early October, "She is DSF" was awarded a grant from the Henrico County Education Foundation. Ms. Steele said this grant is "the only one that has been given to a mentor-mentee club." The club plans to use the money to fund team building activities that focus on physical and mental wellness.

At the fourth meeting, the club discussed stress management and a yoga instructor came in to lead the meeting. Every mentor and mentee wrote a word they wished to be described as and paced it on a card at the top of their mat to remember throughout the yoga practice.

"She is DSF" is clearly breaking new ground and will be bolstering the sense of community across the grades at Freeman.

Both club members and sponsors are excited to see "She is DSF" evolve and make an impact on Freeman. A number of activities are slated for the future. "She is DSF" meets every other Tuesday after school.

## Upperclassmen Bond over Biking

Abby Zorn  
Staff Writer

Seniors Garrett Giddings, Jonathan Morton, Harry Phelps and junior Seth Casey take the term "DIY" to a whole new level. Together, these guys buy rusty, beat up, old dirt bikes. Dirt bikes are motorized objects similar to motorcycles. They fix them up and recreationally race them.

Garrett has racing in his blood and is a seasoned veteran on the racing circuit.

"My uncle races. I have pretty much been doing it since I was two years old," Garrett said.

Jonathan rode and fixed up ATVs (all-terrain vehicle) before he got into dirt bikes at the beginning of the summer and into the beginning of this year. He had a fairly eventful experience while participating in this activity.

"One day, I was out riding



PICTURE: HARRY PHELPS

Seth Casey poses behind his red dirt bike

some trails, and I hit a tree going around 15 miles per hour. It was a pretty bad day. I was basically sunk in a puddle up to my neck swimming in mud," Jonathan said.

Harry got involved with dirt bikes at age seven. He loves riding especially with his friends.

Seth got his love of dirt bikes from his dad. "My dad has been riding for as long as I can remember," Seth said.

He really began getting into the racing scene freshman year and continues to be involved today.

Garrett, Jonathan, Harry, and Seth coined themselves [their] "own mechanics." They love to personalize their dirt bikes.

"Stickers. We use a lot of stickers," the guys all said.

As fun as racing, working on, and messing around with the bikes is, it is quite costly-- each of the guys has mentioned spending a couple thousand dollars on them.

"I've probably spent around \$4,000 in total," Harry said.

They enjoy riding around Charles City and, on occasion, Slader Park.

"[Slader Park] That's actually where I crashed my bike," Jonathan said.

Garrett, Jonathan, Harry, and Seth have created a bond through their love of dirt bikes. They are close friends, who do something they enjoy together. Through their creativity and ingenuity, they have become DIY pros.

## Freeman Boxer Makes an Impact

Cole Ryland  
Contributing Editor

Sometimes when life gives you lemons, you punch the lemonade out of them. This is the case for Lindsay Hollowell, Freeman's latest boxer-in-training, who jabs her way through life's many hurdles. Dripping with sweat, flooded with endorphins, and focused on the blows, Lindsay squares up to the punching bag and lets trivial problems go.

The gloves first came on when Lindsay was in eighth grade, after she found a gym she wanted to join. "I just wanted to hit something and get my feelings out, and I always thought boxing was interesting," she said.

Lindsay trains at CSC RVA with her two coaches, or three if sparring is happening. Every day follows a routine, starting with medicine ball drills to warm up. After those, Lindsay takes part in "shadow boxing," or boxing without an opponent, which helps with combinations and form. After that, she exercises cardio, stretches her muscles, does punching bag drills, and sometimes exercises with rope climbing.

When training to fight specifically, Lindsay enjoys adding a mix of moves into her set. "The basic punches are jabs, hooks, and undercuts, and using them in combinations is fun," she said. "I like defense as well, like ducking, pivoting, and blocking my face."

Lindsay may train often, but the process of getting to the

gym is, as she admits, a slow start. "It's hard to get me to go to boxing because getting ready is so tedious," she said. "Once I'm there and doing it though, I think to myself, 'it'll be fine,' and then leave happy, sweaty, and exhausted."

The happiness boxing brings to Lindsay comes from both exercise and learning. When focused on any given drill or technique, she finds that it causes "endorphins to rush in." It is in these moments that Lindsay disregards the world around her, and devotes her entire focus towards improving her ability.

"I like hearing my coaches talk about my progress. It's really encouraging and makes me happy," she said. She considers her fellow gym members "a big family" because of this synergy, which allows her to progress further. Boxing is used by Lindsay as a method of emotional management, endorphin release,

exercise, and fighting knowledge. She has been taught by her coaches that boxing can be used as a form of defense, but the true meaning stretches further for

her. Lindsay claims that if anyone is interested in boxing, they should take the chance and try it. "You're going to work hard, sweat, and be out of breath," she said. "But you'll leave the gym feeling amazing, sore, and happy." As the amazement, soreness, and happiness flows in after each day at the gym, Lindsay displays to Freeman that a punch is worth a thousand sweaty smiles.



PHOTO: SETH CASEY

Harry Phelps stands behind his yellow dirt bike

## Freshman Uncovers Confidence in the Kitchen After Chopped Jr.

Gretchen Neary  
Staff Writer

Freshman Emily Waters is cooking up success in the kitchen. The summer before sixth grade, Emily was on the Food Network show "Chopped Junior," which is a spin-off of the hit cooking show "Chopped." Contestants are given a basket full of mystery ingredients that all must be incorporated into a single dish. There are three rounds: appetizer, entree, and dessert. After each round, one contestant is

chopped, or eliminated.

Emily has been interested in cooking "as long as [she] can remember," said her mother, Jody Waters. "From the time she could hold a spoon, she always wanted to help out in the kitchen," she said.

Both sides of her family have great cooks, and she gained her culinary knowledge "mainly from her mom and grandma."

Emily auditioned for the show in July, and after a rigorous process, including numerous phone and Skype interviews, found that she had been accepted in August. Emily traveled to New

York City to film the show. In the first round, Emily cooked a salad with fried clams as well as hot dogs. In the entree round, she created a steak plumcot with a mozzarella topping. Emily was eliminated before the dessert round.

Emily took an important lesson with her from her "Chopped Junior" experience. Whenever she gets nervous during an interview or public speaking, she remembers her time on TV. "It's kind of like if you've conquered one thing you can conquer another. I just tell myself you did that! You can definitely accomplish this,"

she said.

Ms. Waters agreed. "I also think the experience really taught Emily to trust her inner strength. There were several times along the way that she became very overwhelmed and really didn't think she could do it, but she persevered each time, and pushed through the anxiety," she said.

These days, Emily enjoys cooking as a fun after-school hobby. She and her close friend, freshman Aubrey Walker, have cooked together before. "She's a great teacher and taught me some good tips, like don't touch anything after you've touched

raw chicken," said Aubrey, laughing.

While clearly an accomplished chef and instructor, Emily is not interested in making cooking her career. Emily said she may go on to the adult "Chopped" show but she sees it as "something [she] would do after retirement."

Instead, Emily has her goals set on a job in "social sciences or law." Whatever she does in the future, Emily will always have great memories and lessons from her experiences with "Chopped Junior" that she can apply to any situation.

# Students and Faculty Create New Library Desk

Sabereh Saleh  
Staff Writer

After 12 years of anticipation, the library has finally obtained a new circulation desk. With help from the county maintenance and sophomores Natasha Romero and Katherine Farmer, the desk was finally built after seven months of work.

The previous desk had been passed down from the main office after the last school renovation which, according to librarian Laurie Kaplan, was “not really a circulation desk and falling apart. We were staggered.”

The new desk, at 13’ 6” inches long, is “more flexible and allows more room,” said Mrs. Kaplan.

The previous desk was not very well suited for the number of people working as library staff and caused problems with training the aides, according to Mrs. Kaplan, but the new desk “is much better suited for the library.”

It was created as a side project for the previous teacher Samuel Ketner’s Technical Drawing class, and he had chosen Katherine and Natasha to work on the desk “because he knew we were really passionate and capable of doing the project. He pulled us aside and told us about it,” said Natasha. The class uses programs like CAD to design 3D objects, while Natasha and Katherine used the program Sketch-Up to design the desk.

They worked with the librarians to figure out what would be best and faced many challenges along the way, which also cost them a lot of time, according to Natasha. “We were really frustrated when the program would just stop working and we’d have to start over again from scratch.” They used the program Sketch-Up, which would sometimes crash and force them to restart



PHOTO: EMILY ANSTETT

Freeman library’s new circulation desk.

the entire project. She also said they’d work on it in class and sometimes out of school because she was “really passionate about it.” Mrs. Kaplan stated that they “worked very hard. We must have changed the desk plans at least five times.”

“It took a long time and a lot of effort,” said Katherine. “It was a lot of trial and error, especially because it was a new program. It was a lot of back and forth with the librarians too, and making sure we knew what they wanted. Every time I go into the library though, I feel accomplished.”

Both Katherine and Natasha stated that it took three quarters of the year to make the desk.

With constant communication with the librarians, the desk had finally been done and the plans were handed over to carpenter David Gilliland from the county

maintenance crew.

“We saw very viable resources in the school; it was practical,” said Andrew Mey when speaking of the plan.

“I’m really proud of it, it’s an example of how you can accomplish your dreams on a small scale,” said Natasha.

The desk was funded through “fundraisers they did for five years with Barnes and Noble gift wrapping and costed a little over \$2,000,” stated Mrs. Kaplan.

Freeman plans to continue using school resources and having students engaged in the process, according to Mrs. Kaplan and Mr. Mey. “We absolutely plan on using school resources in the future, because that’s part of our efforts to make learning authentic and provide students with a greater sense of ownership,” said Mr. Mey.



Mutahera Najafi helping with SODA.

# SODA Students Help With Translation

Lowell Smith  
Staff Writer

This year, Freeman’s SODA class (Students On Developing Attitudes) is conquering language barriers. The club divides its time planning lessons at Freeman and leading classes at Tuckahoe Middle School during lunch time on Fridays. “Students are responsible for developing the lessons,” Mrs. Curry said.

Change has been the primary theme of SODA this year. “We really kind of made it better and stronger this year,” said Mrs. Curry. Realizing the club contained so many multilingual students, Mrs. Curry saw opportunity where students could be “pivotal not only just helping sixth graders at Tuckahoe but also helping out the ELL (English Language Learners) population at Freeman High School.”

“We kind of have two different versions of SODA. We have the SODA kids that go to TMS and then we have some...[that stay] here and want to help the ELL population at Freeman High School.”

“I go and talk to them in different languages because I speak

Farsi, Pashto, Persian, English and a little bit of Spanish. So I can go and help some students during ELL,” SODA student Mutahera Najafi stated.

Mrs. Curry said, “The idea is that they provide that resource of translating when needed.” For example, the teacher has given students a task, students like Mutahera help further explain directions for the ELL students. “They’re not there to do the work for the students in any capacity. They’re helping relay the message.”

Mutahera moved to Richmond from Afghanistan six years ago and is excited to help at Freeman where “there’s usually a lot of new kids from Afghanistan.”

She said, “I remember when I first moved here I really wanted someone to help me speak my language, but I didn’t really have anyone like that with me. So I am really happy that I can help someone like that get through what they want to get through.”

Given the success, SODA wants to recruit more students like Mutahera in the future. “We’ve already started coming up with a way to be better at doing that, because it takes a really patient student to want to do that,” said Mrs. Curry.



PHOTO: SETH CABANISS

Seth’s Chinese water dragon.

# Rare Reptile Collection

Abigail Taylor  
Staff Writer

Most of us, when we think of animals that could be considered “pets,” see cats and dogs as the go-to choice. Senior Seth Cabaniss, however, has decided to take a different approach to what kind of animals he keeps in his company.

Over the past two years, Seth has collected a vast number of exotic reptiles and amphibians that he cares for, including a Chinese water dragon, a bearded dragon, two tree frogs, and a ball python.

“I became interested in exotic animals after watching some YouTube videos at work one day,” Seth explained. Since then, he has traveled across Richmond, finding new animals at a variety of reptile stores.

Not everyone was thrilled with Seth’s new passion for cold-blooded creatures. “My mom didn’t want me to get them, but said that I could keep them as long as they stayed in my room,” Seth said. Indeed, Amy Cabaniss was quite surprised when she found out that she would be sharing a home with lizards, snakes, and frogs.

“We hadn’t had a discussion about having the little rascals live in our house. They just appeared!” she said. However, she has no grievance with the creatures, explaining that “They certainly don’t cause any problems, and are nice and quiet unlike our dogs!” Ultimately, she is happy with Seth’s passion for

cold-blooded creatures “as long as they don’t escape.”

Seth has kept to his word of keeping the animals contained. “I only let them out of their tanks if I am in the room with them, because they are really fast and can’t be left out alone,” he explained. His ball python, Draco, has attempted to escape a few times, but Seth was able to contain him before things got out of control. “He’s very calm, so it wasn’t hard to catch him,” Seth said.

Exotic animals can be hard to handle, as well as expensive to take care of. Seth has to pay for the needs of all of his reptiles, and admits that “the cost can add up.” His lizards and frogs need lots of protein-filled crickets to appease their massive appetites, and Draco the snake requires a frozen mouse every week. Nonetheless, Seth loves having the animals around.

“I plan to move into an apartment with all of them after school,” Seth said, but made it clear that “it will have to be somewhere off campus because most dorms don’t allow reptiles.”

Even though senior year has proven to be very busy for Seth, he still makes lots of time for his reptiles, and enjoys that time immensely. “The frogs are my favorite- they remind me of little Kermit,” he said. He hopes that raising awareness for these exotic animals will make them more mainstream pets, and consequently more people will want to get them. Seth strongly believes, “They are full of personality... everyone should look into getting some reptiles.”

# Freeman Lockers Get A Glow Up From Students

Marcus Rand  
Staff Writer

Whether you’ve seen the signs posted throughout school or the white-painted lockers in the main hall, by now most students probably have some idea of the “YOU” project. For the first time in Freeman’s history, students are being offered the chance to rent and decorate the lockers that line the school’s hallways.

Managed by the Freeman Project, a school organization with emphasis on community service, the “YOU” project adds to list of activities that the Freeman Project has undertaken in order to benefit the school community. The group has done cosmetic things, such as cleaning up the mess left behind after the recent tornado, as well as more permanent projects like revitalizing the trophy case in the main hall.

This project, however, offers the entire student body a chance for creative expression.

Junior Sophia Cubahiro, a student in the Freeman Project, said she hopes the locker project will “give each student that’s here a chance to be themselves and have something that they did to represent the school.”

The project, which has been in the works since the 2016-2017 school year, is open to all students attending Freeman, allowing underrepresented voices the chance to add art to their school without enrollment in an art class. The group also hopes that by involving students directly in their school environment, they will feel more connected.

Junior Samantha Davis, another member of the Freeman Project managing the locker initiative, said “If you have to be here for four years you want to feel like you enjoy being here, we want to make the school into people’s second home since we’re here so long.”

Any student can rent a locker



PHOTO: EMILY ANSTETT

Freeman Lockers painted white for students to personalize.

at a fee of \$5 from members of Freeman Project at certain C and D block lunches, as posted on Schoology. Before painting the locker, you must submit a sketch or description of your intended design, with “DSF” or “Freeman” included in it. Once painted, it will stay there until the next school year, where you can pay \$2 to re-rent the locker and keep the design the same or it may be repainted and re-rented as needed.

Freshman Lilley Darden, who plans to rent and paint a locker, said “I’m excited to decorate the lockers because I think it would brighten Freeman up.”

The faculty also shares in the excitement towards decorating the school. Laura Jones, social studies teacher, said “Freeman is a beautifully diverse school, but when you walk in the doors, there’s not much to reflect this.

So we wanted to provide an avenue for students to show what Freeman is.”

The project also serves a secondary purpose: raising money to fund this year’s “All-Star Prom” for Freeman’s Exceptional Education students. As many of the students in the program aren’t able to attend prom, this event allows them an experience that suits their specific needs.

“We had our first All-Star prom last year, along with the Integrated Services program at Glen Allen High School, and it was immensely successful” said Ms. Jones. “We want to be able to host one each year, and eventually expand it to include all Henrico high schools that want to attend.”

Whether it’s to help raise funds for the All-Star prom or leave your mark on Freeman, students have begun renting lockers.

# Athleticism and Competition Go Beyond Varsity Sports

## We hear lots about star football players and incredible goal-scorers. But what about the Freeman athletes whose athletic abilities get showcased outside of school?

### Senior Surfer Goes With The Flow

Julia Cassidy  
Features Editor

The ocean stretches out in a deep blue sheet all the way till it meets the horizon, undulating with the undying rhythm of the tide. Gentle salty waves rise up and crash in crystal droplets while the sun's rays shine down, reflecting off of the waves. This beach environment is where Senior Lexie Dixon pursues her surfing passion.

fourth or fifth grade. She says that after that camp, she started to get "really into" surfing.

She normally surfs in late August, early September, and sometimes in October or November. Her typical places to surf include Hatteras, North Carolina, Rodanthe, North Carolina, as well as Virginia Beach, Virginia. However, her favorite place to surf was far from the East Coast.

"This summer, I went surfing in Hawaii, which was by far my favorite, but like I just can't go there every day," she said.

Surfing takes some strategy. "You can use different boards. Normally when I go to Virginia Beach I use my longboard because the waves are smaller. I use my shorter board when I go to Hatteras because the waves are bigger, [making it] easier to use a shorter board," she said.

For Lexie, surfing is normally a group affair. "I go to the beach every



Lexie Dixon

However, Lexie believes that the thing that is the most daunting about surfing is the water itself. Lexie said, "The only thing out there that scares me is when it's starting to become winter time and the water is really rough. There are [a lot more] riptides and under toes compared to the Summer. I'm not scared of sharks or anything just rough waters."

As for competitive surfing, Lexie says she has never tried it before. She has attended the East Coast Surfing Championships (ECSC), but she has never surfed in one before. She is open to the possibility of it in the future. However, for the moment she is not competitive about surfing. "I just do it for fun... maybe [later] if I further my skills," she said.

year with my family and friends so I normally go [surfing] with them or by myself," she said.

Lexie has gone surfing with Senior Katie Cooper starting many years back. Katie said, "I remembered seeing pictures of her and thinking 'woah! She is really good.'" When they were in sixth grade, they went on a trip together to Lexie's Dad's cousins

house in Virginia Beach. "We surfed in the middle of September with these warm water wetsuits. It was freezing and we were wet and it was a mess." Nevertheless, Katie looks back on the memory fondly. "It was so much fun," she said.

Surfing is not without its dangers; surfing comes with the potential risks of injury, weather, water, and wildlife.

Lexie remembers a time when she was surfing out pretty far with friends who were in kayaks. Her friends kept feeling that there was a shark out there in the water, and as they were paddling back in to shore they kept feeling the bump under their kayaks. "Even though it didn't really affect me, it was still scary" she said.

### Freshman Competes With Four-Hoofed Friend

David Buckbee  
Staff Writer

Most 5-year-olds are learning how to read, but when she was five, freshman Page Yauger was learning how to ride a horse.

Page rides horses six days a week, including once on the weekends. Traveling out to a farm in Midlothian to ride, she trains for approximately 60-90 minutes each session.

"On a horse show weekend, she usually has to sacrifice both weekend nights and one full day," said Ann Yauger, Page's mom.

Competitive in nature, Page devotes her time to her training in order to improve her performance

in horseback riding shows.

"I compete in shows every weekend or every other weekend, mostly in the summer," Page said. "During the school year, I'm mostly training in preparation for summer shows."

Riders in show competitions are split into one of three disciplines, or types of events: dressage, jumpers, or hunters. Dressage is based on appearance of the horse and rider, jumpers is based on the speed of the horse, while hunters, Page's discipline, focuses on how smooth and fluid the horse runs through the course.

Dressage lacks jumping during its event, however, both jumpers and hunters jump through multiple obstacles during their competi-

tion. Jumping is Page's favorite aspect of show competitions.

"I compete against other individual riders, sometimes even professionals," Page said.

In addition to the time commitment, horseback riding is also both physically and mentally demanding.

"Riding horses is a great workout both for the low-carb body and the core," Page said.

Having rode horses for over eleven years, she began riding intermittently; just once or twice a week. As Page grew older, however, she began increasing the frequency, length, and rigor of her training. Her hard work and continued commitment culminated two years ago, when Page's family bought her a horse: Mikey.

"I've had Mikey for two years, and I absolutely love him," Page said, beaming.

Despite Freeman not having a horseback riding team, Page hopes to continue riding horses through high school and potentially ride in college, too.

"I've been doing college camps during the summer," said Page "I'd love to get a scholarship—both JMU and UVA have great programs."



Athletes work out at CrossFit RVA

### Junior Stays (Cross)Fit

Steve Ulrichs  
Staff Writer

Despite Freeman not having a CrossFit program, junior Tristan Lowry participates in CrossFit multiple times per week at CrossFit RVA.

"It's a great workout to help maximize all-around physical health," says Tristan.

CrossFit focuses on targeting specific muscle groups, and is based off functional movements using a variety of weights and bodyweight workouts. Bodyweight workouts use one's body to put stress on muscles, as opposed to weights. An example of this would be pushups, which put stress on muscles using one's own body weight instead of using extra artificial weights.

CrossFit was founded in 2000, but the concept was started much earlier

by a man named Greg Glassman. Greg made the discovery as a teenager that using dumbbells and free weights was a potentially beneficial alternative to solely doing body-weight workouts. When he started competing in athletic activities with his friends, he realized how much the free weights helped him, and thus CrossFit was born.

The various levels of competition are something that other sports lack. It can be as cooperative or competitive as a participant chooses to make it.

"I like how I can do things at my own pace" says Tristan. "I think if I keep at this enough, I may decide to move over to a separate class so I can participate in competitions."

Classes currently in Tristan's routine are solely designed to keep the participant in shape, while other classes are

tailored to prepare athletes for specific events in CrossFit competitions.

An example of an event from a competition an athlete would need to specifically prepare for is a 20 minute circuit consisting of as many rounds as possible of the following challenges: 8 toes-to-bars, 10 dumbbell hang clean and jerks, and 14-cal. row. Completing these workouts in that order makes one round, and whoever can complete the highest number of rounds in the 20 minutes wins the competition.

The class designed for that competition would focus more on those workouts and strengthening the muscles needed for those workouts. Tristan's happy rigger where he is in classes for now, however he may soon step up to the daunting challenge of competitions.

### Junior Stays On Her Toes

Sadie Rogerson  
Staff Writer



Victoria Wright

Of the many parts that junior Victoria Wright plays in her life, being a ballet dancer is the one that keeps her on her toes the most. On top of school and life in general, Victoria finds the time to attend two-hour classes, four times a week, along with a Saturday rehearsal for upcoming performances, all at the Richmond Ballet.

Having danced there for nearly five years now and 13 overall, she has become accustomed to the demanding nature of her chosen activity. "I began when I was three years old, mostly because a bunch of my friends were going to do it with me and because I wasn't as interested in other sports," Victoria said. Since then, she has dabbled in different genres of dance, including jazz and modern, but ultimately she chose to focus

solely on ballet.

Prior to junior year, Victoria practiced five times a week rather than four. Such a rigorous schedule was too hard for her to handle during what is widely considered to be the hardest year of high school. She made the switch from five to four after realizing that she "wasn't getting enough sleep," but couldn't afford to miss class because of the Richmond Ballet's "very strict attendance policy."

Unlike many traditional sports, ballet is a year-round commitment, but with every season comes a new production for which to prepare.

Currently, Victoria is getting ready for her seventh performance in the Richmond Ballet's *The Nutcracker*. This process begins in October with auditions, and then those chosen to perform practice for two hours each Saturday and Sunday in addition to their regular classes. This year, Vic-

toria is playing the part of a soldier. In past performances, she has been everything from Mother Ginger to a cook.

In the springtime, she practices for her annual recital on the weekends instead. Performing in shows takes a combination of strength and endurance, "You have to be able to perform and dance at the same time," she said.

Victoria described a typical weekday class as being approximately "45 minutes of barre, 45 minutes of center, and then 30 minutes of pointe." Each type of instruction has a different purpose. Barre is used to "warm up," center to "practice combinations of steps," and pointe is simply practiced to perfect a dancer's technique.

Although practicing in general and for major productions is fun in and of itself, Victoria said that she thinks the best thing about ballet is the "camaraderie and the

friendships you make." She stated that she believes it has also helped her to develop better "teamwork skills," which serve her well in school now and will continue to do so later in life.

Her mother, Mrs. Wright, elaborated on how ballet has impacted Victoria so far, "As her technical and artistic abilities [have grown], dance [has] motivated her to explore other forms of art," she said.

Although Victoria doesn't plan to continue dancing after high school, given "how long it takes to become a professional dancer," she said that ballet will "always be special" to her.

### Jiu Jitsu + Black Belt: Don't Cross This Senior

Will Dornik  
Staff Writer

When senior Gracie Dixon isn't busy with lacrosse, basketball, or school, Gracie spends her time training and teaching kids at the American College of Jiu-Jitsu off of Patterson Avenue. Commonly called Street Effective Mixed Martial Arts, Aam-Ka Jiu-Jitsu aims to help people gain confidence in defending themselves.

Aam-Ka Jiu-Jitsu is a collection of all types of martial arts. It helps students prepare for all types of defense scenarios. The art mainly is a variety of karate with influence from Judo and Jiu-Jitsu. While other forms of

martial arts are mostly offensive, Aam-Ka Jiu-Jitsu entails on defense tactics once a fight is taken to the ground. It takes real world applications on how to defend yourself when an opponent has a weapon. It's a well-rounded system of both offensive and defensive tactics.

Gracie has worked for nine years to become an adult black belt. Two years ago she decided to help kids defend themselves while also being physically active.

"I usually teach them different types of techniques they can use to defend themselves from different attacks," she said.

Defense is not the only benefit to Street Effec-

tive Mixed Martial Arts. Gracie said, "Although defense is the number one priority of Aam-Ka Jiu-Jitsu, it keeps me and my students in shape. The American College of Jiu-Jitsu is a great alternative to the YMCA.

Due to Gracie's heavy workload at school and other extracurricular activities, she hasn't been able to compete recently. Gracie plans to keep teaching Street Effective Mixed Martial Arts after high school. "I plan to continue teaching through my college breaks, and hopefully see some of my oldest students continue to develop."

Gracie would also like to continue in her own Martial Arts journey as



Gracie Dixon

well. "When I'm not teaching, I'd like to continue training for my second degree black belt. It's a ton of work, but it's a fun way to stay fit."

J-m Dixon, Gracie's mother, is impressed on how Aam-Ka Jiu-Jitsu has affected her. "She

has definitely improved her mental and physical strength and confidence, her self-discipline, leadership and teaching skills. It has shown her that if she sets a high goal, in this case her adult black belt, and fights hard to reach that goal, she can

achieve it in spite of all of the mental and physical challenges she may have to endure in the process. She has also learned the importance of one of the dojo's mottos: 'You don't lose, you learn'. 'A great life lesson in and of itself.

### Sophomore Aspiring Competitive Driver Loves The Thrill

Josua DuPois  
Staff Writer

"There are no drivers like Formula One drivers. They are engineers, in a way," says Asif Kapadia, a film director in Europe where Formula One Racing is most popular.

William Jones is a sophomore who regularly participates in what he describes as "basically Formula One racing."

William has been racing since a young age and has been interested in cars his entire life. He and his father compete in full size vintage Alfa Romeo brand cars, a type once used in Grand Prix motor racing as well as Formula One. In total, his family owns seven cars of this style, three of

which they actively race in Virginia, Connecticut, and Florida.

William's father has been collecting and working on cars for a long time. All but one of their cars have completely finished restoration.

William's role in the race is solely work at this point, mainly helping refuel the car or check tires on a pit stop, but he plans to start driving when he gets his license in about a year.

A typical race begins with preparing the car for action by performing a full inspection and making sure everything is working properly. This includes applying fresh tires as well as making sure the car has plenty of fuel.

When the green flag

flies, cars accelerate to over 100 miles an hour while enthusiasts of the sport roar from the stands.

"There's really a lot to think about when you're out there [with] 50 or so other cars. They're all around you and you have to focus on your throttle input, shifting (gears), what's around you, focusing on the next corner and how you're going to take that properly. There's a lot to think about," said William.

Safety is strictly enforced during a race; it is against the rules to bump another car.

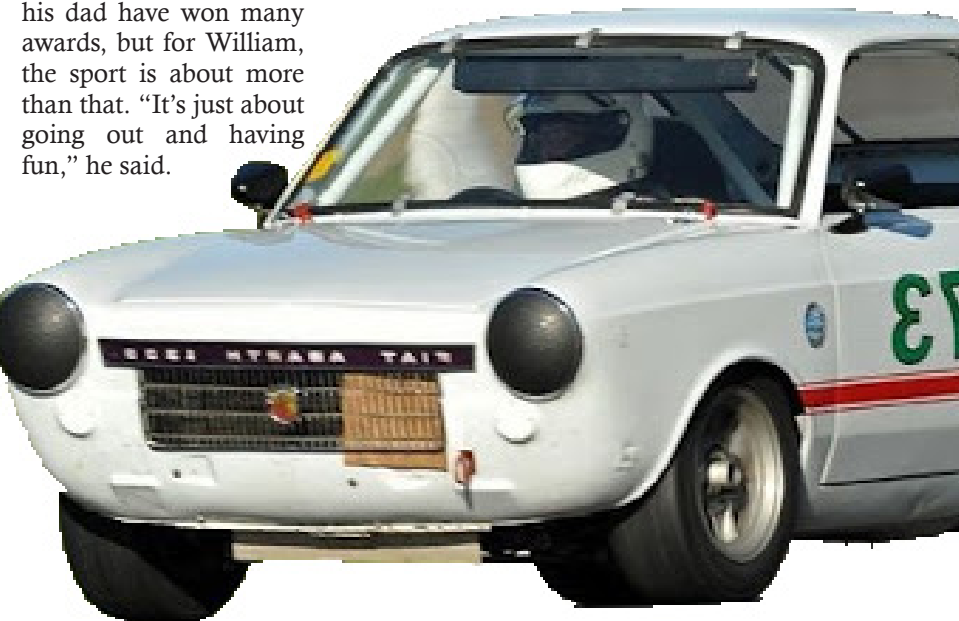
Depending on the length of the race, a one-minute pit stop may be required in order to replenish worn-down tires and empty fuel tanks.

This type of race is called an 'enduro' and runs for about an hour.

Over time, William and his dad have won many awards, but for William, the sport is about more than that. "It's just about going out and having fun," he said.

Without a doubt, by racing and maintaining his family's cars, William is one of the few, if not

the only student at Freeman who can say they fit Kapadia's description of a Formula One driver.



William Jones



Page Yauger

## Fall Briefs

### Football

#### Alec Erickson

"The highlight of the season was definitely beating Deep Run."

"After losing the first game to Midlothian, the team worked hard at practice and had an unexpected winning season."

### Field Hockey

#### Erin McCall

"The season highlight was beating Atlee 2-0 when we were ranked 6 and they were ranked 2."

"Through the season we improved so much. We adjusted to playing on turf and really meshed together as a team to turn our losing season to a winning one. We had many hard games, some of which we went into overtime and shoot-outs but we fought hard and are so happy with the progress we made!"

### Golf

#### David Andrews

"The season highlight was qualifying for states and placing second in regionals."

"A summary of season was proving consistency for the team on the second day of regionals which helped qualify them for states."

### Boys Cross Country

#### Sam Geissler

"At the Patrick Henry Invitational we finished second so we got the first trophy at a large invitational. Also, it was fun to run on a team with so many seniors on varsity and to see the growth of the three freshman on varsity"

### Girls Cross Country

#### Iris Cassidy

"The highlight of our season was when we went to Patrick Henry in Ashland 10 runners finish in top 10 in all our races."

### Boys Volleyball

#### Will Coker

"The highlight of the season was beating Godwin at Godwin on their senior night. That game secured our spot in the post season and motivated the whole team."

"The season overall went well. Although the team had differences, we were able to pull it together when we needed to and finished somewhere that we all proud of."

### Girls Volleyball

#### Leanne Larkin

"Going to five with deep run was definitely the highlight of the season!"

"We played really well in the deep run game and usually had competitive games just ended up coming up short a few times."

## New Girls Basketball Coach

Balazs Kaszala  
Staff Writer

Andrea Sisson may be a Godwin alum, but this winter she'll be wearing the gray and blue as Freeman's new girls varsity basketball coach. As a new coach with few returning varsity players, Coach Sisson will have the difficult task of creating good team chemistry between the girls. She said that the best way to really get to know her know players is to "just establish a relationship with them...that's just me getting to know their family, getting to know their brothers and sisters, just to make sure that they understand that I care about them more than just as a basketball player."

Coach Sisson grew up in a basketball family. "I have been involved in basketball since I could walk ... [my family] eat, sleep, drink, play basketball, that's all they did." Her basketball inspiration led her to play basketball at Godwin, and then later at Kutztown University in Pennsylvania. After her collegiate career ended, Coach Sisson accepted a job offering to be the Godwin junior varsity girls basketball coach, where she coached for four years before coming to Freeman.

As a coach at Freeman, Coach Sisson brings a positive, upbeat

vibe to the team, something which the players themselves have noted. "[This year] I would say that it's a much more positive attitude, that we're all willing to work really hard to create a bond between the coach and the new players," said junior Eleanor Carey. "[There is] definitely a positive energy," agreed senior Abigail Wilson.

Coach Sisson knows that it's difficult to adapt to a new coaching environment, but she says that the one thing she keeps in mind is to "stick to what you know." In her mind, expectations should be similar to previous coaching experiences because the strategy has been seen to work. "For me, it's just understanding what kind of experience the girls had in the past, and try to make sure that it's somewhat similar, but also make sure that we're heading in the right direction."

As it is still early in Coach Sisson's tenure at Freeman, it is difficult to fully see the results she's accomplished right now. Her main goal for this season is for "basketball is a successful program here, whether that means working on a lot of fundamentals at practice or working on game strategy."

Coach Sisson is also bringing a new style of play to the team. "I'll be throwing in a lot of different drills and plays and terminologies," she said.



PHOTO: CAROLINE TYLER

Coach Sisson watches the varsity girls basketball game against Glen Allen.

Finally, Coach Sisson hopes that she can help the girls really grasp the fundamental aspects of her game this year. "My expectation is for the girls to grasp on to what I'm trying to build here. I know this is going to be a process and it's not going to be some-

thing that's like, you come in to practice one day and the next day it's all fixed. It's going to be a challenge for me, and I just want basketball to be fun for the girls."

## Athlete Promoted From Sideline to Court

Ashwin Suresh  
Staff Writer



PHOTO: CAITLIN MCSORLEY

Kenneth Oliver cheers on his teammates after they scored against Atlee.

Dribbling his way from the Philippines to competition and culture of America, Kenneth Oliver has finally accomplished his dream.

Kenneth, a senior basketball player, is an immigrant from the Philippines. He arrived in the US on April 30, 2016. Since that day, Kenneth has worked hard to overcome language and cultural barriers, and this year, he finally made the varsity basketball team.

Kenneth and his family moved to America as soon as his mother found a job. Kenneth said "she would not accept leaving me, my brother, and my father back."

"We had heard many great things about America...especially for my family and for me playing basketball."

The immigration process according to Kenneth was long, but relatively smooth with no extraordinary difficulties.

He was "very happy" to reach America, "but it was very hard to leave [his] friends behind."

Kenneth maintained a love for basketball, and he was excited to see what American basketball was like. The transition into a new style of basketball was not easy, as American basketball consists of lot better competition

according to Kenneth.

Kenneth's most difficult transition was developing chemistry with teammates. He said "it was very difficult in the beginning."

Last year, Kenneth did not make the varsity team, and was just a manager. He said during games, it was embarrassing to only give out water and record film for the rest of the team.

Michael Fortune, senior captain of the basketball team, said that even though Kenneth was just a manager last year, "he was always on the side working on something."

Head Coach Chapin George said Kenneth has "unmatched work ethic" and is passionate about the game, and this allows him to be successful.

Kenneth wakes up early to work on his ball-handling skills, runs two miles every day, and he works on his craft through various practices.

"Kenneth has not missed an off-season workout in the past two years" said Michael Fortune. "He sets an example by working hard on and off the court" said junior Branan McKeon Kenneth's friend.

"On the days we don't have basketball practice for school, Kenneth is working on his bas-

ketball skills at the Tuckahoe YMCA from 4:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m." said Branan.

According to Coach George, Kenneth's greatest attributes are his ball-handling skills and his pressure defense.

Kenneth is described by his coach, teammates, and friends as "genuine, selfless, honest, passionate, kind, and polite." Michael said.

"Last year, he used to call me 'sir' and this just shows how respectful and polite Kenneth is," Michael said.

Not knowing that he would be coming to America in the first place, and "just to be able to make the varsity team this year...is a dream come true" said Kenneth.

Kenneth appreciates things like laptops and printers which were not accessible everywhere in the Philippines. But his dream was to see his name on the scoreboard in the gym, and now after countless hours of hard-work and dedication, "OLIVAR" will now be seen by the entire school during every basketball game.

## Freshman Shot Putter Makes a Comeback

Julia Hall  
Staff Writer

Freshman Chloe Ellen will be making a comeback of sorts as she competes in shot put, long jump and sprints in her second season for the Rebel indoor track team. Chloe's first winter track season was cut short due to a seizure which caused her to miss several weeks of competing.

"My seizure happened from not having enough water in my system, last year, at the end of our first meet," said freshman Chloe Ellen.

"I feel very prepared for my coming season."

To train for her events Chloe does sprint running. For shotput, "I lift about 20 pounds, and for long jump I work on my jumping and squats."

Chloe's best and favorite event is shot put.

"Honestly, it kind of helps when you have a lot of anger. Like, when you have a weight, you just want to let it out" she said.

Chloe's shot put coach, Jud Beard, said "she is capable...she [can] work hard to try and get better...she can be very good." Coach Beard said that the biggest challenge Chloe needs to confront is that "she's got to

dedicate herself to [the event]...she's got to buy...into this." He said that Chloe really has to want to win in order to succeed.

Coach Beard expects this to be a season of progress for Chloe. One of Chloe's teammates Lizabeth Rivera, said "she's [going to] be really good by the time she's a senior, she's going to have learned a lot."

Chloe got her start in field events when she was in fourth

grade while she was running cross country. Mr. Fritz, Tuckahoe Middle School science teacher and coach, convinced her to try shot put.

Chloe's teammates and coach expect her to "fine tune" the technicality of the shot put, gain more experience, and beat her personal record this season. Her personal record from Tuckahoe Middle School is 29 feet and at Freeman is 25 feet and 9.5 inch-

es. At Tuckahoe, Chloe holds the records for shot put, discus, and long jump.

Chloe's goal for this year is to go to states, "but I have to throw 36 to go and I'm only 29 right now."

Perhaps Chloe will channel her anger into her comeback season, so she can take it all the way to states.



PHOTO: GRACE POWERS

Chloe Ellen throwing shot put at practice.

# Four Senior Swimmers Commit on Signing Day

Cameron McCarty  
Sports Editor

After a long wait Peyton Proffitt, Kara Young, Reid Hutcherson, and Maura Graff made their athletic commitments official on Nov. 14, as they each signed to swim at the collegiate level.

Counselor Kevin Steele spoke briefly about the swimmers' success on Freeman's varsity swim team. Peyton, Kara, and Maura led the girls to place second in the state championship after only participating as a VHSL sport for three years. Reid contributed to the team as well by helping the boys team earn third place at the state championship. After celebrating the accomplishments of the athletes, the parents of each swimmer shared warm statements about their child's journey with swimming.

Additionally, Freeman Coach Chris Dingman congratulated to swimmers. He said, "Anyone can be a great swimmer but not everyone can be a great person," before reflecting on his personal experiences and observations of the hard work each athlete put into the pool over the past three years.

Peyton started the sport when she was eight, and in middle school chose to pursue swimming over other sports.

"I would say my support system has made me the swimmer I am today because without my coaches and my teammates pushing me to do my best and having positive attitudes. Most of all my parents really helped me by making it fun, they have never put pressure on me and make sure I know they don't care how fast I go as long as I am having fun," said Peyton.

Peyton will be attending William and Mary, which "stood out because of the team's positive, encouraging environment as well as the amazing coaches and unbeatable academics." After visiting, it was clear to Peyton that Williamsburg was meant to be her home.

"Signing day was very exciting.



Left to right: Maura Graff, Reid Hutcherson, Peyton Proffitt, and Kara Young sign to swim in college.

I was glad to see so many people supporting me and my teammates," said Peyton.

Peyton's mother was sentimental when congratulating the swimmers on finalizing their success, "with the determination that you all have you will go on to do great things," said Susan Proffitt.

After making many sacrifices and spending many early mornings swimming, Reid is ready to pursue his athletic career at Villanova and contributing to his new team.

"Long meets and early practices while your friends are asleep or having fun can lead to missing out on major events," said Reid. However, he sees swimming as a positive part of his life, and attributed his success to his family and teammates.

"[Swimming] was stressful at times but I was able to meet a lot of new people through it and it taught me several things that would help me through the rest of my life."

In his upcoming years at Villanova, Reid is ready to see "what the future holds."

Kara has also been a member of the varsity swim team since

her freshman year. However, last year, Kara wasn't able to swim because of a concussion that caused symptoms lasting five months. After that, it took a lot of hard work to get back to where she started.

"It was hard not being able to do most stuff like flip turns, dives, or backstroke and I could only swim for thirty minutes for the first couple of weeks. I missed most of the freeman swim season and almost the whole club [YMCA] season so I couldn't swim until summer," said Kara.

Kara will be swimming for Virginia Wesleyan to further pursue her love for the water (both with the sport and going to college near the beach.)

"The biggest feeling of relief was when it was finally all over I was glad to be committed and going to college," said Kara.

With her current teammate Peyton, Maura Graff will also be swimming at William and Mary next year. After a long recruiting process filled with big decisions and stress, Maura was more than ready to join the Tribe family.

"I love William and Mary

because of its amazing team culture; everyone on the team is extremely supportive of one another and it's a truly special team atmosphere. Also, the phenomenal coaching staff, outstanding academics, beautiful campus and closeness to home made this school the perfect place for me," said Maura.

"I would contribute most of my success to my parents because of the incredible amount of love, support and opportunities they have given me. My brother, sister, and friends are also immensely supportive of me and I could never have succeeded without them. I also attribute my successes to my coaches and teammates who push me every day, and my teachers for being so understanding and supportive of me."

Through commitment and dedication, Kara Young, Peyton Proffitt, Reid Hutcherson, and Maura Graff achieved their long awaited goals to officially become collegiate swimmers. "Seniors: click your pens and sign your life away," said Kevin Steel.

## Winter Briefs

### Wrestling

Patrick Hinkle

"I am most looking forward to experiencing the wrestling season with friends."

"My goal would be to improve my skills and fitness to the best of my ability."

### Gymnastics

Meredith Hearn

"I am most looking forward to getting to know my teammates better and getting some skills back."

"My goal is for our team to do our best and have fun despite us losing some key athletes."

### Boys Basketball

Robert Steele

"I'm looking forward to our team and seeing who plays what roles."

"My goal is to try and help the team as much as possible to win games."

### Girls Basketball

Gracie Dixon

"I am excited for the new coach and how she will be different from years past."

"I want to win more games than last year."

### Boys Indoor Track

Cullen Munro

"I'm excited to finish my senior year of track."

"I want to make it to states in the mile."

### Girls Indoor Track

Camila Perez

"I'm looking forward to competing on our new track."

"My goal this season is to PR in the 500."

### Boys Swimming

Graham Boyle

"This season, I'm the most excited to have some really good races against my teammates, as well as the guys from other schools."

"The goal for this season is for the Boys team winning states!"

### Girls Swimming

Caroline Wood

"I am super excited to get back into swimming. I am looking forward to the swim meets and a great season!"

"Some goals for the season are to win states and to improve as a team."

## Sophomore Competes on Egyptian Swim Team



PHOTO: ANIMATIONCONTINENT.COM

Finswimmers wear special fins on their feet while in action.

Emma Johnson  
Staff Writer

When Karolen Morkous turned ten years old, her mother signed her up for swimming lessons as a birthday gift. Eight years later, she is making a name for herself in the swimming world with hopes of someday swimming in the Olympics for the Egyptian National Team.

Karolen does a unique type of swimming called "finswimming" which involves swimming with fins and a snorkel.

While it has not yet been named an Olympic sport it still requires very rigorous training. "I do an hour of conditioning and then an hour in the water every day," she says. This is challenging for Karolen because her coach lives in Cairo, however technology has made their relationship possible. "My coach will send me what I need to do for practice for my competitions," she said about how they would train through messages and videos.

Mohamed Kefah, Karolen's coach, spoke about her commitment. "She does not miss training at all even in her illness," he said. She even once tore a liga-

ment in her foot and responded by winning second place in her event.

After moving from Cairo close to two years ago, Karolen has had to adapt to school in the U.S., but is excelling. "She's an excellent student" says Mrs. Keller, Karolen's Biology teacher. "Karolen doesn't need to progress, she's a hard worker, she gets excellent grades, and considering English is a second language for her, you can tell that she has the desire to do well."

Next year in June, Karolen hopes to compete in a national championship event in Florida. With only a few competitions in the U.S., she returns to Egypt about once a year to compete in important swim meets and to see family.

With Karolen's dedication and persistence she hopes to one day dominate the "finswimming" community. Until then, she takes pride in passing her passion for swimming on to others. "With my young sister," she remembered, "I used to pretend to be the coach."

Great things lay ahead for Karolen's future as she continues to pave the way to her own success and for the future of finswimming.

## Wrestler Balances Band and Sport



PHOTO: CAMERON MCCARTY

Michael Moore wrestles with a teammate in practice.

Salaar Khan  
Staff Writer

Two communities, two families, two commitments. Sophomore Matthew Moore is the only student at Freeman to be both a member of the wrestling team and to play for the Freeman marching band.

Matthew was interested in wrestling when he first joined the Tuckahoe team but since then, his enthusiasm has grown. "I really started liking it in high school and now I'd say it's definitely my favorite sport," said Matthew.

Matthew's introduction to playing in the band was a little different. He got into it because of one of his mentors: his dad. "My dad used play trumpet so we had one at home and I figured he could help me learn how to play it," Matthew said.

Juggling two commitments can be taxing. Matthew often has to be at school by 6:45 a.m. to practice for the marching band as well as sacrificing time to play on the weekends. Wrestling usually has practice every day after school in addition to all matches outside of school.

He admits that while conditioning for the season can be tough, the team makes it more than worth it.

"I'd say the best part about wrestling are the matches. I love being able to spend times with the guys and just get pumped beforehand," he said.

What gives the Matthew the ability to balance school, sports, and band with some extra free time for himself as well?

"He works very hard," said Matthew Henshaw, Freeman's wrestling coach. "We have weight training that nobody's really obligated to come to every Tuesday and Thursday during school and in the summers during the mornings. Matthew and a couple of others are coming almost all the time, because it's their own choice of wanting to get better."

Coach Henshaw also recognizes that Matthew is determined in everything he does do, not just wrestling.

"I like his work ethic. For Matthew to take on so many things at once is a testament to his parents and how he was brought up and how he's organized himself," said Coach Henshaw.



# Football Team Finishes Second in the Area

Addison Gorenflo  
Staff Writer

Despite a tumultuous season rife with injuries and controversy, the Rebels varsity football team ended with a winning record and secured the second rank of the division. Many of the team's wins this season were over teams that have historically defeated them, such as Hermitage, who they beat by a 37-point margin. A record of seven wins to three losses sent the Rebels to playoffs, where they were eliminated by L.C. Bird in the first round.

This successful season is a notable feat in comparison with the team's performance last year. In the 2017 season, the Rebels ended with a record of four wins to six losses and failed to secure a spot in the regional playoffs. According to head coach Mike Henderson, "It was very unusual to go home early. We had made the playoffs 4 straight years [before last season]."

Several factors culminated in last year's poor season. For one, head quarterback Jack Pollard, now a freshman at Washington and Lee, suffered a season-ending knee injury in the fifth game. With Jack on the bench, the team had "poor chemistry and suffered from a lack of leadership", said senior wide receiver Liam Simpson.

Heading into this year, the

Rebels knew they had to make drastic changes in order to avoid another losing season. Many of these changes included switching the positions of veteran players. In particular, Liam noted senior Alec Erickson as having "really stepped up in a new po-

sition". Alec, who played quarterback in Jack's absence last year, was moved to play wide receiver this season and became a key player for the Rebels. For example, in the team's fourth game versus John Marshall, Alec had 60 receiving yards, includ-

ing a 25-yard diving catch for a touchdown. Another significant change was the arrival of Patrick Taylor, a senior transfer from Tucker who has had a major impact on both offense and defense.

Considering the disarray caused by Jack's injury last year,

defensive coordinator Blake Derby knew that a "strong quarterback [would be] vital to a successful season". In response to the quarterback question, Freeman had an unorthodox approach: two quarterbacks. Both junior Thomas Laughlin and sophomore Andrew Bland saw considerable playing time as quarterback this season. According to Coach Derby, "Thomas is a strong pocket player while Andrew is better at connecting on long, high-pressure passes." Having two options for quarterback gave Freeman a major advantage, especially when Andrew was injured in week eight's game versus Hermitage.

In addition to these positional adjustments, the tight bonds forged between players drove the team's success. "This year our team is much closer and comradery is much better," Coach Derby said, "The players enjoy being around one another and don't care about the superficial things." Similarly, Coach Henderson noted that, "We could tell the team had a great chemistry at spring workouts and we have had great senior leadership from everyone."

For seniors like Liam, a victorious last season is the "best outcome [they] could have asked for." "This team is just the best group of guys," Liam said. "We all love each other so much, and it means the world to me to see all our hard work pay off."

PHOTO: BILL MCCLURE



Players celebrate after senior Pat Taylor scores a touchdown in a football game on the turf.

# Competition Cheerleading Makes History

Maddie Sherman  
Staff Writer

For the first time, Freeman's competition cheer team advanced to the regional tournament after districts and competed on Saturday, Oct. 27. Junior Bella Colangelo recalled a sort of tradition that the team has before performing, "Before we go out to compete, we'll all get in a circle and hype each other up or motivate each other."

Head Coach Emily Walthall explained the competition scoring as being similar to dance or gymnastics. "Half of our score is how difficult our skills are; the other half is how well we perform those skills," she said. As the scores are not announced until the end of the competition during the awards ceremony, the whole team waited anxiously after their performance.

Freshman Morgan Pustilnik remembered the practice before when the entire team sat in a circle and talked about how they had improved over the course of the season.

"It made us realize how close we all got in only a couple of months," Morgan said. Senior Captain Grace Powers also remembered this moment and

said, "I think this helped us have the drive to go into regionals that Saturday and give it our all."

At its very base, competitive cheerleading is a sport where teamwork and dedication are vital to success. "Cheerleading is unique in that if we are missing one team member, one whole stunt group or half of a pyramid can't practice," said Coach Walthall.

There is a certain level of chemistry that a team needs to have in order to work successfully with one another. Coach Walthall explained that this is one of the things the coaches noted at the beginning of the season in August. "Team dynamic and chemistry is so important because we all rely on each other to create a great routine; we are quite literally lifting up one another," she said.

Morgan Pustilnik admitted to being nervous when first meeting everyone, but said that she has loved her experience as a cheerleader so far, as her teammates are "all so positive and helpful." Peyton Butler, a senior on the team, agreed with the positive nature of the team. "If I could use one word to describe my team it would be a family," Peyton said, "We fight and love each other just as I do my actual siblings."

Perhaps this strong bond can be partially credited to head coach, Emily Walthall. While Coach Walthall was an assistant coach last year, this was her first year as a head coach.

"I wanted to become a cheer coach because so many important figures in my life were coaches who instilled both a love of sports and also built my character," she said. Coach Walthall has an impressive history with the sport. She cheered at her high school, Colonial Forge in Stafford, VA, and went on to cheer at Virginia Tech. After graduating, she was the assistant coach for her high school's team for two years.

"She's great at motivating us and making sure that we don't give up," Bella Colangelo said. Bella also feels that there has been "more of a sense of collaboration and comradery within the team" this year. Grace Powers explained that Coach Walthall attended a lot of stunt clinics and Virginia High School League (VHSL) informational sessions in order to get a better idea of what direction to go for the routine. "We also went to Universal Cheerleading Association (UCA) Cheer Camp in August, before the season started," Grace said, "I think having our undivided attention on cheer for

a few days helped us learn new skills and grow closer as a team."

Peyton expressed how her favorite part of the season was getting to see everyone improve and grow in comparison to last year. "Everyone on the team got better in some aspect, whether it be attitude wise or a skill specific to the team."

As the tournament came to a close and the scores were announced, Freeman placed third in at the regional competition, behind only Atlee in second place and Deep Run in first.

"When they heard their name and realized they had placed so high in a competitive region, I think everyone knew in that moment that all of their hard

work had paid off," said Coach Walthall. Reflecting back on their performance, Grace said, "That was the best routine we ever competed in all of my four years on the team."

After such a successful season, Bella said she believed that the team is "looking really good and in a great place for next year." "I feel like we can do just as well next year," Morgan added, "But we're really going to miss our seniors." Coach Walthall asserted that the cheer team has the confidence and skills to keep pushing forwards towards excellence. "I know this is just the start for a very successful DSF cheer program," she said.

PHOTO: UNKNOWN



Freeman competition cheer team cheers at regionals at Atlee

# Field Hockey Team Finishes Strong Season

PHOTO: PLUNKET BEIRNE



The field hockey team poses for a picture after a game.

McBride Rawson  
Design Editor

Starting the season with a new coach and young roster, it

against Prince George then James River to start the season, reinforcing that negative outlook.

While the outcome may have been disappointing, the details of the game show an upward trend. With only 4 shots on target in the first game rising to 18 shots in the next game, some hope for a competitive season emerged. After the Prince George and James River losses, the Rebels rallied to beat Godwin 4-2 in the third game of the season. "I thought this year was going to be a rebuilding year until we beat Godwin," said senior Caperton Beirne.

The victory over Godwin marks the beginning of the season's

positive turn. This sharp upturn of success, a presumed rebuilding year turned into a successful season with a young, developing team, was the general theme of the 2018 field hockey season.

"We worked a lot on our individual conditioning inside and outside of practices to keep up with the faster-paced turf," said senior Clara Swartz.

The Rebel's successful 9-8 winning season was helped by the young lineup of sophomores and new head coach Casandra Perez.

"[They] changed our game a lot," said Clara.

By the end of the season the whole team came to realize their success.

The Rebels made a run to the

Regional Tournament where they had an advantage as they were "lucky enough to be one of the only field hockey teams in [the] region with access to turf," said Clara.

The Rebels turned the table to beat Prince George in the quarterfinals on home turf. "That's when we knew how far we'd come," said sophomore Margaux Schimick. They then lost to Atlee in a tough match in the semifinals.

After a surprisingly successful season, the players are optimistic about next year.

"I think next year well be pretty good with some of the sophomores already having varsity experience," said Margaux.

# Magic Within Freeman

Maggie Sheerin  
Staff Writer

A magician may never tell his secrets, but freshman Cameron Disbrow is thrilled to talk about his love for magic.

"I first became interested in magic when watching a David Blaine special on Netflix and am still fascinated with it today," Cameron said. "I now have been practicing for about three years," he said.

Cameron is primarily self-taught, teaching and creating new tricks for himself, but when he does want inspiration from others, he said that he will "watch some videos of different magicians on YouTube."

Of the tricks that he has created and learned from others, his favorite is "the card flip." This is where he makes someone pick a card, place it back in the deck, and then waves his hand over the deck and flip it on the top.

This trick, along with the many others that Cameron has learned over the past few years, took much time and determination in order to accomplish and master.

While he admits the personal satisfaction of mastering a new



PHOTO: JAMES DISBROW

**Cameron holding his cards.**

trick is largely rewarding, Cameron said that his favorite thing about magic is "the look on people's face when I perform a trick for them. When they go from not believing to then being astounded by what I do, that is my favorite part."

Of the people, Cameron performs for, one of his biggest supporters is his dad. He watches all of Cameron's tricks and has always been his number one fan. "I perform all of my tricks for my dad," Cameron said.

However, his dad is not Cameron's only source of inspiration to perform magic tricks.

Cameron is still largely influenced by renowned magician

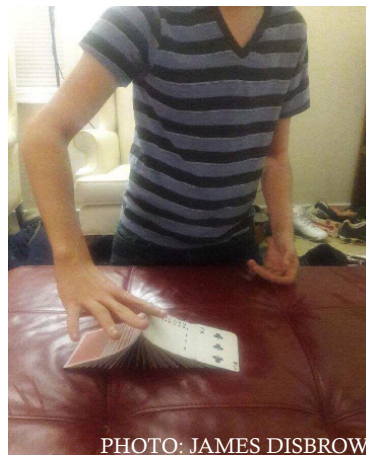


PHOTO: JAMES DISBROW

**Cameron doing a card trick.**

and illusionist David Blaine, the same magician that brought Cameron into the world of magic three years ago. "He is my favorite magician and also is the biggest inspiration for me to perform magic tricks," Cameron said.

The greatest reason that Cameron learns and performs magic tricks is to watch people change from "thinking that magic is just a trick."

He said that he loves to "do something spectacular and make someone believe that magic is real."

Whether you believe in magic or not, Cameron Disbrow's love for the trade is easy to believe in.

# ShoreDog Cafe



Maggie Flournoy  
A&E Editor

Growing up, I remember Tuckahoe shopping center as lacking interesting stores.

Now, with the addition of Sweetest Stich, Kuba Kuba Dos, and ShoreDog Café, the area has lit up.

When I visited ShoreDog Cafe, the first thing I noticed was the pleasant environment. The overall atmosphere of the place is relaxing and beachy, so I felt right at home.

I'm both a pescatarian and fairly dairy-free, so at most breakfast orientated restaurants, I end up ordering either a side dish or some fruit. However, at ShoreDog, I ordered the bagel with smoked salmon. It was amazing, but at \$8, expensive.

ShoreDog claims to use only fresh ingredients, so while it makes sense that it is expensive, it is still a bit jarring to spend \$8 on a bagel.

With my food, I also ordered one of the Cane Cola drinks. They're basically a Coke but made with real sugar cane (Hon-

estly - I think they taste even better than normal Coke. Don't tell my mom I said that).

The Cane Cola was also a bit expensive, well worth it. Even though it may have been 9 a.m.

If you've read my article about Starbucks on the Commentator Online, you would know that I am not a huge coffee lover. At all. ShoreDog is pretty well known for their coffee, so, for the sake of the review, I decided to order a latte.

I really do think it was better than the Starbucks ones... and I make those myself.

As well as a large variety of breakfast items, ShoreDog also serves lunch every day and dinner Wednesday through Saturday.

The type of people who visit this restaurant are diverse. There were students working on homework, men and women in business suits having a meeting, and families out for a casual meal.

Overall, ShoreDog café is such a pleasant environment with staff that couldn't be nicer. While it may be on the pricy side, it is definitely worth the money. The locality, customer service, and ambience can't be matched.

If the quiet study environment isn't right for you, ShoreDog also often has live local music!

## Rebel Reviews and Freeman Favorites

### The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina Review



PHOTO: NETFLIX



Annie Stephens  
Staff Writer

Sabrina the Teenage Witch is not so funny anymore. Dropping on October 26, "The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina" has created an uproar. As another show based off of "Archie Comics" ("Riverdale"), it was given plenty of advertisement. For weeks I had been seeing advertisements for it on my Instagram explore page, and Disney heart-throb Ross Lynch was in every ad, so I decided to watch it.

The show itself is a dark-DARK- spin-off of the original "Sabrina the Teenage Witch" sitcom. This new Sabrina traded in laugh tracks for what appears to be gallons of fake blood. The plot revolves around Sabrina and her life with her two aunts living as members of the "Church of Night," which is a Satanic cult. Her parents died from an "accidental" plane crash when she was just a baby. Her mom, however, was a mortal and her father was one of the greatest high priests of the "Church of Night" leaving Sabrina as only a half witch, which causes controversy.

On Sabrina's 16th birthday, she must partake in her "Dark Baptism," which is essentially a Sweet 16 party but you're forced to sign the "Book of the Beast," handing your soul over to Satan. Sounds fun, right?

However, there are many - too many - problems surrounding this Dark Baptism, and when she refuses to sign the book, Sabrina must balance her mortal life and the challenges that Satan throws at her.

The show is a good show, with good acting and an intriguing plot, but it had a few problems. For starters, all of the witches and warlocks in the "Church of Night" were British, and I just want to know why. Was Satan British? Did everyone migrate over from England, but then live to be 200 years old? Or honestly, did I miss something? It seemed to be as though this was the dark

version of the "Harry Potter" series.

Next problem: too many spiders. If you are not a fan of spiders, then here is your warning to watch with caution; they'll get you when you least expect it.

Moving on, the show was insanely gruesome and had a satanic theme to it. Almost every episode would include murder, a sacrifice, or in one circumstance, cannibalism. That was gross. The satanic pentagram was seen frequently, and there were many times where Sabrina would lie on the ground surrounded by candles, which made me wonder how she didn't catch on fire. Although it could be disturbing at times, the gruesome and satanic themes oddly compelled me to watch more.

One more big problem, Salem the cat did not talk. In the original sitcom, Salem could chat it up. In this version, his vocabulary consisted of different meows that only the witches could understand, and he was only around in times of need. There are no sarcastic quips from Salem in this show. Sorry. The only time an animal spoke in the entire season was in the last five minutes of the last episode.

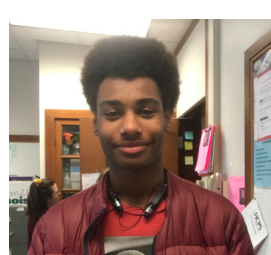
So far I have only voiced my concerns about the show, but in all honesty it was a really good show. I must say it was extremely well produced and had a plot so amazingly twisted that I forced myself to binge watch it for about six hours. I'd give this a four and a half star rating out of five.

All in all, this is just another stereotypical teenage drama where the protagonist must decide between two worlds, one with her family and another with her friends, and there is a splash of a love story mixed in there.

Honestly, I'd highly recommend "The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina" if you have a tough stomach, and like to be spooked. There are only ten episodes, but every episode seems to be longer than the other, so good luck with that. Regardless of a few disturbing scenes, I suggest that you turn off every single light, grab a blanket, and binge the entire season in one day.

Expect nightmares.

### What's Your Favorite Winter Movie?



Solomon Harkley (9)  
Nightmare Before Christmas



Jacob Brann (10)  
Year Without a Santa Clause



Kota Meltzer (11)  
Frosty the Snowman



Victoria Getter (12)  
Christmas Vacation



### A Star is Born Review



PHOTO: WARNER BROTHERS



Katie Cooper  
Online Editor-in-Chief

**WARNING: THIS FILM IS RATED R**

When the "A Star is Born" trailer released, a meme sprang from it. The internet had their laughs for a while, but little did they know, the movie would be described by critics as "an emotional masterpiece." A Star is Born colorfully depicts the lives of famous rockstar Jackson Maine (Bradley Cooper), a talented sweetheart with a troubled past, and Ally Campana (Lady Gaga), a vocal powerhouse and struggling artist, who meet by chance at a drag bar one night and fell in love.

Their story takes off as a wonderful romance: Jackson and Ally perform together every night and become each other's source of inspiration and get married on a whim. But Jackson's traumatic childhood haunts him every step, and results in a major alcohol and drug addiction that meddles in his perfect marriage. Watching Jack's battle between his love for Ally and his addiction was the most heart-wrenching part of the movie.

Most of the audience in the theater walked out in tears caused by the combination of such a beautiful tragedy and amazing, original music from the "A Star is Born" soundtrack. Bradley Cooper's directional purpose was to highlight the ugly parts of fame and the problems that many celebrities face in their own lives. Having a personal connection to the many problems that his character faces, Cooper's authenticity in forming Jackson's struggles shines. Lady Gaga, a notable face in the pop music industry, demonstrates the cost of fame and the dilution of an artist's personality through her character Ally.

This film is fourth rendition of the story of Jackson and Ally. In

1937, Janet Gaynor and Fredric March starred in the first ever "A Star is Born", directed by William A. Wellman. Although this film features different music and a different plot, it follows a similar storyline. A woman named Esther Victoria Blodgett travels to Hollywood in pursuit of becoming a famous actress, and learns her skills from movie star Norman Maine, a talented man with a history of alcohol abuse.

The second version directed by George Cukor in 1954, is a bit more music-centered. Led by James Mason and Judy Garland, the film went on to gain much applause for Garland's musical talent and wonderful screenplay. In 1976, "A Star is Born" was redone for the third time with a plot that most closely resembles the 2018 version with Cooper and Gaga. The two reputable actors in the film are Barbra Streisand and Kris Kristofferson: the first Grammy Award went to the pair for singing the year's best original song, called "Evergreen."

Over the years, I have watched musical-dramas like the award-winning "La La Land," the steamy yet hilarious "Chicago," and of course, Disney's famous "High School Musical" trilogy. I can admit that these films, and many other films that fall under the musical-drama category, are not nearly as impactful, harrowing, and beautiful as Cooper's version of "A Star is Born." Watch this movie to enjoy a vocal and visual masterpiece that will rip your heart out of your chest and leave you singing "Shallow" with tears in your eyes for weeks.



PHOTO: ALAMY  
**Kris Kristofferson and Barbra Streisand in third iteration.**

## Fall Play: *Picnic at Hanging Rock*



PHOTO: GRACE POWERS

The Freeman cast of *Picnic at Hanging Rock* prepares to bow after their dress rehearsal performance.

Grace Powers  
A&E Editor

On Nov. 15, 16, and 17, the Freeman Theater Department performed *Picnic at Hanging Rock*. The Australian play—based on a novel by Joan Lindsay—centers around the disappearance of several boarding school girls on a Valentine’s Day picnic at the geological site, Hanging Rock. Set in 1900, the play conveys the modern theme of appearance versus reality as the boarding school administration and community struggle to find the girls that mysteriously vanished on the day of the picnic.

What sets this play apart from previous years is not only the content, but also the use of Australian accents. The student actors worked with a dialect coach, but had to practice for hours outside of coaching to improve their accents.

“I watched a bunch of videos

about prestigious Australian accents. And then once I kind of got it, to prepare for each show, twenty minutes before the show I would get into character and say everything in my Australian accent,” said senior Teagan Fenderson, who played Irma Leopold, the only one of the girls to be rescued after her disappearance.

Junior Kenzie Gilson played Mrs. Appleyard, the headmistress of the boarding school. Though a mean and selfish character, Kenzie made the role her own by giving “her dimension through an established difference between her inner personality and the front that she puts up around her employees and students.”

Like those who vanished at the picnic, Mrs. Appleyard becomes victim to the Hanging Rock after trying for many months to resolve the scandal.

A secondary story line focuses on British traveler Michael Fitzhubert and his Australian coachman and best friend Albert

Crundall. These two men encounter the three girls at Hanging Rock right before their disappearance. Senior Mark Hereens played Albert Crundall, who he said he felt was a “happy-go-lucky dude” unaware of how his world was about to change.

Regardless of the story they are portraying, many cast members agree that the best part about doing the play is the feeling of family that comes from spending so much time together. The cast was able to have fun while also preparing their show.

“I remember when Tristen first put on his fake mustache for the show, we joked that it was a squirrel like in the bit from *iCarly*,” senior Ariela Press said.

The supportive environment allowed this cast to pull off a show with such an ambiguous ending. This conclusion makes it up to the viewer to decide what really happened to the girls at Hanging Rock, and what about Hanging Rock attracts such a deadly mystery.

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“It’s a photorealism piece. I drew it based off a picture and then used a grid technique to enlarge it on the paper.”

-Beth Sachdeva (12)

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“This is a watercolor painting of the inside of a tomato, and I enjoy watching people try to figure out what it is.”

-Ghinwa Hareez (12)

## Thespians Carry on Traditions



PHOTO: LIBBIE WARD

The Freeman Thespian Society performs its induction ceremony.

Taylor Pounders  
Staff Writer

A bumper sticker on the back of senior Conor Battle’s car states “Thespians do it on stage.” However, according to Conor, Thespian Society president, the Freeman drama department “puts their own spin” on the International Thespian Society. One of the things that makes this society at Freeman is its rituals.

The ‘tapping’ of new members is the most public of the society’s rituals. On the day of the tapping, a current Thespian society member will go into an inductees’ first period class and

notify the potential new member of the beginning of their induction process.

“There’s something about seeing the look of embarrassment on the new members faces. It is just perfect,” said Conor Battle.

In order for a student to be inducted into the society they must participate in two shows and have an acting role in at least one.

In the weeks leading up to the induction ceremony, many inductees work to memorize a monologue they must recite at the ceremony.

Once the day of the induction ceremony arrives, all of the members and inductees of the

society gather at the school. The current members dress in black, and the inductees wear white.

“I just walked in and there were candles everywhere, and it was really hard core and a little scary. But it’s also really cool because all your friends are there with you,” said Zoey Mowery.

When a musical or play comes around, all of the actors, crew members, and managers wear their shirts from the previous plays they have participated in on the days leading up to the newest show.

According to Kenzie Gilson, Thespian Society vice president, the theatre department also participates in “weird warm-up games that are supposed to get the blood moving” right before a show.

Although there are many rituals and fun experiences in the Thespian Society, most of its members agreed that it was the atmosphere that was the most special.

“We’re a family. It’s all about this group because sometimes we bicker and fight but we come together. There’s something about theatre because you have to put yourself out there so much so that when you all do that together it’s really special,” said Conor Battle.

## Bands Come Together at Halloween Concert

Remy Schimick  
Online Editor-in-Chief

There’s a new band in town. You’ve probably seen the stickers for Last Night’s Ghost all around Freeman, but now there’s a new name to watch out for in RVA: Fanfare. Fanfare includes senior Nathan Vranas and junior Miles Fagan.

Fanfare was one of the five bands that played at ‘Jungle House’ on October 31st, a house in RVA that has become a “DIY Venue of sorts,” according to Miles. Fanfare played with Kill the Clock, House & Home, WSTR, and PVMNTS at the Jungle House Halloween Show.

Some of the bands had a long trek to our town. WSTR came all the way from the UK, PVMNTS from Los Angeles, and Kill the Clock from Buffalo, NY. WSTR and PVMNTS have been on an American and European together and were playing a show in Virginia Beach the next day; however, Kill the Clock made the journey just for this show. They even had to drive back that night to make it to class the next day. Talk about dedication.

If you’re like me, you’re probably wondering how all of these bands came together just for a house show in Richmond. WSTR was on tour a few months back and played a show at the National. The night before their concert, the band actually stayed at Jungle House, owned by another local band House & Home. “The guys who live [in Jungle House] were telling them about how we have shows there sometimes,” said Miles, “to which

they said, ‘Oh wow, we don’t do that in England we would love to do something like that.’”

Without much planning, WSTR announced their plan for a house show at their concert the next day. What was originally expected to be a small house show only featuring WSTR and House & Home grew from there. PVMNTS, who WSTR was touring with around the time of the house show, joined in. After that, Fanfare and Kill the Clock were added making for a night full of fun.

One of the bands, PVMNTS, had a lot of traction with the teenage girls of Richmond for one specific reason: Tyler Posey. Tyler, best known for his role as Scott McCall in *Teen Wolf* and Lucas in *Truth or Dare*, is one of the three members in the punk/pop band. Disguised in a poncho and sombrero, Tyler mingled quietly with other band members and fans. This, among other things, made the night “a dream come true” for Miles and Nathan.

“To be able to play my first show with Fanfare in front of a huge audience of my friends on the same bill as bands I love and look up to was insane,” Miles said. “Playing with Tyler Posey was cool too,” he said laughing. About 130 people showed up the show on Halloween to where they even had to turn people away for safety reasons.

Although Fanfare is a new band, “it is already starting to feel like a family,” said Nathan. They have a show on November 30th at the Canal Club and an EP coming out within the next month, so keep an eye out!

## Four-Step Mindfulness

1. Acknowledge your feelings.
2. Take a deep breath.
3. Exhale fully.
4. Focus on your senses.



Left: Mindfulness Coach Alex Peavey, coach of the VCU Mens’ Basketball Team, visited Freeman to share an easy, four-step mindfulness technique.

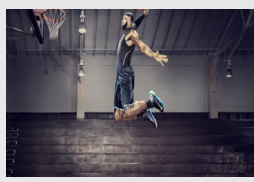


PHOTO: RICHMOND TIMES-DISPATCH

Check out these articles on [dsfcommentator.org](http://dsfcommentator.org)



Thank you, next  
Laney Van Lenten



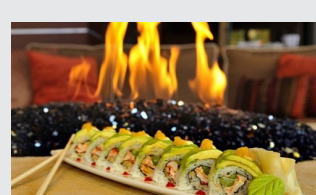
Jacob Biney Can Probably  
Jump Over You  
McBride Rawson



A Day in the Life of Allie  
Luxton  
Cameron McCarty



“Papa’s Scooperia”  
Review  
Juliana McKean



Calling All Sushi Lovers  
Grace Powers