

THE COMMENTATOR

Vol. LXVIII, No. IV Douglas Southall Freeman High School March 2021



PHOTO: HENRICO COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

HCPS Vaccinates Teachers and Staff

The vaccination center located at Richmond International Raceway, buzzing with socially-distanced activity.

Jack Harenchar
Staff Writer

Through a partnership with the counties of Goochland, Hanover, and the City of Richmond, Henrico County Public Schools (HCPS) began vaccinating its employees against COVID-19 in late January.

As Henrico County entered Phase 1b of its vaccination program, schoolteachers and staff, along with first responders, people aged 65 and older, and other front-line essential workers became eligible to receive the vaccine.

Preparing for Vaccine Distribution

On Jan. 12, six days after the HCPS decision to go forward with the proposed return to in-person learning dates, Superintendent of Schools Amy Cashwell announced that the county would postpone the transition back to the classroom for those who chose to return.

Because the HCPS vaccination plan included using school nurses as vaccinators, “having schools with no nurses present would result in staffing levels that won’t meet our expectations for implementing the HCPS COVID-19 Health Plan for larger numbers of students,” said Superintendent Cashwell in her Jan. 12 update.

As soon as HCPS learned that it could begin the process of vac-

inating staff, the county had to demonstrate that it had the capacity to efficiently and effectively vaccinate people en masse. Henrico partnered with Goochland County, Hanover County, and the City of Richmond for the injections, as well as the Richmond Raceway Complex for a vaccination location and Westwood Pharmacy as a supplier and for storage. In that manner, the counties as a whole were able to receive a vaccine allotment.

“With strength in numbers we were able to get the attention of state and federal suppliers,” said HCPS Chief of Communications Andy Jenks. He added that “in partnering with the right people and being able to demonstrate that we [can] get thousands of people through [the vaccine process], not just HCPS employees, but other government folks and school employees in Hanover, Goochland, and Richmond ... we were able to set up the process to make that happen.”

With a vaccine allotment, venue, and partners for the process, “the next question [was], how do you get as many people vaccinated as quickly as possible,” said Mr. Jenks. “That’s when the light bulb goes off that we have [school] nurses who can assist.”

While nurses went through training, the HCPS central office dealt with the logistics of polling interest in vaccination and the subsequent scheduling. “During the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday weekend ... a lot of us had to put

our personal lives on hold to start to create, troubleshoot, fine tune, and communicate a signup process,” said Mr. Jenks.

“The process was a little confusing as we all waited and waited for an email that didn’t come in the stated time frame,” said English teacher Wiley Hunnicutt. “For a while, I believe we were worried that if we missed the email, we would miss the opportunity to get vaccinated,” she said. However, according to Ms. Hunnicutt, “Once the email confusion was cleared up, the county was proactive in helping us through the process.”

After they knew who was interested in a vaccine, HCPS took care to schedule the staff to avoid “a situation where it’s first come first serve and everybody lines up out the door, and stands outside for six hours,” said Mr. Jenks.

The county had a considerable scheduling task on their hands as “over 60 percent of our staff ... have elected to get [the vaccine],” said Robin Gilbert, Henrico’s School Health Services Supervisor.

Distributing the Vaccine

On Jan. 20, HCPS began the long-awaited process of distributing the vaccine. Working Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays to vaccinate over 6,000 school staff who elected to receive the vaccine,

it took about 60 school nurses three weeks to distribute the first dose.

“The county was proactive in helping us through the process.”
- Wiley Hunnicutt

Math teacher Derek Podolny called the process of receiving the vaccine “very efficient,” noting that the process was structured to ensure distancing between those being vaccinated and that there was diligence in verifying paperwork.

Ms. Hunnicutt said that receiving the vaccine, in her experience, was “flawlessly executed.”

“The atmosphere at the vaccination center is overwhelmingly positive,” said school nurse Laurel West. “At the vaccination table we have seen tears of relief and heard so many words of gratitude.”

As school staff had not always been included in Virginia’s Phase 1b vaccination plan, the HCPS return to in-person learning plan was not contingent on the vaccinations.

“While we all have great confidence in the mitigating interventions and processes that we have in place right now, this was just one

of those extra things that happened to fall right into the timeline,” said Mrs. Gilbert.

“When I heard we were getting the vaccine, I felt like I had won the lottery of sorts,” said Ms. Hunnicutt. “So much of my fear and stress over being in the building fell away.”

Mr. Podolny, on the other hand, said that “It felt like a non-event, because of how much longer a path we have to vaccinate the majority of the population.” This being said, he noted how proud

“The atmosphere at the vaccination center is overwhelmingly positive.”
- Laurel West

he was of the “health care professionals and planners for getting the long road started.”

Principal John Marshall believes that the vaccine will boost the staff’s confidence in returning to the school building. Between vaccinations and the county’s extensive mitigation procedures, Mr. Marshall said that “we are ready” for students to return.

Freeman Celebrates Black History Month

Annabelle Glassman
Staff Writer

February marked the 45th annual celebration of Black History Month. This year, Freeman students and teachers honored and celebrated the month by tuning in to the weekly speakers, eating delicious food from Black-owned restaurants around the Richmond area, visiting historical sites, and learning more about Black history, both locally and nationally.

Speakers included... two of the first Black students to attend Freeman.

“The Freeman Black Student Union has created this amazing program that’s student-led, which makes it different,” said Spanish

teacher Erica Beard. “In so many different situations, [teachers] take students into the auditorium and the teachers put [a program] on.” This year, “it’s really different” because “you have 16, 17, 18-year-old students who are making this for their peers,” she said.

The Henrico County Public Schools Black Student Union developed a bingo board this year that includes historic locations, Black-owned businesses and restaurants, and famous statues located around the Richmond area to celebrate Black History Month.

Additionally, to celebrate Black History Month, Wednesday’s Freeman Focus, which is typically used for Wellness Wednesday lessons, was repurposed. Black speakers from a variety of backgrounds and jobs were invited to speak about their experiences and viewers were given the opportunity to ask questions through a Google Form. Speakers included

Christina Kanu, founder of Christina Kanu Consulting in Atlanta, Ga., Jericia Johnson, a licensed therapist with a private practice

“It’s important that we don’t stall our progress.”
- Bella Fowler

in Chesterfield, Va, Brenda Fountain Coffey and Chaldea Fountain Montague, two of the first Black students to attend Freeman, and Special K, a spoken word poet.

Junior Bella Fowler tuned in on Feb. 4 to see Christina Kanu, and on Feb. 17 to see Brenda Fountain Coffey and Chaldea Fountain Montague. “Their messages were applicable [to Freeman],” she said. The meaning of these speakers to Freeman, said Bella, is that “it’s important that we don’t stall our progress.”

HCPS BSU BLACK HISTORY MONTH BINGO FREEMAN

| | | | | |
|----------------------|---|--|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Maggie Walker House | Claves Unidos | Africanne on Main | Rumors of War | BK's Loaded Kitchen |
| The Lily Pad | Slave Auction Site on Main St. | Sun & Selene | Bellevue Elementary School | The Valentine |
| Mommianas | Maple Bourbon | Free Space | Museum Galleries at VUU | Soul Taco |
| Bateau | Virginia Museum of Fine Arts - African American Art | Arthur Ashe Statue | Nomad Deli | Virginia E. Randolph Museum |
| Richmond Slave Trail | Charles' Kitchen | Black History Museum and Cultural Center of Virginia | Erika J Fitness Studio | Mama J's Kitchen |

PHOTO: BLACK STUDENT UNION

The bingo board developed by the BSU included historical sites and Black-owned businesses for students to visit.

THE COMMENTATOR online

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Follow @DSF_Commentator for news and updates!



DSF Sports Streaming Live

Maddie Cassidy
Staff Writer

Every high school in the Henrico County Public Schools (HCPS) system has created its own YouTube channel to stream its sporting events in an effort to give the maximum number of people the ability to watch these events.

This media expansion is in accordance with Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam's Executive Order 72. The order states that each player is allowed to invite two guests to outdoor sporting events and that indoor sporting events are limited to 25 guests per field. The order heavily affects the Freeman community, since Freeman has a high spectator turnout at many sports events.

“The live streaming is a great bonus to still somewhat play in front of people.”

- Andrew Bland

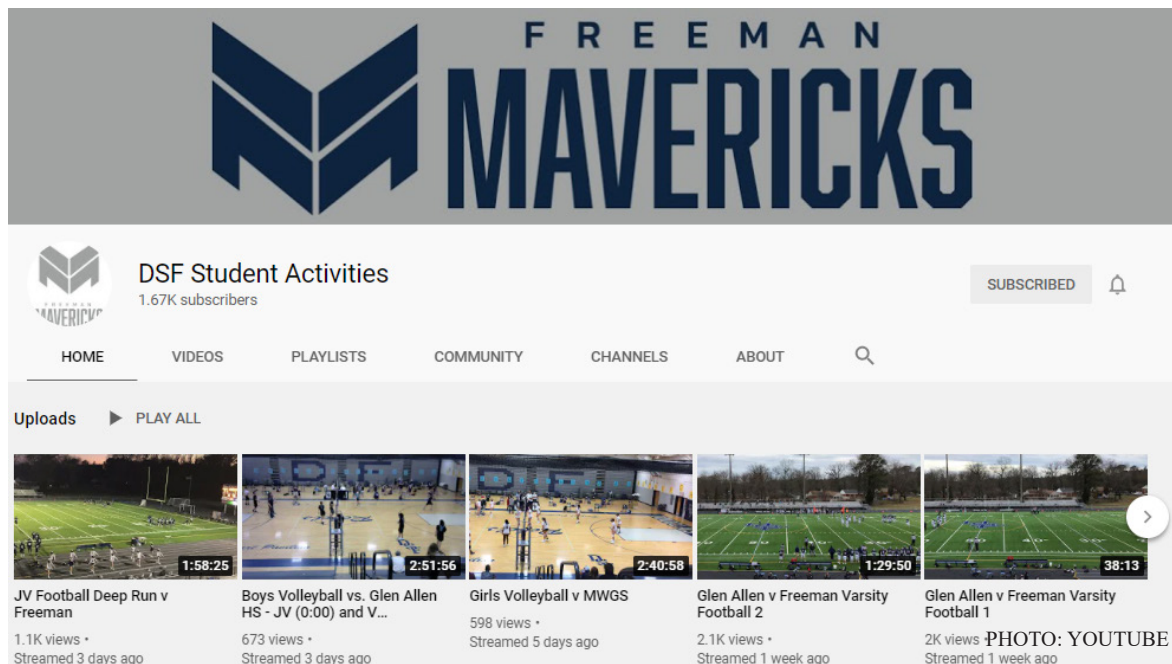
Streaming on YouTube, while the most accessible option, poses a number of challenges for the schools. Each high school's You-

Tube channel must reach 1,000 subscribers in order to be able to livestream events on smartphones and other mobile devices. Fortunately, the DSF Student Activities channel has more than 1,000 subscribers at this point.

“The county is trying to be very helpful with set up and assistance,” said Freeman Student Activities Director Suzanne Criswell. “Right now the hold up is with YouTube itself – getting the channel and device ‘accepted.’ There are so many trying to do this setup that there is a backlog.”

Another challenge is that YouTube channels only allow for one livestream at a time. This conflicts with the Freeman sports schedule, which often has multiple teams playing simultaneously. Ms. Criswell said, “Our schedules are set – and really can't be moved.” According to Ms. Criswell, at times when events coincide, “we are looking at live stream[ing] one and film[ing] the other to post on the YouTube channel.”

Live streaming changes the look of games for the athletes, but the response is positive. Senior Andrew Bland, quarterback and captain of the varsity football team, said, “I am super excited to play, regardless of how many people are in the stands.” He said, “the live streaming is a great bonus to still somewhat play in front of people.”



The DSF Student Activities account streams live games from a variety of sports.

Junior Charlotte Hare, a varsity sideline cheerleader, expressed similar sentiments about upcoming football games. “It will be very different without a crowd because the cheerleaders normally respond to the energy from the crowd, but livestreaming is definitely the safest and most valuable replacement currently,” she said. “It will change cheering, but we will definitely have to try our best to be as loud and spirited as we can to cheer on the team.”

The lack of a crowd offers advantages for quieter sports, such as cross country. “While many might find spectators as motivators, at particular sections I prefer the quiet wooded sections where you focus on maintaining and getting into your pace for each mile,” said Ben Mayes, a junior on the boys varsity cross country team. “Having this opportunity to run is a gift and removing spectators doesn't much change this,” he said.

The change in format for watching a game poses the question of whether or not people will tune into these livestreams. “I know it is not the same, but I hope everyone keeps up with and enjoys coverage of these events,” said Ms. Criswell. “If state policies change on spectators – and HCPS approves – we will make any change available to have people on campus for the ‘real deal.’”

Freeman Hosts Culture Week



PHOTO: CARTER REILLY

Senior Maaida Farhad presents at last year's Culture Day.

stronger sense of community here at Freeman. “In a world that seems to grow more divisive by the day, finding commonality through education is the best way to teach tolerance and love,” she said.

Senior club president Jianna Young is also excited about Culture Day. She said that she is “passionate about equity and inclusion,” and as such, looks forward to “[planning] a virtual Culture Day in the most fun and engaging way possible.”

“Finding commonality through education is the best way to teach tolerance and love.”

- Meredith Swain

Culture Day focuses on Freeman's diverse student population, composed of students who speak 42 different languages and hail from 51 different countries. “The diverse population at Freeman gives us an incredible collection of languages, countries, and cultures to showcase,” said Mrs. Reilly.

Mrs. Swain agreed, saying that “Freeman is one of the most diverse schools in Henrico County, but that diversity is often not recognized and celebrated as it deserves to be.” Through Culture Day, the Equity Ambassadors “hope [students] will see themselves represented and feel pride in that,” said Mrs. Swain.

In Jianna's opinion, the success of Culture Day at Freeman reflects a need for a similar celebration in less diverse schools across Henrico County. Jianna said that Culture Day could be “more meaningful to groups of people who might find themselves marginalized in a less diverse school.”

Jianna hopes that every Maverick can try to attend Culture Day because “it's a unique way to get involved, show school spirit, and learn more about your peers and cultures that you may not otherwise know.”

Jack Kelleher
Staff Writer

Despite school remaining online for many, Culture Day makes a return this year. Three years ago, the then-newly-formed Equity Ambassadors club created Culture day to promote diversity and inclusivity at Freeman.

This year, the “day” is closer to a week, with three days' worth of events. During the week of March 22-26, Culture Day will be hosted during Freeman Focus on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. This particular week was chosen as it will also be World Language Week.

The plan for Culture Day is

for the events to be divided into three themes: language, cooking, and customs. In years past, there were activities like fashion shows, student speakers, sharing different cultural foods, and art projects. This year, it will look a little different due to COVID-19 restrictions. Some experiences, like food sharing, are impossible, while other events, like student speakers, can be adapted. Equity Ambassadors sponsor Carter Reilly said, “We have some great ideas to make Culture Day events as interactive and exciting as possible, but we need to be very comfortable with the technology.”

The other Equity Ambassadors sponsor, Meredith Swain, sees an added benefit to this year's virtual Culture Day: creating a

AP and SAT Updates

CollegeBoard

AP

PHOTO: COLLEGE BOARD

All Freeman AP Tests will be administered **digitally and from home** except for AP Spanish and AP French tests.

- AP Spanish and AP French will be paper/pencil tests held at Freeman.
- All tests will be **complete, normal-length** this year.
- Test dates start **May 18** and end **June 10** for Freeman.

For more information on administration on times, dates, and other info, visit: <https://apstudents.collegeboard.org/ap-2020-2021>

CollegeBoard

SAT

PHOTO: COLLEGE BOARD

Upcoming test dates include:

- **May 8**, registration by April 8th (no test at Freeman)
- **June 5**, registration by May 6 (test at Freeman)

Don't forget to **check PSAT scores**, available March 8!

No Subject Tests are being offered

To register for the SAT, check center closings before test day, and for other info, visit: <https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat>

Prom 2021: 6 Feet of Room for Jesus



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Classmates to Sweethearts



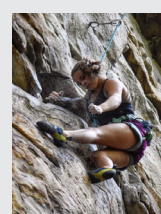
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From Freeman to Fame



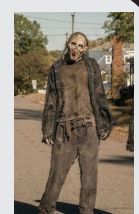
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Freeman's Got Talent: Affon Hessian



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Senior Works With Zombies



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PHOTO: HOWARD DEARBORN SCHOOLS

Half Days: A Scam!



Anastasia Branch
Editor-in-Chief

Half days. You either love them or hate them. Allow me to guide you through a journey where we explore all the reasons why half days are a total scam.

Reasoning No. 1: Half Days = More Homework

I know, this seems very contradictory. However, based on my experiences, I have noticed that there are times when teachers will assign more assignments because there is less class time during the day. Students, have your Chipotle afterschool plans ever been spoiled by the infamous “finish what you didn’t finish in class for homework” phrase? Yes, it’s a sad reality.

Reasoning No. 2: Half Day + Half Day = Full Day

You don’t need to be a math

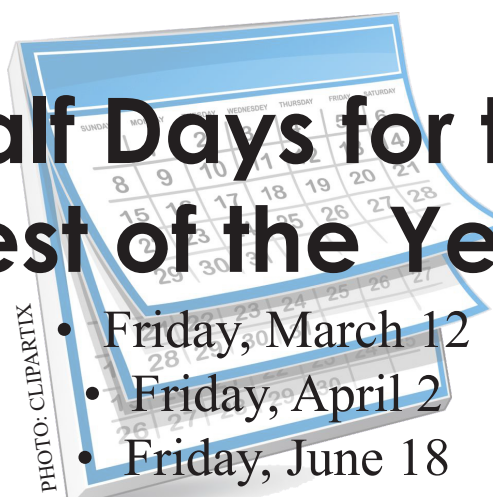
whiz for this one: let’s combine half days for full days off. We can all agree that we would rather combine two half days’ afternoons to create a blissful, stress-free 24 hours away from school. On Sunday night, a full Monday off sounds a whole lot better than a mere three hours away from the screen. It’s simple math, people!

Reasoning No. 3: Half Days are on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, or Thursdays

There is one exception to my half day hatred. If a half day is on a Friday, then I am a full supporter. With that being said, why do half days have to be on the other days of the week? A half day on Monday will really put a hurting on your weekend plans, but the real kicker is on a Wednesday half day. This awkward day will make your week feel like it’s twice as long. Awesome.

Fortunately, the county has blessed us with two half days on select Fridays during March and April. At least for the rest of the year, we can rest easy knowing that we are utilizing half days to their maximum potential.

Half Days for the Rest of the Year:



- Friday, March 12
- Friday, April 2
- Friday, June 18

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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.

He Said



Ashton Doll
Opinions Editor

Glad we can soon get close to normal life.

Although less personal over Zoom, it was done well.

With winter ending, the flowers will bloom and the sun will shine :)

Goodbye, KUWTK; hello, better Kanye music.

Can't get much better than this.

A well-deserved time of rest after resting for a year.

A nice change from regularly scheduled programming.

TikTok “celebrity” trying not to become irrelevant.

She Said



Keya Pokhriyal
Opinions Editor

When's my turn?

Tina Fey and Amy Poehler are friendship goals.

So inspirational, Ashton!

Kim has “Drivers License” on repeat right now.

Chick-fil-A's peppermint chip milkshake >

I'm counting down the days.

TGIW!

The Jake Paul of TikTok.

Let Me Bring My Dog to School



Lanie Moore
Managing Editor

Here’s the thing: I would like to bring my dog to school.

I’ve gotten so used to having him lay on my feet while I do school at my desk, or lay on my legs while I do school on my bed, or lay in my lap while I do school on the ground, that I really just can’t imagine doing school without him. He has become a necessary school supply for me; his doggie presence is as important as a pencil or pen, though he is somewhat fluffier and harder to write with. Frankly, my workspace will feel incomplete sans dog. I simply do not know if I will be able to concentrate without his sleepy snores in the background.

Thus, for purely academic reasons, I propose that Freeman allow pets when we return to the building. With the plethora of COVID-19 regulations, everything is going to be different anyways—why not just throw our friendly

canine companions into the mix? Better yet, why not throw all sorts of pets into the mix? Cats are cool, fish are friendly, gerbils are genial if you give them the chance. A typical class could have rabbits, lizards, frogs, birds. Heck, we could open the door to prickly porcupines, prizewinning ponies, even a spindly spider or two. It’ll be as though everyone has their own therapy pet—so long, school stress; hello, happy homework!

Plus, having so many well-loved pets will actually help us to get rid of some less-loved ones: roaches. Any food bits dropped on the ground will be scarfed up immediately by the nearest hungry doggo,

preventing them from attracting those unwanted underlings. Besides, any varmint that dares to show its face will surely become food itself for the nearest cold-blooded, bug-loving beast.

Picture it: happy pets mean happy students, and happy students mean happy teachers. Focus will improve, test scores will improve, GPAs will improve. There simply isn’t a downside to 2,000 dogs, cats, fish, gerbils, rabbits, lizards, frogs, birds, porcupines, ponies, and pet spiders roaming the halls along with their teenage owners. Let’s make it happen, folks: the Maverick menagerie!



PHOTO: LANIE MOORE

The writer’s sleepy dog, snoozing on his bed.

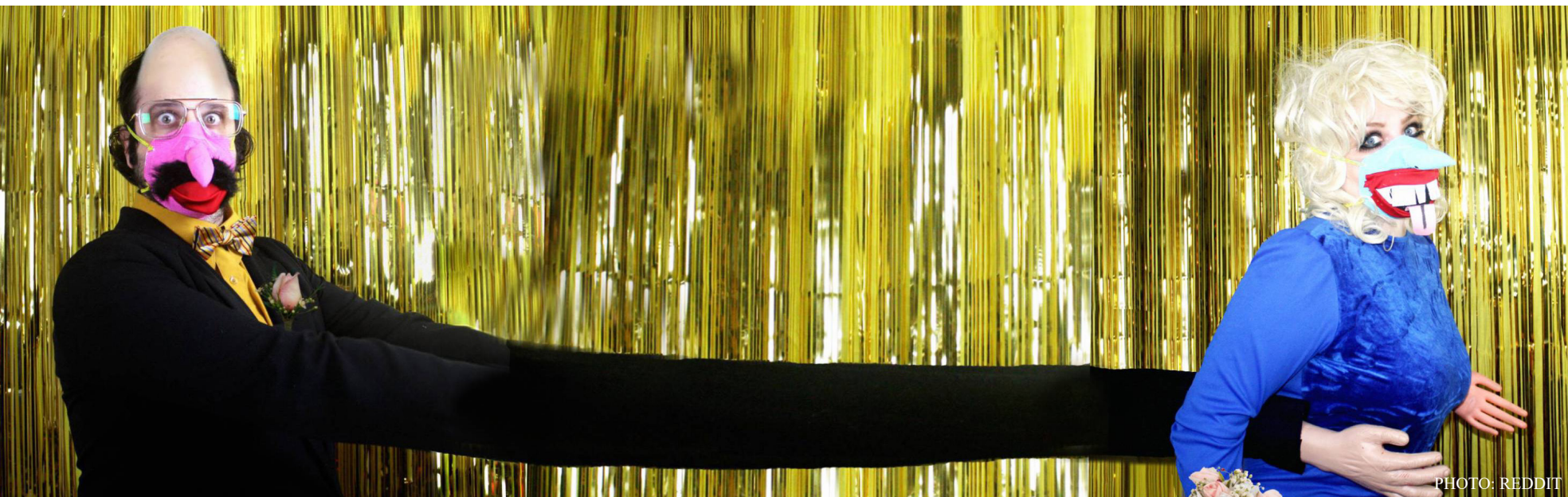


PHOTO: REDDIT

Prom 2021: Social Dis-dancing?



Kendall Betz
Features Editor

With the start of the second semester comes the build up to prom. Juniors and seniors busy themselves with finding dates, and lunch table conversations become all about the iconic dance. Girls spend countless hours searching for the perfect dress and planning the perfect prom experience. At least, that's what usually happens. But this is 2021, so instead of prom-posals, upperclassmen are asking: is there going to be a prom at all?

That's where I step in with my top three ideas for Prom 2021.

1. Get the ball rolling on in-person events with Human Hamster Ball Prom."

ion.

Not digging the idea of being stuck inside a ball all night, then this next idea is for you.

2. Instead of a ball, make it an imaginary box. Everyone gets a parking spot in the student lot for the night, and they all stay in their spot for the duration of the event. Admin could drive a golf cart around with individually packaged snacks and drinks, and it would be

a great opportunity to be outside and enjoy the fresh air. Just hope it doesn't start to rain.

If you're more into traditional pandemic parties, you'll appreciate my next pitch.

3. It just has to be said: virtual prom. Nothing says party like a Zoom link these days. Dress up (at least from the waist up, you know the drill), grab a snack, throw on some LED lights or a snazzy

Zoom background, and you're ready to party like it's 2020. Shake

“Nothing says party like a Zoom link these days.”

the dance up with a game: virtual bingo, anyone?

Prom this year will definitely not be a typical dance, but anything will be better than last year's prom experience. As a senior, I hope prom is in person. It would be nice to at least have one semi-normal high school prom.

While most of prom is undecided, one thing is for sure: there will be plenty of space for Jesus at this year's dance.

Due Date Times: Ranked

The times of due dates speak volumes. Now that everything is online, it is easy to rank teachers by simply looking at the times at which they set their due dates. This way, students are able to find the teachers who have consideration for their students, and those who do not.

3. 4:00 p.m.

The harshest time to make assignments due. We all need some time of healthy procrastination. With a time like this, it's likely that the assignment was given to students earlier in the day. Having the shortest amount of time to complete assignments is unhelpful.

2. 9:00 a.m.

This is the superior option for those who do not sleep, as they can stay up all night to finish assignments. Respect to all the workaholics in and out of Leadership who are behind on their sleep schedules. We believe in you.

1. 11:59 p.m.

Allows for the most procrastination of the three. Our hearts go out to the teachers who choose 11:59! Once the clock hits 11, our inner motivation strengthens to help us finish our assignments just in time.

Dear Teachers,

Have courtesy for your tired students who do not prefer irregular due dates. Stick to the 11:59 due dates, please. Quarantine has already been rough enough for us. Thank you.



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

Don't get sucked up by the SENIORITIS MONSTER!

Seniors!

Have you noticed yourself falling behind in work? Getting up late for school? Studying less and less for tests? Or not even studying at all? If any of those apply to you, BEWARE--you may be getting sucked up by the senioritis monster! It has attacked generations of seniors, and its appetite hasn't waned yet. But to those of you who find yourselves in the monster's clutches, there is hope! Fight back: keep turning in assignments, keep getting up, keep studying. You're almost there--you can make it!



CARTOON: TIMMY DILLARD

Lillie Pearl: Serving Soul Food with Soul



PHOTO: MIKE LINDSEY AND KIMBERLY LOVE-LINDSEY

Chef Mike Lindsey and Kimberly Love-Lindsey pose outside their Grace Street restaurant.

Brooke Ward
Staff Writer

Taking Richmond by storm as of Nov. 13, Lillie Pearl, “a new American restaurant with southern ingredients and global influences,” has proven itself a staple of downtown cuisine.

After meeting at their previous employer, Chef Mike Lindsey and his wife, Kimberly Love-Lindsey, decided that it was time to follow their dreams and open a restaurant of their own. “Unfortunately, I was the one always holding him back,” said Mrs. Love-Lindsey, who was concerned that they would be missing out on other potential career opportunities by opening their own restaurant. However, “Corona[virus] changes your perspective on things,” she said, “it was a turning point in our lives where we knew it was time to go for it.”

Paying homage to a beloved family member, Mr. Lindsey, the restaurant’s chef, named the establishment after his grandmother, Lillie Pearl. “Lillie Pearl was a great cook, she was the cool grandmother,” said Chef Lindsey. Grandma Lillie Pearl “was the vision we had for our restaurant.” Full of bustling family members, upbeat music, competitive card games, and incredible food, Lillie Pearl’s home had every aspect of a delightful dining experience.

Several of the restaurant’s menu items stem from Grandma Lillie Pearl’s own kitchen. “The smothered pork chop is one of Lillie Pearl’s dishes that has been passed down through generations,” said Chef Lindsey. This pork chop is also one of the restaurant’s best-selling menu items!

Lillie Pearl’s menu offers a wide range of southern hits that Richmonders know and love while also incorporating Latin, Asian, and

West African influences. “You can put so many things on the menu, but they have to be able to play off each other,” said Chef Lindsey. “We put a lot of effort into blending those cultures into Richmond cuisine.”

Lillie Pearl offers its guests a chance to spice up their lives with soul food that adds a twist to their traditional food favorites. “The new American side allows us to put whatever we want onto the menu,” Chef Lindsey said. “We’re able to offer a table of 10 something different for each of them to enjoy.”

Next up in owning a successful restaurant is the atmosphere. Mr. Lindsey and Mrs. Love-Lindsey place emphasis on making Lillie Pearl feel like “home” where there is no dress code. “Come as you are,” said Chef Lindsey, who wants his guests to be “comfortable and well taken care of.” “We won’t judge if you’re wearing pajamas,” said Chef Lindsey. “Come in, and we’ll treat you with respect.”

As a Black restaurant owner, Chef Lindsey, who is of African descent, finds meaning in coming to work everyday. “I just have so

much pride,” said Chef Lindsey, who has made Lillie Pearl into a successful and inclusive restaurant. Lillie Pearl regularly sees a mix of all types of cultures in the restaurant. “As a Black chef, nailing down food that everybody in Richmond is eating, no matter their ethnicity, is incredible,” said Chef Lindsey.

As for Lillie Pearl’s future, Chef Lindsey hopes to “keep doing what we’re doing, and not lose grip on how well we’re executing.” Lillie Pearl is more concerned with internal success rather than external achievements. “We don’t need accolades to be successful,” said Chef Lindsey, “the goal is to be the best restaurant we can be.” According to Chef Lindsey, “I want to be a restaurant people talk about.”

Chef Lindsey’s advice to young entrepreneurs who are starting from the bottom is to keep pushing. “Everything is built on your determination, follow-up, and how much you push yourself when times get tough,” said Chef Lindsey. “Know what you want to do, figure out how you’re going to make it work, create a plan, and execute that plan.”



PHOTO: LILLIEPEARL.RVA

One of the restaurant’s many dishes celebrating Southern heritage with a twist.

Community Service Opportunities

HISTORY AND HUMAN RIGHTS CLUB MENSTRUAL DRIVE



PHOTO: ATDSF

The History and Human Rights Club is hosting a supply drive for menstrual products on March 20. Students can donate menstrual products - mainly pads and tampons - to the drive, and History and Human Rights Club will send these crucial donations to the RVA-based nonprofit Safe Harbor.

LETTERS OF LOVE FOR OUR ELDERS



PHOTO: LOVEFOR-ROURELDERS

Senior isolation has intensified throughout the pandemic. Love For Our Elders mails handwritten notes to senior communities across the globe, bringing connection in a time of separation. Learn more about mailing letters to seniors at: loveforoureliders.org.

HISTORIC EVERGREEN CEMETARY RESTORATION



PHOTO: ENRICH-MOND

Founded in 1891 by leaders of RVA’s African American community, the Historic Evergreen Cemetary “is the resting place for thousands of individuals who faced segregation, discrimination, and racial violence while contributing in important ways to the city.” Volunteers help restore this historic cemetary by clearing debris and documenting headstones.

JAMES RIVER PARK CLEAN-UP



PHOTO: JAMES-RIVERPARK

Searching for a way to give back while spending time in nature? Volunteering for James River Park clean-ups are the perfect way to give back to RVA and the environment. These clean-ups include trash pick-up, trail maintenance, and invasive plant removal to maintain the natural beauty of the James River.



PHOTO: SMRITHI SATHIYAMURTHY



PHOTO: SMRITHI SATHIYAMURTHY

Above: Smrithi and Campbell as seniors at Freeman. Below: The couple is now celebrating four years together.

Classmates to Sweethearts

Emily Waters
Staff Writer

Freeman alumni Smrithi Sathiyamurthy and Campbell Nystrom have been together for four years, and you’ll never guess where they met: here in the halls of DSF.

The two “were both in the center and were in the same rotation all four years,” Smrithi said. During their senior year, the We The People Competition (WTP) brought the couple closer. “We didn’t really become friends until We the People senior year, since we were put into the same unit,” Smrithi said.

“We first started bonding over our unit and the large workload to prepare for WTP,” and eventually the two “started talking less about school and more about ourselves and our interests,” said Smrithi. Soon after, Campbell and Smrithi went on their first date at Casa Italiana, a local pick in the Freeman community.

“Freeman was a big part of our relationship,” Smrithi said. “It was where we saw each other the most.” The two had very similar schedules, so Smrithi said they “were able to walk to and from those classes together everyday.”

Lara Curry, Freeman history teacher, who taught both Smrithi

and Campbell at one point or another, said “They are both such kind people, that their connection was instant.”

Smrithi graduated from George Mason University in December, and Campbell currently attends the University of Virginia. Smrithi said that, although they went to different colleges, the two “saw each other plenty.” Smrithi said, “We visited each other at least every other weekend, and school breaks were even better because that meant we were both home in RVA.”

“I think productive communication is extremely important in a relationship.”
- Smrithi Sathiyamurthy

According to Smrithi, a “benefit to having met in high school is that we share the same hometown, which makes it easier when it comes to seeing each other while still in school.”

When it comes to lasting relationships, “I think productive communication is extremely important in a relationship,” said Smrithi. She said that “communicating our honest thoughts have helped us main-

tain a happy and healthy relationship.”

Neither Smrithi nor Campbell had been in a relationship before this one. “I think a piece of advice to my high school self would be to try and be a little less anxious,” Smrithi said.

She continued, “A piece of advice I would give to people at Freeman in a relationship would be to keep an open mind and make sure you both communicate.” Smrithi added that it’s not just important to talk often, but to talk “about the important things and expressing your feelings.”

Campbell said that he “think[s] it’s important to talk to your significant other about any issue instead of just letting them fester.”

There are differing opinions on whether or not high school relationships work. “I was definitely skeptical about a high school relationship,” said Smrithi. “I would roll my eyes at those couples in the hallway, probably a bit jealous more than anything.”

After her relationship with Campbell, Smrithi said that she couldn’t “really think of a disadvantage” to having met in high school. She added, “Now I’m a lot less eye-roll and more encouraging and happy for those in relationships in high school.”

From Freeman to Fame

Cameron Cavender
Staff Writer

Over the years, some Freeman alumni have gone on to stardom, including a number who have become successful and famous musicians.

Elliott Yamin, 1992-1993

Pop and R&B artist Elliott Yamin was born in Los Angeles and moved to Richmond at the age of 10, where he attended Tuckahoe Middle School and then Freeman in 1992 and 1993. Mr. Yamin has been singing his entire life, and first began making music around the age of 19.

According to Mr. Yamin, he wished to pursue a music career for many reasons. "There's nothing like creative expression ... [music] was always my safe place," said Mr. Yamin. "Singing has always brought me joy ... that emotional connection you can make with someone, whether it be one person or a sea of people, is the greatest feeling in the world, it really is."

Mr. Yamin competed on the fifth season of "American Idol" back in 2006 and placed third. He described

his experience on the show as "terrifying, electrifying, surreal, and so much fun," and said that it was "the best experience of [his] life." He has now released multiple albums and a number of singles. Up to this point, said Mr. Yamin, his career has been "incredibly gratifying" and "life affirming."

In his free time, Mr. Yamin said that he enjoys biking and basketball. However, he jokingly noted that ever since his daughter's birth in early February, his hobbies have been the same as hers.

Mr. Yamin's piece of advice for young students who dream of becoming musicians is to "work, work, and do some more work, and never stop working, never stop learning."

Tommy Siegel, 1999-2003

Musician and cartoonist Tommy Siegel was a Freeman student during the turn of the century. As a high schooler, Mr. Siegel and his friends were involved in a band called Dandy Otto. "We played at every gig we could get," said Mr. Siegel. "Birthday parties, basketball games, battle of the bands, dive

bars, ice rinks, you name it!" His childhood band produced two albums and performed a live album at the Tuckahoe Public Library.

According to Mr. Siegel, he began playing music in middle school after he received a guitar for his 13th birthday, but he didn't think that he would end up making music for a living. "It still seems like a miracle to me," said Mr. Siegel.

Now, he is in a band called Jukebox the Ghost, which formed in Mr. Siegel's college days. Regarding his band's upcoming record, Mr. Siegel said, "[I] genuinely think it's going to be our best record." According to Mr. Siegel, "usually my favorite record is the most recent thing I've released."

Outside of his band, Mr. Siegel recently released his debut solo album called "Another Century Wasted."

As for any advice that he would give to young aspiring musicians, Mr. Siegel said, "Learn how to produce and record your own music ... the way you can really take control over your destiny as a musician is to learn how to self-engineer and produce your own music."

According to Mr. Watkins, he enjoys writing

Robert Palmer Watkins, 2002-2006

Actor and musician Robert Palmer Watkins attended Freeman in the early 2000s and proceeded to have a successful career onstage.

Mr. Watkins' involvement in music has previously involved creating covers of other songs and posting them to his social media. Currently, however, he is working on the music video for his first piece of original music, "Compton," which he plans to release toward the end of March.

As for his acting career, Mr. Watkins said that he first performed in high school, when he was convinced to do the school play. "I loved [my first play]; I just knew it was what I wanted to do, it felt right... and I never looked back," he said. Now, Mr. Watkins plays Dillon Quartermaine in the ABC show "General Hospital," and has recently been in Richmond filming "The Walking Dead." He also starred in the November 2020 film "Last Three Days."

According to Mr. Watkins, he enjoys writing

and making music, as well as going on hikes and to the beach. He loves to work out and said that he is now getting into boxing.

Mr. Watkins said that his career up to this point has been "an up and down rollercoaster and an adventure that I wouldn't change for the world." According to Mr. Watkins, "It's taken longer than I would have liked to get where I am, but I'm grateful for where I'm at, and I can't wait to see what comes next."

Other Notable Graduates

In addition to Mr. Watkins, Mr. Yamin, and Mr. Siegel, other notable musicians that have come out of Freeman include Kevin Aviance and Bill Leverty. Aviance is a famous club musician, drag queen, and fashion designer in New York City. He is a prominent figure in the city's gay scene, and has per-


formed across the country, as well as in Europe and Asia.

Leverty is a guitarist, and a member of Firehouse, a rock band formed in 1984. He has written many of the band's hit records and has also released several solo albums.

It is important to note that, while none of the musicians mentioned here are female, Freeman has had plenty of famous female alumni. Ellen Spiro, a documentary filmmaker, graduated in 1982, and Sheri Holman, a novelist and founding member of the storytelling collective The Moth, graduated in 1984. Arguably Freeman's most famous alumnus, "Crazy Rich Asians" star Constance Wu graduated in 2000.

With so many notable alumni coming from Freeman, it makes you wonder: who will be the next Freeman student to rise to stardom? Will you or one of your classmates go on to be famous? Only time will tell!

Musical Alumni on Social Media




Elliott Yamin

@elliottyamin

@singlikeyamin

Elliott Yamin




Tommy Siegel

@TommySiegel

@tommysiegel

Jukebox the Ghost



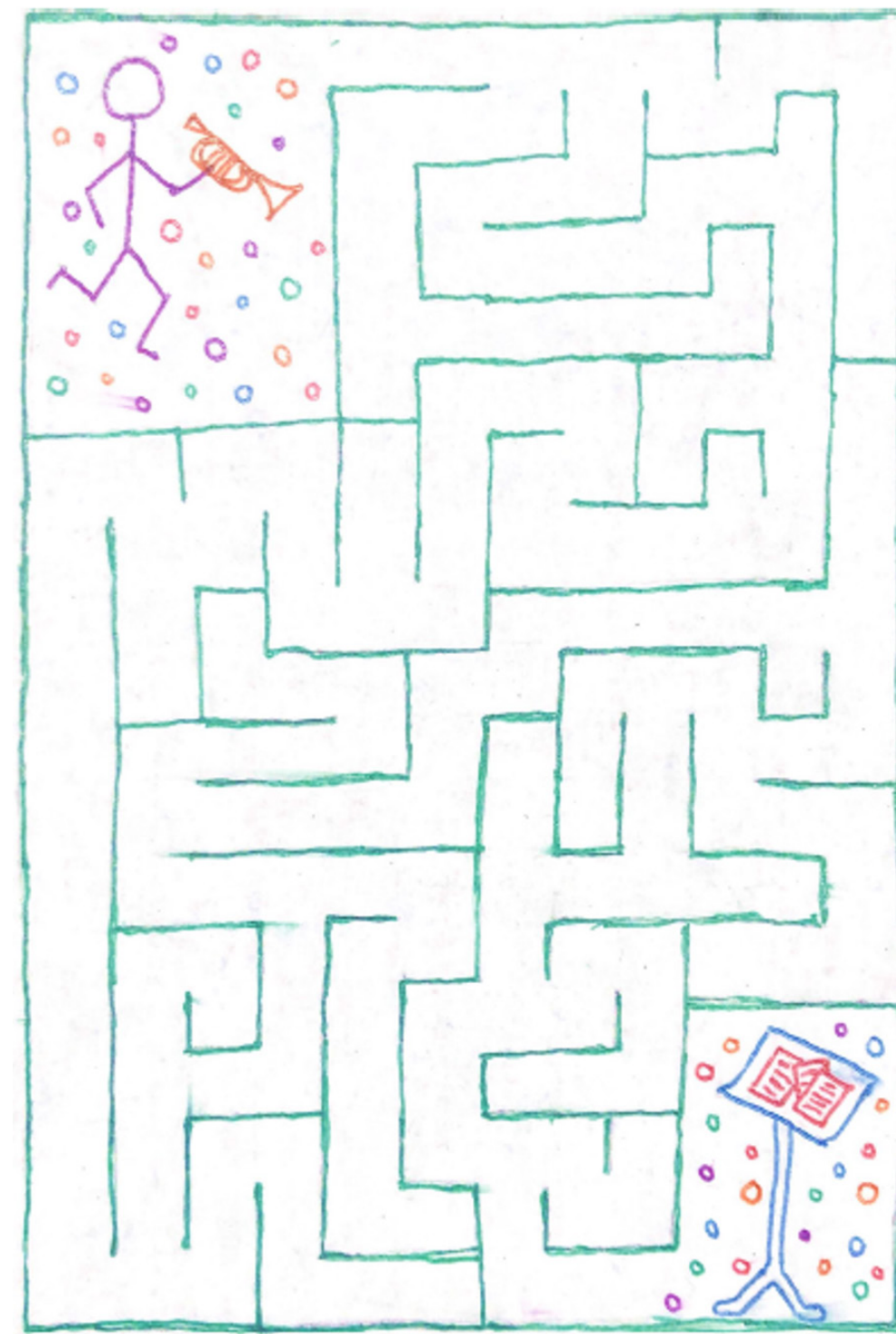
Robert Palmer Watkins

@Robertwatkins

@robertpalmerwatkins

PALMER FUNK IT FRIDAY Music

Help the band kid find his sheet music!



CARTOON: LANIE MOORE

Musical Mavs and all that jazz



PHOTO: GOOGLE



PHOTOS: GOOGLE

Ella Hurlbert
Staff Writer

Junior Faces the Music

school music teacher, Mrs. Johnson," said Virginia, whose strong work ethic and musical skills allowed her to make all-county orchestra last year.

"Virginia is very committed and hard-working," said Freeman senior and orchestra student Ethan Rashkind. "With her being in both the orchestras and color guard, I always wonder how she has enough time to ... make [her music] sound good."

"I don't find it difficult to keep up with orchestra and school now that we're online," said Virginia. "[In online school], I do most of my practicing during the class period. Back when we were in-person, it was a little bit more difficult. We'd all be working together, and you would have to know what you individually need to practice on your own time."

Virginia added that it's "more about how you manage your time" than finding extra time to practice. "[Students] must practice patience, discipline, and diligence in order to improve and find success on their instrument of choice," said concert orchestra teacher Aaron Todd. "[Virginia is] a student I can rely on ... Virginia's classmates can look up to her, too. She is a skilled player, and she is always willing to help other students."

"[Virginia] is very comfortable picking up a new piece of music ... and engaging it without trepidation," said Mr. Todd. "This makes Virginia a go-getter not only in orchestra, but in other parts of her life." "[Music] gives you the chance to really express

Nafisa Anjum. "That's not something a lot of players have."

Ethan agreed when he said, "Virginia has a great sense of humor and can goof around, but at the same time, [she can be] totally focused and take her music very seriously."

Virginia spends over 150 minutes of practice time every week on her violin alone, preferring to rehearse in a place that's "quiet ... so it's easier to hear what I'm playing," she said. "I usually just play in my room or downstairs."

"With guitar, I try to sit down every week and play a few songs," she said. "It's a good way for me to decompress. My other instruments I mostly play when I'm in the mood to."

Having taken lessons in harp and, for the most part, taught herself how to play piano and ukulele, Virginia has a plethora of options when she's looking for a musical outlet. "One thing I love about music is ... that I never get bored of it. If I'm tired of one instrument, I can take a break and work on another one," she said.

"[Virginia] is very comfortable picking up a new piece of music ... and engaging it without trepidation," said Mr. Todd. "This makes Virginia a go-getter not only in orchestra, but in other parts of her life."

"[Music] gives you the chance to really express

yourself," said Nafisa. "Everyone doing something they are truly passionate about brings out their true personalities." Virginia's true personality, Nafisa said, is one that contributes "honesty, passion, and commitment" to orchestra and "elegance and energy to any song" performed.

"My favorite thing about performing in front of others is that it's really satisfying to show off what you've been working so hard on," said Virginia. "It shows that all the practicing ... paid off."

Virginia plans to transform both her love of performing and her affinity for learning musical instruments into a career. "I'm thinking of being a music teacher," she said. "I'm planning to major in music in college."

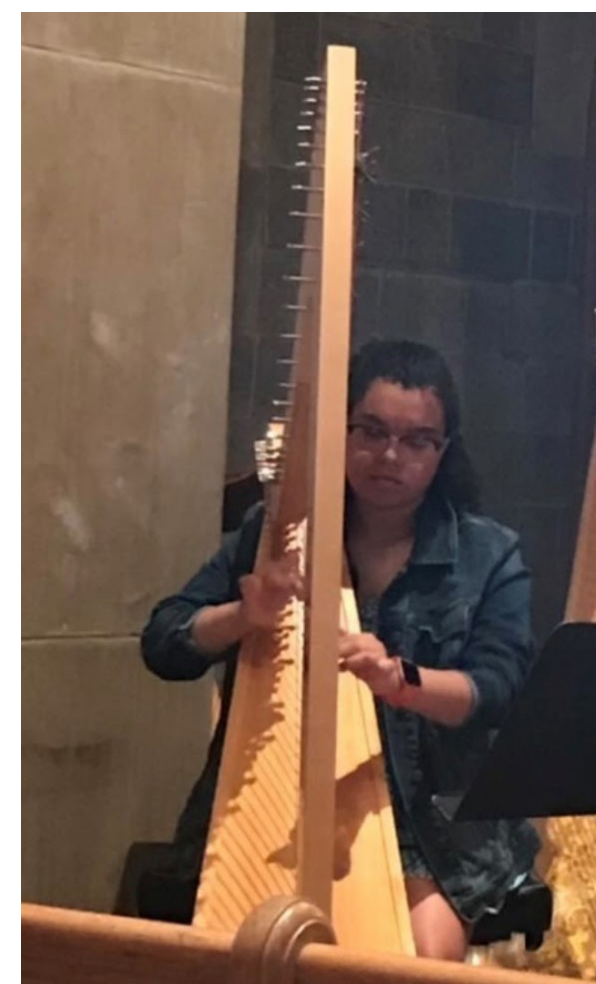


PHOTO: VIRGINIA JOHNSON

Virginia plays five instruments, including harp.

Which Genre of Music Are You?

Have you ever wondered which genre of music matches your personality? Take this quiz to find out!

1. Where is your favorite place to listen to music?

- A) In the car
- B) On the beach
- C) At a live concert
- D) In the library



PHOTO: ENTREPRENEURIAL-EXPAT

2. What are your favorite types of movies?

- A) Adventure movies
- B) Feel good movies
- C) Thrillers
- D) Black and white movies



PHOTO: FINEARTAMERICA

3. Which is your favorite instrument?

- A) My vocal chords
- B) Guitar
- C) Drums
- D) Violin



PHOTO: CITYMUSICONLINE

4. Where would you like to travel to?

- A) Los Angeles
- B) Nashville
- C) Cleveland
- D) London

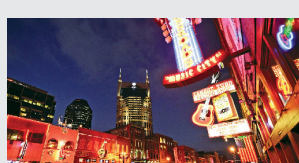


PHOTO: TRAVELWEEKLY

5. Who is your music idol?

- A) Ariana Grande
- B) Willie Nelson
- C) AC/DC
- D) Beethoven



PHOTO: JAMBASE



Mostly As: Pop

Your personality matches a pop song - you're upbeat and energetic!

Mostly Bs: Country

You're most like a country song - you're laid back and genuine to others!

Mostly Cs: Rock

You like to Rock N' Roll - you're always wild and free!

Mostly Ds: Classical

You're like classical music - you're calm and sophisticated!

Freeman's Got Talent: Afton Hessian

"Freeman's Got Talent" is a column featuring a DSF student who displays a particular talent. This issue's column focuses on freshman Afton Hessian, who rock climbs.

Where do you rock climb and who do you rock climb with?

"I climb at Peak Experiences and occasionally outdoors at the New River Gorge. I climb with other members of the competitive team as well as former members."

Why did you start rock climbing?

"My mom grew up climbing so I had always been around the sport but I really got into it after bouldering in Oregon when I was 11. I was a competitive gymnast of seven years at the time but was out on injury when I went. I immediately fell in love with it and joined the training team at Peak the following week."

What is your favorite part about rock climbing?

"My favorite thing is that the gym is always being reset so every few months it's like being in a completely different place. Different route setters have different styles of setting so you are able to figure out what kind of climbing you like best and why."

Do you compete in rock climbing competitions?

"Yes. There are two seasons (bouldering/ropes), each having a series of three main competitions: regionals, divisionals, and nationals. There are also international competitions run by the International Federation of Sport Climbing (IFSC). Climbing will also be in the 2021 Olympics, albeit in a controversial format."

How often do you climb?

"COVID has changed scheduling but I normally climb four times a week."

How has rock climbing helped you?

"Climbing has helped me be a more decisive person. It's really easy to get inside of your head, especially on the wall, so you get well-versed in making decisions."

Who is your biggest climbing inspiration?

"My biggest inspirations are Sasha DiGiulian and Kai Lightner. Besides both being incredible climbers they are active advocates for both environmental and social justice. Sasha, being a member of The Protect Our Winters Action Fund, went to the U.S. Capitol to speak on climate change and land management last year. Kai is the founder of a non-profit for diversity and inclusion within the climbing community which is extremely important as he said "A lot of us are conditioned not to enter spaces that are predominantly white or where we're not represented in the community."

What are your future plans for climbing?

"I hope to continue on the team and keep competing in the youth circuit. Most Virginia colleges have collegiate teams as well so I will most likely continue through college."



PHOTO: AFTON HESSIAN

Afton maneuvers her way down a rockwall.

Senior Advocates for Human Rights

Emma Ridolphi
Staff Writer

Senior Jonda Stephens is not only involved in numerous activities at Freeman, but is also an activist for Black Lives Matter (BLM) and the LGBTQ+ community.

"I've been advocating for LGBTQ+ rights and the BLM movement since I made a social media account at the age of 13," Jonda said. "At the age of 12, I came out as lesbian. On top of that, I am black. Being a black lesbian, especially at that specific age, has its issues. I just want to make sure that what I went through doesn't happen to anyone else in my situation."

Jonda uses her experience to be an outspoken advocate over social media platforms like Instagram. "I post anything and everything that will educate my followers, or anyone, in general, about LGBTQ+ rights and BLM," she said. Jonda believes that her work can influence other people's perspectives of BLM and the LGBTQ+ community. "Whenever I get an opportunity to educate people, I try to get them to understand the history on both sides," she said. "The BLM movement and LGBTQ+ rights don't get enough recognition... whenever I see good words [regarding those subjects], I will post them."

Jonda expressed that she feels as though her activism has made a difference in the community. According to Jonda, "social media is very popular, so whatever I post can get to uneducated people and give resources to people in need."

Jonda's girlfriend and fellow Freeman senior, Essence Touch, believes that Jonda has sparked real change. "Jonda has affected the Freeman community by be-



PHOTO: JONDA STEPHENS

Jonda strikes a pose to show off her pride.

ing an openly gay woman," Essence said. "She is proud and an inspiration for the LGBTQ+ community at Freeman." According to Essence, Jonda "is fighting for causes she is passionate about, and I'm proud of her." Essence said that she hopes Jonda's activism can inspire individuals to "stand up and be proud of who they are."

Jonda is also involved with the Black Student Union, Prism club, and morning announcements. Mrs. Linas, head of the morning announcements crew, described Jonda as "a fantastic team member," and said that "she isn't afraid to jump into any role needed." Mrs. Linas also described Jonda as "a natural at anchoring and weather." She said that she "likes how [Jonda's] personality comes through. That's one of the most important aspects of being an on-air personality."

According to Jonda, "Reporting on the morning announcements was appealing to me because I enjoy being in front of the camera and talking," but "more importantly, there's no one else who reports that looks like me." Jonda hasn't yet integrated her work for human rights into the morning announcements, but said that it's "something to think about."

With Jonda's involvement in clubs, the announcements, and activism, she has a lot on her plate. However, she said, "I plan on continuing my activism in the future." Jonda explained that she wants to further her activism by "donating to LGBTQ+ communities and to the BLM movement" and "being able to speak to LGBTQ+ and Black youth to share my experiences." As an end goal, Jonda said, "I want equality. I want justice. This is what I fight for every day."

From Rome to Richmond

Riley Speidell
Staff Writer

The debate has been settled. "I tried pineapple on pizza and it was awful. I don't know why people like it," said junior Sara Parroccini an exchange student from the heart of Italy: Rome. Although her time abroad has been cut short due to the pandemic, Sara has been learning a lot in her couple months in the United States.

Sara has been staying with Freeman junior Claire Morris and her family since just before winter break. Claire's mother, Gretchen Morris, was an exchange student in Germany when she was in high school, and Claire's father's family hosted exchange students when he was in high school. The Morris family has been wanting to host an exchange student for some time now. "Growing up, our families learned so much about other cultures and we developed deep, long-lasting friendships across the globe through these exchanges," said Mrs. Morris. "We wanted the opportunity to share this type of experience with our children and a foreign exchange student."

Sara's older sister also participated in an exchange student program, though hers was in Iowa. After hearing about her experience, Sara and her twin sister decided they wanted to partake in a similar endeavor. Since Mrs. Morris has experience as an exchange student, she has been guiding Sara through her time in America. "My host mother... has a lot of insight on things that have been really helpful to me," said Sara.

In addition to pizza, Sara has tried many foods during her time in the U.S. According to Claire, "My dad is from New Mexico, and on New Year's, the tradition in our house is to make tamales, so [Sara] got to... be a part of the assembly line." Claire also explained that, "Apparently, you're not supposed to eat chicken on top of pasta, so it was weird for her when we made chicken parmesan the other day."

One of Sara's favorite foods that she has tried in America is a Southern classic. "One thing that I think is really American that I really like is chicken and waffles," she said. "It is really different to anything I've had before, but it is

so good."

Culturally, Sara has experienced many differences between Italy and the United States. "I was telling my family that when you live here, you can't just walk to where you are going," she said. This "is not really a thing where I'm from because public transport is so much easier, [there is] less traffic, and [there is] less inconvenience," said Sara.

Mrs. Morris said, "I think one of the biggest adjustments for Sara has been moving from a big city like Rome, where everything is accessible by foot or public transportation, to Richmond, where we have to drive most places. She's used to being able to go anywhere by herself in Rome." She continued, "Luckily, we live in a neighborhood where she can walk to a shopping center and we can drive her to other places."

Sara also noticed that neighbors interact in much different ways in America than in Italy. "People are so nice. You have to say hi to everyone, which is so weird," said Sara. "In Rome, if you did that they would look at you really weird and be like, 'What do you want?'"

In addition to the cultural differences, Sara notices some political differences. Sara was in the U.S. for the events that took place at the Capitol Building on Jan. 6, and said that it was a "very interesting and unexpected experience." Sara explained, "Something that I don't really like about

America is that throughout the nation everyone seems like, 'Yeah we're the best,' and I think you're allowed to think you're good, but everyone is loud about it." She went on, "You are all about freedom and fair elections, but then storm the Capitol building... I was not expecting that."

Although Sara has been taking her classes online, she has seen Freeman from the outside and has been in the Main Hall to pick up her laptop. Through this limited experience with Freeman, Sara has noticed some major differences between schools in America and in Italy. "We don't have lockers... We don't have fields, and the gym is much smaller," Sara said. In addition to this, "We don't really have school sports, we have gym class and the teacher decides the activities you do," she said.

Another difference between schooling in the countries is class changes. In Rome, the teachers switch rooms, rather than the students. "You and your classmates stay in the same classroom and you only really change classmates when you go from elementary to middle and middle to high school," said Sara.

Despite her first few days being a bit of a culture shock, Sara has found value in her time in the U.S. "All the American history that I've learned about is so in-depth here," she said. It "has been really interesting and I will definitely take that home with me."



PHOTO: GRETCHEN MORRIS

A handmade sign welcomed Sara to the U.S. in the airport.

Senior Soars Through Amateur Piloting

Kieran Wall
Staff Writer

The faded sign on the side of the road read “airplane flights,” complete with a picture of a stuffed bear dressed as an aviator. Most people would have just kept on driving, but not senior Lizzie Steilberg. Where others saw just another sign, Lizzie saw an opportunity.

Lizzie had made the journey out to the middle of nowhere in western Virginia to get more airtime, a vital aspect of pursuing a future pilot’s license. On that particular trip, the plane that she would be flying “was missing screws and leaking stuff everywhere,” said Lizzie. “That time, I thought maybe I wasn’t going to make it back to the ground,” she said, laughing, “but it ended up being fine.”

“I thought maybe I wasn’t going to make it back to the ground, but it ended up being fine.”

- Lizzie Steilberg

Lizzie’s fascination with piloting arose when she was a kid, surrounded by two older brothers obsessed with all things

space and aviation. Both Freeman graduates, Lizzie’s brothers have continued to pursue careers in aerospace, with one interning with NASA and the other working at an aviation company. “They [Lizzie’s brothers] have a lot to do with her interest in flying,” said Matthew Steilberg, Lizzie’s father.

Lizzie got the chance to fully explore her interest in flight through frequent trips to her grandparents’ house in Daytona Beach. There, Lizzie met Molly Suba, then a student at Embry Riddle, an aeronautics college in Daytona. After Molly took Lizzie on a few training flights, Lizzie was hooked. “[Molly] is a super awesome girl who has always loved flying ... and has been a great mentor to me,” said Lizzie.

Even with a mentor in the field, Lizzie quickly found that amateur piloting is not the most accessible hobby. In order to get time in the air, “I basically just hunt down people who have connections to airports or know how to fly,” said Lizzie. “There are a couple local airports around here [that] I’ve wiggled my way into, and their flight instructors take me up.” Using these contacts, Lizzie is able to fly “just about as much as a 17-year-old can.”

To most, flying a Cessna plane seems like a complex and difficult process, but according to Lizzie, “it’s really hard to crash a Cessna

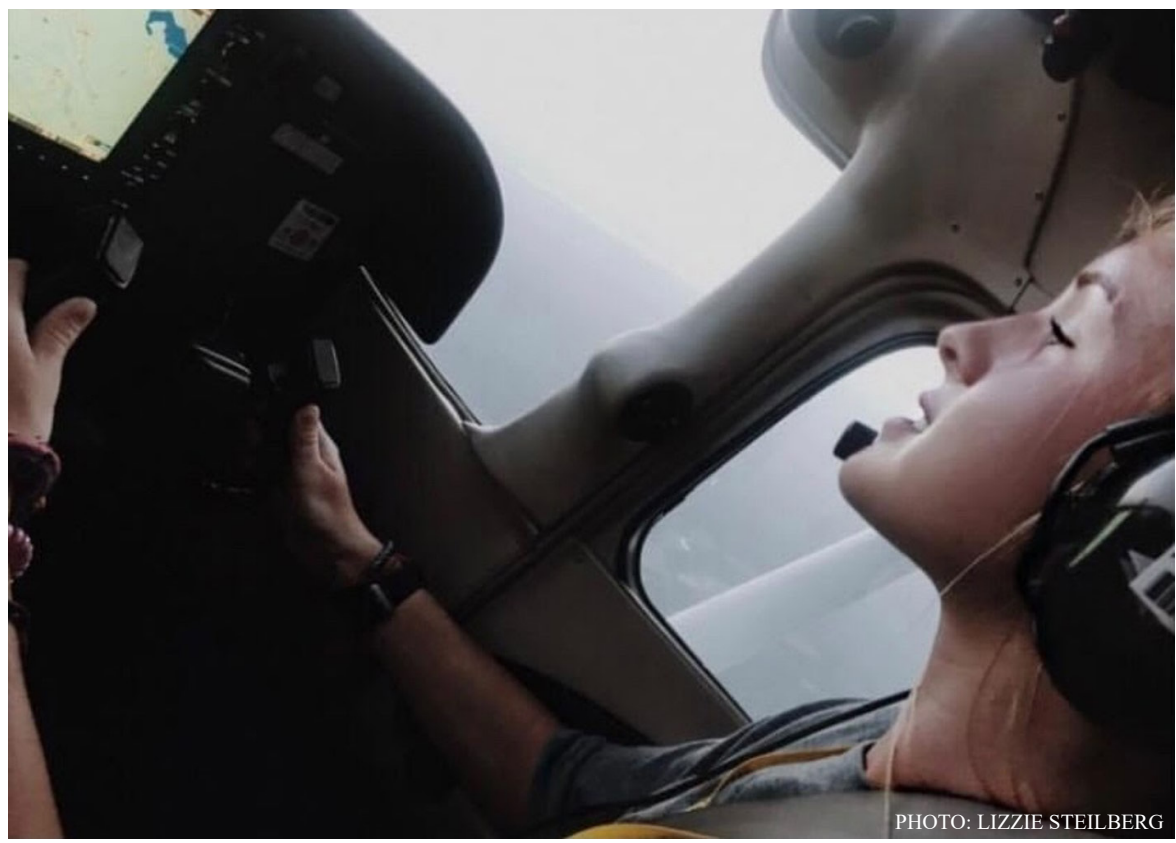


PHOTO: LIZZIE STEILBERG

“I’m thinking about going into the military... and then studying aerospace,” said Lizzie.

... the hardest part is landing because you have to do all the technical stuff ... like radioing the tower and requesting to land.”

Another challenge is maintaining a high level of concentration throughout the entire flight. “When you’re trying to go to a certain place, you have to be very focused,” said Lizzie. “Being able to hold that focus for a really long time, even though it’s loud and you can’t hear, is an important skill to have.”

However, the hardships never prevent Lizzie from enjoying her time in the cockpit. “It’s really cool knowing that you’re the one in control ... it’s like when you get your driver’s license and feel like you can go anywhere you want,” said Lizzie.

Oftentimes, flying is more than traveling from point A to point B. “I really like doing maneuvers, so like a tight spin, or you can even do a barrel roll in a Cessna; it’s like being on a roller coaster,” said Lizzie.

Lizzie’s family has been largely supportive of her hobby. “Her mother and I work very hard to encourage and support the success of all our children,” said Mr. Steilberg, but “the rest of it is all Lizzie – she’s an incredibly hard worker. She’s made this path for herself.” Some of Lizzie’s most memorable

moments in the air have been with her older brother Robert, who is also pursuing his pilot’s license. “[Flying with Lizzie] was actually pretty hilarious,” said Robert, “because of her flights in Florida

“I really like doing maneuvers, so like a tight spin, or you can even do a barrel roll in a Cessna.”

- Lizzie Steilberg

with Molly, Lizzie actually had a better feel for a Cessna than me.”

Lizzie hopes to turn the skills and experience that she has gained through her time flying in high school into a career in aviation. “I don’t think I want to be a commercial pilot; I’m thinking about going into the military and flying for them, and then studying aerospace at whatever school I end up in,” said Lizzie.

“I think Lizzie is capable of anything, including the astronaut corps. The sky is the limit for her – or maybe the sky is not the limit,” said Mr. Steilberg.



PHOTO: LIZZIE STEILBERG

Lizzie and her dad posing in front of a Cessna plane.

English Teacher’s Hollywood History

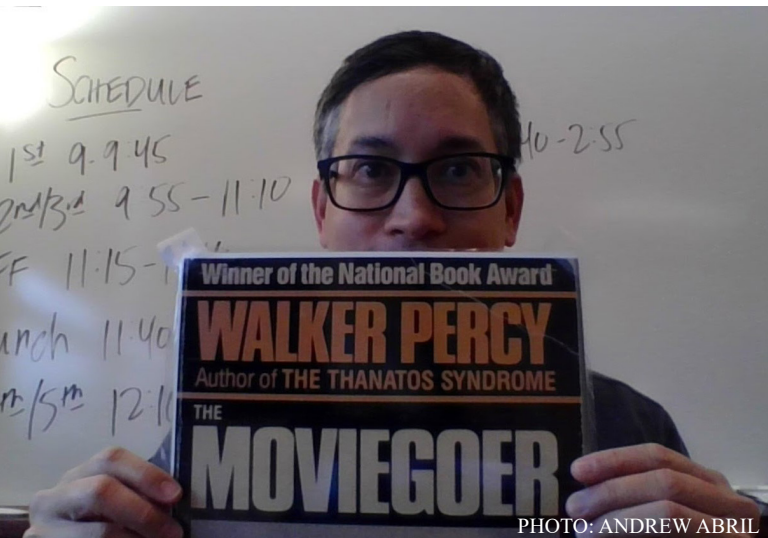


PHOTO: ANDREW ABRIL

Mr. Abril poses with a book cover poster.

Daisy Fuller
Staff Writer

Imagine being in a Hollywood writing room with famous actors and transformative screenwriters, watching the future of film unroll right in front of you. For Freeman’s English and photojournalism teacher Andrew Abril, this was his life before teaching. Prior to this time at DSF, Mr. Abril worked as a creative executive (CE) in the film industry for over 10 years.

Although he majored in English at The University of Southern California, Mr. Abril always had a passion for film, and pursued an internship at Brooklyn Film Company in his final college years.

“My last semester [of college] my schedule freed up, so I could really dive into my internship, and I just clicked with a lot of people there,” said Mr. Abril. When he graduated, Mr. Abril was hired by the same company and continued to work there for over ten years.

“I feel like a lot of what I’ve learned about the world is from movies.”

- Mr. Abril

Mr. Abril had many duties as a CE, but his “biggest task” was evaluating material sent into the company. “I read the material that came in, I did research, and I gave script notes,” Mr. Abril explained. His days would often last from morning to late at night and involved working on sets, writing rooms, and more. Films that Mr. Abril has worked on include “Black Swan” and “Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow.”

While he has moved past his film career, Mr. Abril still stays connected to the cinematic world. Currently, he is the club sponsor for Freeman’s Film Club and is an avid movie fanatic.

Film Club is spearheaded by senior co-presidents Ben Edlavitch and Grace Minson, along with Mr. Abril. The club consists of members who analyze movies and delve into cinematography.

Mr. Abril “is extremely knowledgeable about movies in general, and can contribute to our conversations about virtually any film,” said Ben.

Grace echoed these sentiments, saying that Mr. Abril’s “experience in film has made him a better sponsor for the club.” According to Grace, “He keeps up-to-date with current film buzz and adds in his expertise whenever we ask.”

“I feel like a lot of what I’ve learned about the world is from movies,” said Mr. Abril. His connection to film often influences how he chooses to educate his students. Mr. Abril frequently incorporates movies or cinematic themes into class material and lesson plans. Junior Alyssa Gagen, one of Mr. Abril’s students, said, “Mr. Abril incorporates a wide and diverse array of media, literature, and film, in order to keep [us] informed on modern-day issues.”

For any students considering a career in film, Mr. Abril said, “Knowing cinematic history is really important, write a lot, and study screenplays and movies.”

Mr. Abril’s experience and perspective have given many students a chance to understand more about the ever-changing film industry. “Mr. Abril is the only real connection I have ever had to the professional filmmaking world,” said Ben. “It’s ncuraging to know someone who worked in the [industry.]”

Fishing Tips with Zane Gurkin

The president of Freeman’s Fishing Club, junior Zane Gurkin, is here to give you the tips and tricks you need to help you become a master fisherman and reel in those big catches!

PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO

Freeman's Regency Royals

Sydney Tyler
Staff Writer

Three of the Regency Dance Academy's Show Troupe performers are not only competitive dance teammates, but also classmates at Freeman. Sophomore Abby Crowe, junior Kaitlyn Plemons, and senior Natasha Romero all dance competitively as part of the Regency Royals.

According to Regency Dance Academy, the Regency Royals are "designed for the more serious and dedicated dancers interested in dancing competitively." All three of Freeman's dancers at Regency have chosen to step up their commitment to dance in order to compete passionately at the highest level.

In their first competition of the year, on Feb. 6, the Regency Royals took home 19 awards. Kaitlyn described a busy day of competition: "We wake up early and get ready together, then we do a team warm up, complete all of our dances, and then [we] have awards."

Suzanne Plemons, Kaitlyn's mother, said, "Kaitlyn is smart, sassy, and genuine." Kaitlyn started dancing when she was four years old and has loved it ever since. "I was trying out different sports and dancing is kind of what stuck," said Kaitlyn. Mrs. Plemons said, "I loved dance and being a part of a team. I wanted that same experience for my daughter."

In 2018, Kaitlyn started to dance competitively for the Regency Royals Show Troupe. She said, "I just wanted more to do," and, "when I became friends with [the girls on the team], saw how good they were, and how much fun they had, I was like, 'That looks like

fun, I want to go do that.'"

Now in her third year on the team, Kaitlyn has had a positive experience. She said, "I've gotten really close with a lot of girls, it's just overall a fun group of people and the teachers are amazing." Her dance teacher, Ashley Valo-Horrigan said, "Kaitlyn is the quiet 'mom-like' dancer. She is the one who drives everyone, not only in her car, but she also motivates her peers."

Competing has helped Kaitlyn grow as a dancer and shaped her dance experience. Kaitlyn said, "[My favorite dance memory] is my first competition because it was just the first time I got to perform with all my friends and experience awards, which are the best part." She said, "I've definitely gained skills because competitive [dancing] is so much harder."

Natasha started dancing in first grade and has never looked back. She said, "If I'm being honest, my mom really wanted me to dance, so it wasn't really my decision." Continuing this theme, Natasha did not think about competing until her jazz teacher asked her to audition. Now, she is in her third year competing with the Show Troupe. "I love to perform," said Natasha, "so being on the competitive team is great since I get to do it every month."

Mrs. Valo-Horrigan said, "Natasha is quiet, serious, and passionate. She works incredibly hard and when she dances, emotion pours from her."

Even as a dancer, Natasha has found that some of her favorite moments occur off the dance floor. She said, "I would say my favorite thing is our watch parties ... or whatever we do after the competition because we're all so excited



The girls of Regency Dance Academy's Show Troupe pose together after a competition.

and it just feels like we're a family." With this being said, the copious amounts of time she spends at Regency has taught her more than dance. "I have learned to manage my time very well because I dance for at least three hours a day," said Natasha.

Contrary to her teammates, Abby took a more non-traditional approach when beginning to dance. She switched from gymnastics to dance in sixth grade, because, she said, "I was feeling a little burnt out and dance was something that was similar." Since then, she has focused on dance alone.

Her mother, Margaret Holland, said that Abby "gives it her all and is excited about learning new

dances and spending time with her teammates." Mrs. Valo-Horrigan said, "Abby is strong and funny." During practice, "she works really hard, but will always find a way to make everyone laugh."

As a fourth year dancer, Abby is drawn to the competitive atmosphere at Regency. "I had always liked the more competitive nature of sports, so I took it to the next level," she said. After the team's first competition this year, "the

main takeaway from it was just how happy we were that we could finally be back on stage," Abby said. "It really felt [like] all the hard work we put in paid off."

In this unexpected year, Mrs. Valo-Horrigan said, "Watching [my students] grow from children to strong, young women has been a pleasure to witness and I couldn't be prouder."

A Year Without Takedowns

Russell Nystrom
Staff Writer

Senior Mario Yossif's dedication to wrestling is shown through his time on the mat at Freeman, where he was a constant presence throughout his first three years of high school.

Mario began wrestling in seventh grade at Quiocassin Middle School, where he quickly fell in love with the sport. He continued his wrestling career at Freeman.

While he hasn't yet made any plans to wrestle in the future, wrestling is an important part of Mario's life. "Wrestling will always be a part of my life both because of the lessons it taught me [and] because of the physical abilities I learned from it," said

Mario. Since he began wrestling five years ago, Mario said that the sport has taught him to "never rush anything" and "never give up, no matter how bad the situation."

For Mario's teammates, he is a positive part of the team. "His personality [is] refreshing," said senior wrestler Danny Piper. "Every group needs a guy like Mario to keep morale up." Danny also said that, when practicing, Mario "works hard, so it was always great wrestling against him because you have to earn every point."

On Nov. 30, the cancellation of winter sports due to a steep increase in COVID-19 cases meant that Mario would not be able to have his last wrestling season. Mario said that while he "kind of already knew it was coming," he still "could not believe that this happened in arguably [his] most

important season."

Looking back at his time wrestling at Freeman, Mario's favorite memory was when the wrestlers would be "sitting in the bus after school with the whole team on the way to a match," he said. "It was a lot of fun and it always got me pumped for the matches." While large events like this haven't been possible this year, the team is still close.

"[The team is] always friendly and [we] catch up for a minute or two when we see each other in person," said Danny. "While not everyone is best friends for life, Freeman Wrestling is a bond that doesn't break." Mario added that he wanted to "say thank you to all the coaches and everyone else that helped him along the way."



PHOTOS: DAVID YOSSIF

Action shots of Mario on the mat with wrestlers from other schools.



Ella Mortimer
Online Editor-in-Chief

With strict social distancing guidelines in place to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, hiking across Virginia is an amazing way to get exercise, spend time in nature, and get out of the house, all while practicing social distancing. Visit these hikes throughout Virginia to experience the natural beauty of the great outdoors!

John Radcliffe Conservation Area



- Scenery & Wildlife: ★★★★★
- Terrain & Intensity: Easy-Moderate
- Location: 21501 Chesdin Rd.
- Distance from DSF: 49 min. / 35 miles

This scenic hike encounters two dams and beautiful swampland along the Appomattox River. The main path was very well-maintained, and the "Explorer Path" was slightly more challenging but very enjoyable!

Rockwood Park



- Scenery & Wildlife: ★★★★★
- Terrain & Intensity: Easy-Moderate
- Location: 3401 Courthouse Rd
- Distance from DSF: 25 min. / 16 miles

As Chesterfield's oldest park, Rockwood Park contains a variety of trails and paths through the forest. One trail follows the scenic Gregory's Pond. This park offers great hikes to enjoy with your furry friend!

York River State Park



- Scenery & Wildlife: ★★★★★
- Terrain & Intensity: Moderate
- Location: 9801 York River Park Rd
- Distance from DSF: 56 min. / 55 mile

York River State Park is known for its unique estuarine environment filled with wildlife and fossils. With over 30 miles of hikes around the York River shoreline and its marshes, hiking at this state park is definitely worth the drive.

Senior Works With Zombies

Isabelle Hevron
Staff Writer

Fans of “The Walking Dead,” the popular TV show focused on a group of survivors in a post-apocalyptic world, will be excited to know that crews are filming the spin off, “The Walking Dead: World Beyond,” right here in Richmond.

Since mid-November, one of Freeman’s senior thespians, Charlotte Cooper, has been interning with the show’s construction buyer and construction coordinator. Charlotte has always had a passion for theatre, and she knew that this job would be a great learning experience. “I wanted to see the process up close and have a greater appreciation for production as a whole,” said Charlotte. Working as a part of a team that is creating a TV show has helped her to expand her connections and learn from professionals. “I’m meeting many people who have had multiple experiences on famous shows and movies--“Turn,” “Lincoln,” “The Hunger Games” series--and it’s been so interesting,” she said.

Although working for the construction buyer and coordinator has been enjoyable for Charlotte, it is a big time commitment as a senior in high school. She starts her day by waking up at 5:45 a.m. so that she will be at the location where she’s needed by 7 a.m. Once she arrives at work, “I do whatever the department heads need me to do,” Charlotte said. “Sometimes I’ll run an errand out to drop off supplies, sometimes I pick up



PHOTO: AMC

A shot from “The Walking Dead: World Beyond,” filmed here in Richmond.

drawings of the sets that need to be built, or I grab lunch for the crew.” Finishing her day around 3 to 3:30 p.m., she works about 8 hours a day, or 40 hours a week, making her internship a full time job.

Charlotte completes all of her school assignments asynchronously, on top of working a job, which is a lot to handle. Though the workload is heavy, Charlotte and her mom, Ann Cooper, believe that it is preparing Charlotte for the future. “I love that she has had to really set a structure to her work, school, and personal life--it’s good practice for life balance in college and beyond,” said Mrs. Cooper.

One of the only downsides of Charlotte’s internship is the impact of COVID-19, which has made it slightly more difficult to see the

normal interactions and work of actors. “We wear masks and eye protection constantly, we’re split up into different zones so there’s no cross-contamination, we have trackers that ping off of each other to ensure there’s a six foot distance, we aren’t able to each lunch together...and more,” said Charlotte.

Even though the pandemic has temporarily changed TV production, the online school aspect has helped Charlotte be able to intern in the first place. “As disruptive as COVID has been to all of us, I’m oddly grateful for the unique opportunity it opened up for Charlotte,” said Mrs. Cooper. “This full-time job (which runs through June) wouldn’t have been possible at all in a normal year.”

With three shows currently be-

ing filmed in Richmond, Charlotte is “excited for the future,” as she plans on pursuing a career in the field. “I love seeing that there’s a film industry in Richmond and I’m able to be a part of it,” said Charlotte. Although the work she does as an intern isn’t her goal for the future, she’s getting a real sense of what goes into the production of shows. “What I do isn’t glamorous, nor is it precisely the career I’m going for when I’m older, but it’s opened my eyes a lot to how much work goes into a show,” she said.

Getting to work as part of the production of a TV show while still in high school is not something many teenagers can say they’ve accomplished. “I think it’s so neat that Charlotte gets to see a lot of the behind-the-scenes and

moving parts of a TV show and make connections in such a cool industry,” said Charlotte’s friend, senior Amanda Gagen. “I can’t say I know too many people who have had that experience at our age.”

Through this job, Charlotte is building credibility, making connections, and learning the ins and outs of production. “I hope to keep in touch with the people I’ve met, as well as reach out to casting directors and just get my name on the map. This experience truly helps in terms of my future,” she said. “The Walking Dead: World Beyond” will be filming all around Richmond until this summer; according to Charlotte, “If you see a ton of trailers and a cop car blocking the entrance to a street, it might be ‘TWD: WB.’”

New VMFA Exhibits

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) often has new exhibits that attract viewers from all over the area. Recently, the VMFA has installed two exhibits: “Virginia Arcadia: The Natural Bridge” and “The Fifty-Three Stations of Tokaido Road.” Both exhibits encapsulate a mixture of impressive artwork and fascinating history.

The Fifty-Three Stations of the Tokaido Road

This is one of many drawings from Utagawa Hiroshige’s “Fifty Three Stations of the Tokaido Road” series. Hiroshige created these works in the 1830s using a variety of materials, including ink, paint, paper, and a wood block print. The artworks depict events along the length of the Tokaido Road in Japan, which spanned a total of 319 miles. With the highway covering such a lengthy section of land, there were many stops and different ways of life along the road. Hiroshige wished to capture the beauty of the route with 12 different artworks based on the highway. Now, the drawings of the Tokaido Road are located at the VMFA until May 31, 2021.



Utagawa Hiroshige (b. 1797) *Mishima*, 1833, that is depicted in the *Fifty-Three Stations of Tokaido Road* series, 1833-1834. Ink and paint on paper, from a woodblock print

Virginia Arcadia: The Natural Bridge



David Johnson (b. 1827), *Natural Bridge, Virginia*, 1860 Oil Paint on Canvas A depiction of one of Virginia’s wonders, the Natural Bridge.

This artwork was created by David Johnson, an American artist. He was inspired by the Natural Bridge here in Virginia back in 1860. The bridge is found in the Shenandoah Valley and was formed due to water erosion. Many painters in Johnson’s time attempted to capture the beauty of the bridge; however, Johnson’s rendition stood out above the rest as he was able to create a gorgeously photorealistic painting with oil paint. Since then, the work of art has been heavily applauded and has been in many different museums. Currently, this artwork is being displayed at the VMFA and will be open to the public until August 1, 2021.

Where You Should Go For SPRING BREAK*

*Within COVID-19 guidelines, of course!

What kind of scenery do you like on your vacations?

- a. Tall buildings and bustling streets
- b. Clay houses alongside a vast blue ocean
- c. Whimsical architecture straight out of a storybook
- d. The view of a mountain range

What is your favorite kind of food?

- a. Street food, including freshly cook hot dogs and mouthwatering pizza
- b. Spanakopita, a dish referred to as spinach pie
- c. Butterbeer, Harry Potter’s take on cream soda
- d. Lomo saltado, a meal that contains sirloin, potatoes, and onions

What is your favourite kind of weather?

- a. Cloudy skies and potential rain
- b. Mild sunny weather with the occasional cloud
- c. Perfect weather and no mosquitos making it almost too perfect
- d. Warm rain and fresh, crisp air

Who do you enjoy travelling with?

- a. You are a lone wolf, you like to travel by yourself
- b. You love to travel with your significant other
- c. When you travel you always bring your family with you
- d. A group of adventurous friends



PHOTO: CNN

If you chose mostly A’s... You should go to **New York City** for your spring break! You love the rainy weather and city aesthetic.



PHOTO: State.gov

If you chose mostly B’s... **Santorini** should be your spring break destination! The mild weather and sitting by a rocky seaside is your vibe.



PHOTO: wikipedia

If you chose mostly C’s... You love spending time with your family and like to be immersed into stories, so you should travel to **Disney World** for spring break!



PHOTO: indiana

If you chose mostly D’s... With your adventurous personality, **Machu Picchu** is a place you should visit for spring break!

DSF Visual Arts Redesigns Logo



PHOTO: EMILY ASHKANI

Senior Emily Ashkani designed the department's new logo, shown above.

Kristina Kang
Staff Writer

New logos mean new merch. For the Freeman art department, this means a contest—open to Art IV, Art V, and National Art Honor Society—to create new department T-shirts in order to embody the new Mavericks logo.

“I decided that I wanted to start to put some life into [the logo] by having the students use it in a new

T-shirt design,” said art teacher Beth Jones. According to Mrs. Jones, “School logos adapt over time and become important symbols that represent a school and the student body.” Accordingly, students were given a little over a week and creative freedom to complete their final design. The three finalists following the first round were senior Emily Ashkani, senior Allie Hahn, and junior Mya Jones.

“She gave us complete freedom

to design whatever we wanted,” said Emily, the winner. “It [was] kind of hard to try to think of something new that I hadn’t seen before, but also trying to keep that Freeman vibe in there, so it took a lot of brainstorming, and a lot of trying to be creative.”

Allie originally didn’t know where to begin with her design. “I just started with the Mavericks logo [that] VCU created and played around with it,” she said. “I kept going back to the thought that I wanted my design to be as different as possible from the original ‘Freeman Rebels’ logo.”

Mya knew that she wanted to begin with the general “M” shape of the current Mavericks logo. “I was inspired to make it somewhat industrial [because] so many people were comparing the [Mavericks] logo to [the] Transformers,” said Mya.

Some students turned to technology to create their first design draft, while others stuck to paper and pencil. “I’m not really familiar with digital art, so I did all of mine on paper,” said Emily. However, Mrs. Jones suggested that Emily try to design her logo digitally after her initial drafts. According to Emily, “That was actually my first time working with a digital design, [so] there was [a bit] of a learning curve.”

Some students, such as Mya and Allie, started directly on digital platforms like Procreate. “I think I used half of the functions wrong, but when I got something to look the way I wanted it, I just kind of went along with whatever I’d done,” said Allie.

Students went through multiple drafts and versions until they landed on a design that they were ready to submit. “I probably went through two or three different drafts, just trying to get the font [and spacing to] look right,” said Emily.

“It was very fun as I saw students’ work evolve and become

Freeman Foodies

Barrio Taqueria

Located at 2229 W Main St, Barrio Taqueria is a new eatery from the Richmond Restaurant Group that offers delicious tacos, hearty burritos, and fun beverages. Spanish for “neighborhood,” Barrio certainly lives up to its welcoming expectations. The restaurant offers unique food items, including a carnitas burrito that contains pineapple. Next time you’re looking for a new dinner spot, give Barrio a try!

| | |
|--------------|-----------|
| FOOD | ★ ★ ★ ★ ☆ |
| PRICE | ★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆ |
| AMBIANCE | ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ |
| COVID SAFETY | ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ |

PHOTO: INSTAGRAM

Queso Nachos with black beans, salsa, pickled red onions, and more! (\$8.95)

PHOTO: YELP

Buffalo Cauliflower tacos with lettuce, raddish, pumpkin-seeds, and buffalo sauce .(\$3.95)

PHOTO: YELP

Vegan seven layer burttio with rice, beans, gucamole, corn salsa, and veg-an ranch. (\$9.95)



PHOTO: ALLIE HAHN



PHOTO: MYA JONES

The designs of the other two finalists.

stronger after they got critique[s] from their peers,” said Mrs. Jones. “Through the years [the new art department logo] will be interpreted many different ways. I’m excited to don this new T-shirt.” Once students submitted their final designs, Mrs. Jones put together a Google Form for the entire faculty to vote for their top three choices.

“I think in the end the three finalists created designs that were simple, clean, and readable, and did a good job representing the creativity of the arts department,” said Mrs. Jones. Following the first round of voting, Mrs. Jones had her classes vote on their favorite.

In the end, Emily’s design was picked to be the new logo. “I think everybody had really good designs

and I’m not sure why mine was chosen over some other people’s,” she said with a laugh. “I personally think it is a little bit basic, but I think it does appeal to more people.”

As the final design is being tweaked and finalized before it is made available to all students for purchase, contestants such as Allie are looking back on this experience in a hopeful manner for the future. “It makes me really happy to see everyone willing to embrace the Mavericks and work to create a more positive brand for the school,” she noted. “I think it’s an important process and time of change, especially for future Freeman students.”

Watch out for these upcoming movies!



PHOTO: GETTYIMAGES



PHOTO: GETTYIMAGES



PHOTO: GETTYIMAGES



PHOTO: GETTYIMAGES

Godzilla vs. Kong
Release date:
March 31, 2021

No Time to Die
Release date:
April 2, 2021

Black Widow
Release date:
May 7, 2021

Dune
Release date:
October 1, 2021