



THE ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUE



Photo by Cat Pizzarello

Farmer-florist pioneers sustainable floriculture movement

Sage Devlin imparts life lessons from their journey to self-discovery, tips and tricks for the flower growing cycle, how to participate and advocate for sustainability, as well as speaking on their sustainable farmer's coalition, where they found their passion for environmentalism and speaking around the county, including at our school itself.

READ MORE ON PAGE 4

Leesburg's Environmental Advisory Commission brings awareness and activism to town residents



Photo courtesy of @townofleesburgva on Instagram

What is the Environmental Advisory Commission? How can I make our town more environmentally friendly? Who is in charge of keeping our local government green? We explore exactly how our town works toward a more sustainable future, in the face of apathy and misinformation.

READ MORE ON PAGE 4

How to hike Leesburg



Photo by Liberty Harrison

How to hike Loudoun: from forest trails to open meadows, learn about the perfect trail for you. In an exploration throughout the hiking trails of four local forests, plus the W&OD trail, we examine the pros and cons, as well as advice on how to get the best out of your experience for each of our local trails. **READ MORE ON PAGE 15**



Scan here to sign up for Keep Leesburg Beautiful's upcoming litter clean-up, planned for April 22!

End the stigma against blue collar jobs

Editorial

The US labor market has a problem. While we constantly push high schoolers to pursue higher education and positions we deem honorable, such as doctor or lawyer, we forget the career options that support our easy lifestyles and standard of living. When was the last time a student was encouraged to become an electrician, a factory worker, or waste collector?

Ironically, we hear constant complaints about the prices, quality, and accessibility of services like these.

How can we as a society expect people to work as the foundation of America, providing the services and creating the products essential to the success of US society, while simultaneously ignoring at best or degrading at worst the professions that provide these?

According to recent statistics from resumebuilder.com, only 47% of recent graduates have secured full-time employment in a job related to what they studied in college, and the majority, 56% according to Forbes, are graduating with thousands of dollars in student debt.

Skipping the student debt and earning immediately as an apprentice are significant draws for some students, cognizant of the weight student loans have on one's life.

Many, however, don't understand how high the pay is for many technical jobs within the industry, with many skilled trade jobs earning above the \$55,260 average for college graduates in the US, according to Bankrate.com.

"Our education system also must more broadly encourage skills-based education," **Kristin Tate** wrote, for The Hill. "For many students, the degree on the wall often comes with increasingly unserviceable personal debt and fewer job openings ... Meanwhile, certification programs and specialized degrees at colleges, vocational and trade schools can yield lucrative careers. Electricians and plumbers are in such high demand that some pull in six-figure salaries. Employees at the dock of Los Angeles can clear \$100,000 a year with overtime. Starting truckers average over \$70,000."

Along with financial success, blue-collar workers have higher levels of job security, especially in this time period.

Blue-collar career fields, especially since the chaos in our economy brought by the pandemic, are experiencing shortages in many areas, providing a level of job se-

curity that both promotes employee benefits and provides peace of mind when looking for and keeping a job.

Blue-collar fields are also often less likely to engage in downsizing or outsourcing, due to the constant demand for the foundational services they provide.

"Blue-collar work is largely essential—these individuals keep our homes and offices running safely and smoothly," says **Sam Pillar**, CEO of HJ, a leading provider of home service operations management software. "Our communities couldn't operate without them."

But in fact, the term "blue collar" has become a controversial one, conjuring images of dirty physical labor and a stigma that the jobs require a lower level of intelligence, skill, and work, while simultaneously being seen as harder, due to their physical aspect normally missing in the traditional white-collar jobs.

These ideas are patently untrue.

Firstly, the idea that blue-collar work is low-intelligence is false. Of course, anyone can approach their work intelligently or unintelligently, but more importantly, many of these jobs require a specialized skill set and analytical problem solving skills, which are the same job requirements shared with white-collar professions.

Deducing the problem with a sink's plumbing, using visual-spatial skills to find irregularities, understanding how multiple parts may be contributing to the problem in their combined functionality, and honing the interpersonal skills required for customer service all require a high level of intelligence to complete efficiently and effectively.

Due to the work demands of blue-collar jobs, quick thinking is also an extremely necessary skill.

"Blue-collar work demands intelligence, creativity, and innovation. Workers need to be able to think on their feet and come up with solutions to problems that arise on the job," said **Doug Oberhelam**, former CEO of Caterpillar Inc, for CNBC.

Blue-collar work is also not always physically demanding.

"There are so many different types of blue-collar jobs out there. Some require physical strength, while others demand technical skills or creative problem-solving," said **Mike Rowe**, host of Discovery Channel's 'Dirty Jobs', for CNN Money.

In fact, many of the jobs at the higher pay end of blue-collar work are associated with less physically

demanding jobs, with a larger focus on specialized technical skills.

In conjunction with reducing the stigma around blue-collar jobs, implementing easily accessible educational pathways to blue-collar career fields within the public school system is integral to encouraging students to consider this career path, and to educating parents on the benefits of supporting their children in this choice.

While there are many ways to expand and improve this education and support, we do already have some of these courses in the Loudoun County Public School system.

At the Monroe Advanced Technical Academy (MATA), part of the Academies of Loudoun, there are programs that provide students with a variety of blue-collar job experience. Programs such as Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning, Welding, Building Construction and Auto Service Technology are all offered as one or two year programs. After completion of these programs, students can receive an apprenticeship or certification to work at any location in Virginia.

However, these classes have very limited spots, competed for by students from the whole county, and require an extra application to vie for a place, something not easily accessible for many students.

The classes that are more easily accessible, such as the regular high school courses at a student's home school, tend to be quite limited in the type of skills they teach. Found at the end of the art hallway in Loudoun County High School, engineering and wood-working classes teach students important skills in trade industries. Tech Ed teachers **Charles Post** and **Daniel Chandlee** guide students through various classes such as Materials and Processes, Production Systems, Tech Drawing and Design, and Manufacturing Systems. In these courses, students learn design and manufacturing techniques through a mix of machinery and digital programming.

However, if we want to support students in choosing these career paths, a larger variety of course content, including more specialized hands-on learning, should be taught.

Programs more similar in style to the MATA programs, with opportunities to gain work experience in specialized fields, should be offered at regular high schools throughout the county, and while new teachers and supplies can be expensive, they aren't necessarily

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The County Chronicle is produced by students in Newspaper Journalism I, II, and III under the direction of an adviser. Topics are student-chosen, student-researched, and student-driven, but all content is subject to administrator review.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The staff of The County Chronicle welcomes guest opinion pieces and letters to the editor. Pieces should be less than 400 words and must be founded on researched fact. Any student, faculty, staff, or alumni interested in contributing to the newspaper should contact the adviser, Valerie Egger, at valerie.egger@lcp.org.

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required.

Other schools across the United States pushing for blue-collar skills education have formed strong partnerships with local colleges and neighborhood businesses that offer the specialized instructions and equipment.

As **Amelia Harper** wrote for the K-12 DIVE, this “can allow schools to help students build these more specific skills in high school without much additional cost to the district.”

But beyond offering students

the courses, we need to convince parents of the value of blue-collar jobs. Students are often pressured by the adults in their lives not to pursue these positions because of the stigmas associated with them.

“Younger workers are reluctant to take on these [blue-collar] positions because ... parents perceive these jobs as requiring a lot of manual hard work, which for certain positions that have become more high-tech, is no longer true,” said **Aparna Mathur**, resident scholar in economic policy stud-

ies at the American Enterprise Institute, for the Society of Human Resource Management. “The image of these jobs as being hard and ‘dirty’ often discourages people from applying.”

We need to change the way we think about these jobs, bringing them into a social mindset as a diverse set of jobs that require a variety of skill sets and personalities that are just as valuable as white-collar workers.

While a work in progress, our county is among one of many that

is beginning to see the importance of blue-collar careers and of supporting students pursuing them with educational and training opportunities. It is our duty now to push for a continued acceptance of and appreciation for these jobs, as well as lobbying our school system to work in a positive direction towards further implementation. So next time you hear someone talk down about a “garbage man,” remind them exactly how important these jobs are to our way of life. •

Cancel culture harms humanity’s ability to grow

Karen Martinez | Staff Writer

Cancel culture does more harm than good. It has been hurting humanity’s ability to grow since 2020.

Cancel culture, a “punishment” online that people use nowadays to call out celebrities or big influencers for their bad behavior, usually involves racism, homophobia, sexism, or transphobia. Cancel culture has grown to the point where even politicians as politically opposed as **Donald Trump** and **Barack Obama** have criticized it, with Donald Trump calling it “the definition of totalitarianism.”

Cancel culture has been around since the early 2010s, when people would talk about the problematic behaviors of celebrities and influences on a blog called “Your fave is problematic” on Tumblr. Celebrities like **Lady Gaga** got exposed, in Gaga’s case, for dressing in blackface at a celebration in Berlin in 2011.

Eventually, cancel culture grew bigger in 2017-2020, growing significantly in 2020 after **George Floyd**’s death, according to **Dr. Julia Moore**, an Associate Professor of African American Religion and Religions of the African Diaspora at University of North Carolina Charlotte.

People, including teenagers, united online and used social me-

dia platforms such as TikTok, Twitter, and Instagram to cancel those who said negative things about the BLM protests. Some celebrities, like **ASAP Rocky** got accused of not caring about the police violence against African Americans, and others got called out on racist things they’ve done in the past.

What happened in 2020 with cancel culture was unexplainable. Many people got canceled for things they did in the past. At some point in the past, the majority of the people online were uneducated or ignorant, including those who have canceled others.

The people being involved in cancel culture in 2020 should have used their time doing proper research instead of canceling people not knowing that they’ve changed.

Jenna Marbles, a YouTuber also known as a big influencer online, was canceled in 2020 after her old racist and sexist skits online resurfaced. Marbles decided to make an apology video for the racist and sexist skits she had uploaded back in 2011, then ultimately decided that the best decision was to hold herself accountable and quit YouTube. Many of her fans were devastated about Marbles quitting YouTube and disappearing from social media.

Marbles is a tragic example of being held accountable for her ac-

tions in the past that she has since apologized for. I agree that what she did in the past might’ve been offensive to people, but it seemed obvious that Marbles had already changed. I’d get it if people canceled Marbles for things she had recently done, but canceling someone for their past seems hypocritical.

Mainly, when there was a time where racism and sexism were considered “normal,” stereotyping and making comments about certain groups of people was considered “normal,” especially around 2014-2016, when teenagers would use a social media platform called Vine, which was shut down in April 2019.

Over the years, the world has become more sensitive to things like this, especially today where I could get canceled for a racist video I made five years ago. People online wouldn’t give me the chance to apologize and tell them that I’ve changed and grown throughout the years.

On the other hand, it can be a great way of punishing people online for recent things they’ve done. I think people who still behave the same way they did in the past should be held accountable, or for behaving a certain way that offends people. The people involved in cancel culture should cancel those

who haven’t changed and still continue to do unacceptable things towards a certain group of people, whether it’s because of someone’s race, sexual orientation, gender, or religion.

Not everyone should be canceled for making an insensitive comment today. Some people should be able to apologize to those they’ve offended. It all depends on age and if they genuinely mean what they’ve said. People, mainly young adults, make mistakes and they should be able to apologize and grow from their mistakes.

At the end of the day, cancel culture is all or nothing, and that is toxic. It’ll always be a complex topic to talk about. Cancel culture will have pros and cons, and one of the cons is that people will most likely get canceled for things they’ve done in the past even after apologizing, while one of the pros is that people who deserve to be canceled will get canceled.

After all, people should understand that people change with time, and their actions are different from how they used to be 10 to 20 years ago. People should give others the opportunity to speak or another chance instead of punishing them for a position they have long since grown out of. •



**Lessons from Home Depot:
Some customers need
patience like the others**
by Tae Herron

**Your phone might be
ruining your life**
by Hannah Winegar

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Leesburg's Environmental Advisory Commission brings awareness and activism to town residents



The Environmental Advisory Commission's last Keep Leesburg Beautiful initiative, in October 2022, included stream cleanup. The next opportunity for community participation is April 22. Organizations, families, clubs, and individuals are all invited to join the cleanup efforts. Photo courtesy of @townofleesburgva on Instagram.

Liberty Harrison | Editor-in-Chief

For many years, the Town of Leesburg has made an effort to promote environmentally friendly practices. The Environmental Advisory Commission was created to act in an advisory capacity to the Town Council as well as working as a liaison between other town commissions and staff to promote environmental issues.

The committee also creates awareness, and as commission member **Diana Glick** said, it “inspires community participation,” with clean-up events, social media posts, the Leesburg Flower & Garden Festival, Keep Leesburg Beautiful, and other outreach activities.

Currently, the committee is focused on litter clean-up, energy conservation, improved recycling, and

sustainable landscaping.

The commission is running a myriad of programs to address these issues, including litter pick-up events, and working to increase participation in them by the general public, as well as also implementing an Energy Conservation and Management Plan with the town's new Sustainability Manager, which includes a push towards electric vehicles, charging stations, and solar power use.

Partnering with the Tree Commission, the Environmental Advisory Commission has also begun a tree planting initiative, which also supports their push to promote sustainable landscaping.

Still, the commission is pushing for more. Currently, their biggest focus is seeking volunteers for the Keep

Leesburg Beautiful spring event.

For students wanting to get involved in the town's environmental efforts, Glick says participation in this event is the best way. Our issue's front page contains the link to sign-up.

A push for more educational outreach on recycling, targeting both the town government and the general public, is another current goal.

In an effort to learn more about what is actually happening to the town's recycling, several Environmental Advisory Commission members, town council members, and town staff recently visited a material recovery facility.

The commission is also working on a public education campaign to eliminate plastic bag and plastic film from the recycling stream and to prevent “wish-cycling,” a term Glick

explained to mean, “residents placing items that are not recyclable into their bins that they hope are recyclable, thereby contaminating recyclables.”

Too often, getting attention for these education campaigns and getting the entire community involved are difficult aspects of the Environmental Advisory Commission's job, according to Glick, but the commission is always looking for events they can use to distribute information and gain interest in environmentally friendly practices.

“Public education and participation is a big part of building an environmentally friendly community, which is why we are focusing on increased participation in our Keep Leesburg Beautiful litter pickup events and distributing educational materials about proper recycling practices at the Leesburg Flower and Garden Festival,” Glick said.

Glick specializes in this aspect of the commission. With her background in communications, she has worked mainly on public education materials since joining the commission in February.

“We all leverage our own expertise where we can. We have an engineer, an attorney, a land use expert, and a local native plant business owner,” Glick said, elaborating on how the commission delegates work for their larger causes.

Glick encourages everybody to participate in whatever capacity they can, recommending, “staying informed, reading news about environmental impacts, and becoming involved in efforts with the EAC, such as the Keep Leesburg Beautiful event. Not only does it provide tangible help, it's an opportunity to surround yourself with like-minded residents in terms of action to protect our environment.” •

Local farmer-florist pioneers sustainable floriculture movement

Liberty Harrison | Editor-in-Chief
and Berek Harrison | Staff Writer

Sage Devlin is one of a new generation of flower farmers and stylists pioneering eco-friendly floriculture and floristry. They run Far Bungalow Farms in Leesburg.

Although they didn't always expect to work in floriculture, Devlin carries a legacy of eco-consciousness they share with their maternal line.

“I grew up with my mom who is very environmentally conscious,” Devlin said. “She has always been, and even now we even make fun of

her because she's just always saving all these ridiculous plastic containers that are just trash, but she doesn't want to throw them away. She's just always been like an activist in that kind of way.” Devlin's grandmother also ran as board supervisor for Catocin on a Green Party platform in the 1980s.

“I realized that it was the legacy once I started living here and learning about my family's history,” Devlin said.

As well as being raised environmentally aware, growing up Devlin felt the looming threat of environmental destruction that many con-

tinue to feel today.

“It definitely was always looming, the ozone was the big thing when I was younger, we had to protect the ozone layer and emissions, and now those layers are almost not there,” Devlin said.

It was in Portland, Oregon in 2016 that they discovered their passion for floristry, yet their experiences at floral design school worried them for the state of the floristry industry.

“I went to a floral design school there that was super old school,” Devlin said, elaborating on the waste that was produced, the structured,

artificial arrangement style, and thousands of imported flowers flown in from across the world on tons of jet fuel.

“I was like, this is crazy, we threw away two huge trash cans of foam every day, we'd make arrangements and then just throw it away, which created so much trash,” Devlin said.

Searching for a different way to pursue what they loved, Devlin found an eco-florist, **Emerald Petals**, who taught them an entirely new way of floristry.

“She was no foam, American grown, all that stuff,” Devlin said.

Working under her, Devlin learned a variety of techniques for eco-friendly floristry, and for the next four years they worked in a variety of shops, running a flower cart and their own small floristry business on the side.

Growing their own artistic technique and business as a florist, Devlin not only honed their skills but grew larger ambitions for the future.

“During this time I realized I just want variety,” Devlin said. “I like everything, but as a florist you can only buy so much, and as a farmer I could just grow whatever I wanted.”

Realizing they wanted to create their own farm, Devlin was knowledgeable of the serious commitment it would be, so before committing they spent a year working in exchange for food and shelter, at several flower farms, before traveling back to their family home in Leesburg and working on their family’s vegetable plot.

Coming back home, Devlin reconnected with the land and nature they knew well, from visits down to Leesburg, where their grandparents lived throughout their childhood. After their family offered them a property to begin their farm, Devlin realized this would be the perfect place to start.

While not immediately committed to Leesburg, Devlin has felt their connection grow as they run their farm.

“The longer I stay here, the more attached I get, especially the more literal roots that I’m putting in the ground. When I started it was just like a blank field and sometimes now I just look at it and I cannot believe this, it’s getting to be so beautiful over here.”

This is the third year of Far Bungalow Farms as an official business.

Devlin has also begun taking steps for community outreach using their farmland.

“Land access is such a hard thing for farmers, like the number one biggest impediment, for young farmers, especially farmers of color, and I am lucky enough that that is not a barrier for me. I’m hoping to do some projects here at Rockland that can kind of give back, because I feel like I have this privilege and I would really love to be able to share it.”

They are also committed to operating their farm sustainably, planting mainly by hand, employing sustainable soil management practices, and operating almost wholly chemically free.

Devlin also uses “integrated pest management” in which they use the introduction of certain helpful animal types, for example ladybugs, to kill animals hurtful to their farm, such as aphids. This way Devlin promotes the growth of more environmentally beneficial species as well as not having to use pesticides which can cause mass amounts of environmental harm.

Devlin also focuses on never leav-

ing a plot of land entirely open. “I try to have something growing on the ground all the time because any bare soil means that it’s not sequestering carbon, and plants are not putting oxygen back into the atmosphere, which helps our ozone,” Devlin said.

But beyond the big ideas of sustainability, Devlin highlights how many small things they do throughout their time raising flowers that contribute to their overall sustainability. “There’s just a bajillion things,” they said.

Flower growing is a complex process with around six steps: sewing, planting, maintaining, harvesting, packing, and aggregating.

Devlin along with their partner and one employee has done this process mostly by hand in the past, growing on around three quarters of an acre, but as they continue to expand, Devlin has plans to hire two more employees to assist.

Sewing, the first step, is a time-consuming process, often each seed planted in Devlin’s specially created square cut “seed brownies” which conserve plastic waste and soil. As the seeds germinate they are eventually placed outside to “harden” against the weather before being planted.

“Then it’s kind of just a waiting game for that,” Devlin said. “Ideally you can get a succession of plants and then you kind of have waves of flowers. I’m still figuring out how to have a continuous sow stream.”

While growing flowers requires continuous care, watering through their irrigation system, hand fertilizing with homemade “weed and old leaf fermented fertilizer,” and constantly checking the flowers for bug or fungus damage.

“Harvesting flowers is really nuanced, it’s a tricky thing to explain, but something very important. because if you’re harvesting a flower too early or too late, it’s not going to be good quality for the florist or for the customer,” Devlin said.

Depending on the type of flower and the look they take on when ready for harvest, Devlin hand cuts their flowers and stores them in an onsite coolroom for their personal use or before packing and aggregation.

In storage Devlin doesn’t use chemicals, instead keeping the flowers in fresh water for a short period before they are sold. The flowers they don’t keep for themselves, Devlin delivers to the florists that order them, in their newest addition to their farm, a delivery van.

The flowers they keep, Devlin uses in their floristry business, which services both events and individual bouquet orders.

Devlin brings their same passion for environmentalism into their floristry business.

“I don’t know how I got so intense about it because as far as a florist, I’m pretty radical,” Devlin said, elaborating that many florists

are willing to make compromises on sustainability, such as importing flowers in the winter or not using pesticides but using landscape fabric.

“I’m just an all or nothing kind of person, I’m a Virgo,” Devlin said. “And I find the hypocrisy in the floral industry just so interesting. It’s just so nuanced and there’s so many twists and turns.”

Devlin recognized that even a small unsustainable aspect can have ties to larger aspects, for example the commonly used nutrition packets, which include chemical food as well as increased plastic, are only needed due to the fact imported flowers are several days old.

“Those things that we, customers and even florists, take for granted have these deep rooted, systemic reasons for them,” Devlin said. “It’s such a systemic thing that I think a lot of people don’t even think about because: flowers are great, flowers are supposed to make you feel good, but we don’t account for where those flowers came from.”

In their floristry shop Devlin rarely uses single use plastics, often reusing packaging from other aspects of their business when plastic is required. They have also begun to bring back vintage flower design techniques that incorporated multiple use materials, such as metal pins called “frogs” that hold in place arrangements. They pair this with nouveau techniques such as chicken wire foundation for larger flower installations.

Devlin also focuses on the importance of seasonality in the floristry industry.

“Embrace seasonality. When winter comes in a lot of places, things go dormant and it’s okay that there’s no flowers at that time,” Devlin said.

Instead, Devlin suggests, use evergreens, pods, grasses, dried flowers, and fruit in bouquets and indoor displays.

“Spring is so abundant and beautiful when it comes, and it’s like you can’t fully experience happiness if you’ve never been sad. So it would be helpful if we could shift our mindset from ‘everything now’ to seasonal and cyclical.”

To Devlin, integration of sustainability into the floristry industry isn’t just a matter of environmentalism and protection of the planet, it’s also the very existence of the floristry industry itself.

“If people don’t really make a shift, the business will become irrelevant. Sustainability is trending right now, and that translates to the look of flowers. Millennials don’t want to buy that old school look anymore, neither do Gen-Z. More importantly, our industry is directly connected to the earth and its health. It doesn’t matter how you’re farming or how you’re growing flowers or how you’re doing floristry, if we don’t have fertile soils, if we have

a forest fire every other year, wiping out our land, there just won’t be flowers.”

While sustainability is in vogue, and important in a wider context, Devlin also understands the larger costs of sustainably grown farming, and the extra work it requires for florists to shop locally.

To mitigate these negative aspects, Devlin has begun the Rock and River Flower Collective. Consisting of them and four other growers, the farmers work together, combining stock to make it easier for florists to shop a wider range of local flowers in one place, and lowering costs. They have also begun an online ordering service, which enables florists to buy and get delivery all from the comfort of the florist’s own business.

Still, Devlin acknowledges, their prices will always have to be higher, both due to their small business size and environmentally sustainable practices, but also due to them paying their workers a living wage, rather than using highly exploitative labor practices found in the production of much of the internationally imported flowers common in the US.

“I can’t compete with the prices of the wholesalers, but I can say these flowers are fresher and they’re different and people are starting to want them,” Devlin said.

While doing work in their own floristry and floriculture practices, Devlin also advocates and educates on the importance of buying sustainable flowers and practicing sustainable floriculture.

Talking at schools, garden clubs, and featuring in newspapers, Devlin takes any opportunity to spread the word on sustainable floriculture. They also run a community supported agriculture group, which for a flat rate guarantees flower deliveries throughout the growing season and works to educate its members on seasonality.

“Unsustainable practices are so enmeshed [in the floriculture and floristry industry] and I find that to be really fascinating, that’s kind of my main mission, to educate people on that,” Devlin said.

While Devlin has devoted their life to sustainability in agriculture, and encourages everyone to work to be more sustainable in their own lives and educate themselves on the exploitative nature of many processes behind everyday products, they believe finding your own purpose and pursuing it is the most effective way to make positive change.

“There aren’t any rules to how you live your life, you really can do it how you want and make your life work for you, based on your own values and your own personality,” Devlin said, “I think that’s like the biggest thing I’ve learned in life.” •

As Quizlet puts up paywalls, other websites come to the rescue

Berek Harrison & William Klutz | Staff Writers

It's 11:25, you've just got back from practice, you're too tired to do anything, but you have a math homework packet, a science worksheet, a history flashcard set to run through, and an English paper to write. You need to find the best, most efficient tools to breeze through the work while answering with quality so that you can get some sleep. There are valuable tools on the internet, but one of the most annoying things is when a paywall blocks a useful article or some needed research. No matter where you look, all the useful research for your English paper is blocked behind a paywall.

This can be worked around though the use of a website called twelve foot ladder (12ft.io). It is blocked on Chromebooks for being a proxy, or server that can load web pages, giving it the ability to bypass school blocks, but it can be easi-

ly used with a home computer or a phone. 12ft.io easily lets you get past annoying paywalls many sites have by simply pasting in a URL. On the off chance that it isn't effective on a certain site (such as The Washington Post), try alternatives like removepaywall.com or Incoggo.com.

Next up is your science worksheet. You'll use ChatGPT, a useful tool, not for assisting in answering questions, but instead for helping you understand school work. It can and obviously shouldn't be used to cheat on assignments, and due to that reason, it is blocked on school computers. You can still access it on phones or home computers for free. If you were to type in your question word for word, chatGPT is likely to get it incorrect, even though it may seem confident with its answer, but ChatGPT is still a great tool for learning.

"The accuracy of its responses can't always be trusted," writer **Jack Caulfield** wrote, "We

recommend using ChatGPT as a source of inspiration and feedback." ChatGPT can understand what you're asking, meaning it can give breakdowns of questions without providing answers or specific information. Research what it says and ask it to provide sources to ensure its accuracy. ChatGPT can help speed up your research and learning science concepts. Since ChatGPT does not get everything factually correct, it should be used in tandem with other sources to verify accuracy, according to science teacher **Kayla Urban**.

There are also websites to help you with your math problems. Useful websites for this are Microsoft Math Solver and Symbolab. They can give you a step by step breakdown of any math problem. This means they don't just solve the math problem for you, but instead help you learn the steps to solve math problems you are stumped on or check if a math problem you solved is correct. Make sure to only use it

as a learning tool, and not a way to cheat or get answers on math assignments that require you to do your own work.

Most students who have used quizlet.com recently have run into trouble with the subscription that it requires to access all of its best features, but all the tools of Quizlet can be accessed for free on the site knowt.io. It is very easy to use and has all the functionality and features of Quizlet. Practice flashcard sets can be imported from Quizlet to Knowt.io, or students can find tons of free community made flashcard sets online.

All of these websites can be very useful for quickly learning and accessing information and never should be used for cheating. "Whether it's looking online or looking from some other text for information students need to make sure the information they provide is still their own thought and thinking," **Jarod "Mr. Math" Brown** said, "as opposed to plagiarizing or copying someone else's thoughts." •

Should Quizlet have paywalls?

"I don't think that's a good idea. I think Quizzes and Kahoot are absolutely amazing tools to study."

Will Frye, 11

"It's not very cool of them - obviously, it should be a free resource...with ads on the side or something."

Chase Johnson, 11

"It feels like they're kind of like robbing us for money."

Ty Perley, 10

"I think it's awful because honestly, Quizlets have carried my work...so the fact that it's priced now, I don't...have access to easy things to study on, so it's actually affecting my learning."

Beaunita Nith, 10

"It seems like you're taking away a good resource from students."

Beth Kosakow, Counselor

Teachers think phones are hindering students

Hannah Winegar | Staff Writer

At the start and end of every English class, English teacher **Kathleen Evangelisto** says most students have their phones out. While most eventually complete the work and put their phone away, Evangelisto worries that with phones as an ever-present distraction, students are not digging as deeply into lessons as they otherwise would. Besides that, addressing the behavior of those who will not comply with the direction to put phones away uses up time following up with parents, completing the refer-

ral process in a time-consuming and disheartening scenario that negatively affects classroom instruction.

With the rise of phones, teachers have said that phone use during class is becoming a major problem.

"It's just gotten more and more prevalent. It's not just in school, it's everywhere," social science and global studies teacher **Phil D'Arcangelis** said. "And my problem isn't really so much of people missing school content, but missing life content."

Many teachers agree that the phone use among students dur-

ing class is excessive and disruptive, often resulting in having to repeat instructions and time being wasted.

"Repeatedly using a cell phone during class when the expectation is that cell phones be put away is more than just a nuisance. It is disrespectful to other students who have their class interrupted so the teacher can deal with the issue," English teacher **Tracie Lane** said. "It is also disrespectful to the habitual cell phone offender themselves, because it takes them away from fully engaging with the friends and classmates around them and

the educators that are preparing them for their futures."

Teachers are not only saying how phones are disruptive, but that they're causing negative effects on students' grades.

English teacher **Shawn Simms** has noted a correlation. "I always see a definite correlation between students who are on their phone all the time and their poor grades and poor comprehension," she said.

Simms isn't the only person to notice a link between phones and grades.

"The kids who dutifully put their phones away, truly away,

and stay off of them during class, typically have higher engagement in class, higher grades, and better skills,” English teacher **Kathryn Ives** said. “They also engage with their classmates more.”

“But ultimately, if all they wanted to do is just zone out on their phone, I think that that will have its own consequences. I think you’re just kind of missing out on the character development,” D’Arcangelis said. “Even though maybe that won’t be completely reflected in your grade, I think what really sucks in the long run for you is that you’re missing out on the opportunity to have a real genuine laugh with your friends. Or maybe even just meet a new person in class that you might never have talked to before.”

Not only are phones causing worsened grades, but students’ attention spans are being affected as well.

“The ability to focus for extended periods of time, even five to ten minutes, has noticeably decreased,” school counselor **Matthew Armes** said.

Business education teacher **Nicholas Guglielmo** agrees that phones have decreased attention span. “Phones have hurt their attention span due to their fear of missing out on what is going on in the world.”

The decreased attention span among students has gotten so bad that many teachers have had to alter how much work they can go over in a single class.

“We have had to modify instruction over the years to put it in smaller bites. There’s an impact on imagination,” Evangelisto said. “If you can’t imagine different things when you’re reading something or connecting

in all different ways, you’re not going to have anything to share and discuss and that’s why it’s heartbreaking. It’s robbing people of their ability to understand their own creativity.”

Evangelisto at one point was trying to help a student during class, and the student gestured for her to “hold on” while they finished a level of a game on their phone before being receptive to help. Evangelisto says this has happened three to four times before.

“It makes me sad,” Evangelisto said. “Like I said, it kind of keeps getting in their way. It’s not letting them generate a thought and follow with a thought, throw a thought out and develop another thought. It’s not really giving a lot of people a chance to get to know themselves in their own minds.”

D’Arcangelis agrees.

“I think it’s a little out of control, regardless of whether you’re worried about missing stuff in class, or whether you care about the class that you happen to be in when you’re using your phone. You’re kind of missing out on what it’s like to be just here right now,” D’Arcangelis said. “There’s just the neatness of making connections with other people. I think that is really a great and important skill. I think that people are missing out on that, just the coolness of being aware and here right now. There has to be limits on it, otherwise you end up living in a world of distraction.”

Many speculate on reasons why students have become so addicted to their phones.

“There’s just so much information and there’s so much you can look up on the phone. I think once you start the habit, it’s hard

to break,” family and consumer science teacher **Andrew Policelli** said. “Texting is now the kind of standard form of communication and then games, social media, all sorts of different posts, that they just get addicted to. It’s easy and it’s right there and the phone’s always in their hand.”

Evangelisto said that even society is to blame for this addiction.

“I don’t think it’s their fault, I think it’s society,” Evangelisto said. “The way that the phones are structured and the algorithms are structured and the way in which the world that we live in today is structured. We look at a kid holding the phone and say, ‘What is your problem?’ But adults are the ones who put that into kids’ hands. Adults are the ones who are continuing to allow them to have it in their hands. At the same time we’re disciplining them and writing them up and referring them for having it in their hands. I don’t think that we’re fulfilling our responsibilities as educators if we continue to allow it to impact our classrooms.”

Marketing education teacher **Jennifer Marden** said fear of missing out is also a reason for phone addiction. “It’s the constant thought of ‘I’ve got to see what’s going on. I’ve got to make sure people know what I’m doing and what everybody else is doing.’”

Marden shows concern with students and what they share on social media considering digital footprint. “I think students have to be very, very careful of what they say and post. Digital footprints are out there forever,” she said.

Simms said, “I think that it’s training of the brain at this point that there needs to always be

constant stimulation.” Simms believes this is a generation that “needs their music or a video or texting,” and that sitting quietly makes this generation “very uncomfortable.”

“I say put your phones away and they don’t even know that their phone is still sitting right there. They’re not blowing me off, it’s just so much like a part of them. They almost don’t even see it as a separate thing sitting there,” Evangelisto said.

Policelli agrees that phone use is affecting students’ academic and future work lives. “They’re going to have the same issue when they go and start working. If they’re on their phone when they’re supposed to be working, that’s going to be a problem for them,” Policelli said. “It just sucks up so much of their time that it takes away from so many other things.”

Lane agrees that by the time students are ready to graduate, they should be demonstrating behaviors of a responsible adult. “As a 12th grade teacher, I should not have to remind students to put phones away. A part of transitioning into adulthood and adult responsibilities is moderating our own behavior,” she said.

Evangelisto wonders why the schools are allowing students to continue a harmful habit. “Just like I wouldn’t let a kid pull out a pack of Marlboros, why am I letting them do this in front of me when I’m trying to help them grow as a person?” she asked. “But when you’re on TikTok, and playing games and stuff, and I’m trying to tell you about the Holocaust we’re like it’s never okay to be kind of down here when someone’s talking to you but especially during this we’re just not going to allow it.” •

Alexa Sterner | Staff Writer

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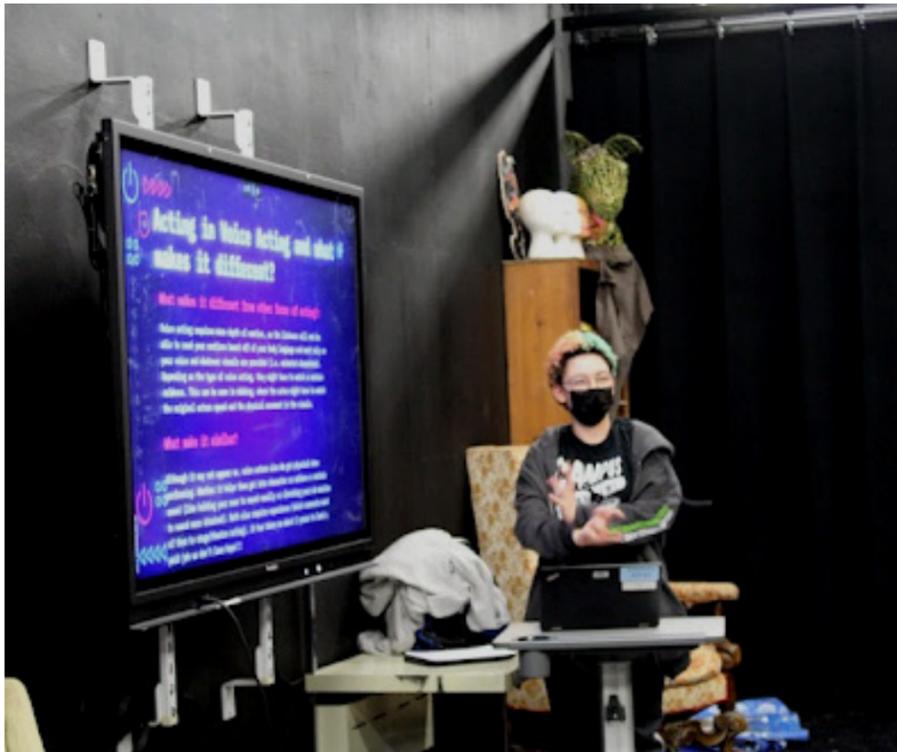
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2023 LCHS Women’s Summit offers resources for students to pursue different industries



(Left) Sophomore Sophia Albert speaks about how she started pursuing her interest in voice recording and voice acting. (Right) Keynote speaker Julie Sprinkle addresses all students in attendance about her life experiences in the Judge Advocates General Corps and her background in becoming a feminist. Photos by Brianna Martinez.

Brianna Martinez | Staff Writer

March 14 marked the second annual LCHS Women’s Summit. Sponsored by Captains United and Alpha Delta Kappa, this reputable event took place for the first time last year with the main focal point being to highlight the achievements of our school’s young women and to inspire greatness out of all students. Planning for the event was a team effort created and executed by retired English teacher **Arlene Lewis** and junior **Daniellah Etisi** with senior **Liberty Harrison**.

Taking place in the library, the 2023 Women’s Summit featured a variety of speakers ranging from current to graduated students to

teachers to family members of current students. This year’s keynote speaker is an LCHS mother **Julie Sprinkle** who started off the summit speaking on her experiences in the Judge Advocates General Corps.

Sprinkle reiterated to the students in attendance that life will have all kinds of obstacles, but persistence, perseverance, determination, and creativity are what can make a difference in your journey in whatever you want to do. The end of her speech kicked off the breakout sessions of each presenter’s topic.

Lewis being a part of Alpha Delta Kappa, has always had the idea of wanting an event that encourages young women to be motivated to achieve their goals

without being held back by their gender. “It’s important for young women to recognize all the opportunities they have to succeed and open their eyes to all of the things they can do,” Lewis said.

Lewis also made it known that not only female students were welcome to the summit, but students of all genders who were interested in any of the topics presented. This event was made to be very intimate for County students by featuring only current students, former students, or families of students. “We could get outside speakers, but we don’t want that,” Lewis said.

Senior **Sachi Kataria** presented Women in Computer Science, junior **Mia Anderson** presented

Women in Aviation, senior **Katie Meek** presented Women in the Military, Etisi and Harrison presented Women in Activism, junior **Sela Campbell** presented Women in Music, LCHS graduate **Kirsten Ponticelli** presented Women in Fine Arts, LCHS teacher **Alyssa Casanova** presented Women in Publishing, and sophomore **Sophia Albert** presented Women in Voice Recording.

Every speaker in the event was recognized for their passion in their field they chose to present about which made the feeling of the event so positive and encouraging for those in attendance. “It’s there if you want it, so go for it,” Lewis said. •



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Winter track athletes triumph by shattering several school records



Freshman Sabine Toumi completes a high jump at the Park View Classic on December 3. Toumi broke the school record in shot put this season. Photo by O'Neal Photography.

Olivia DeWan | Editor-in-Chief

With a temperature of 30 degrees and a wind chill that makes it feel like 20, the LCHS Varsity track team huddles in the bleachers under thermal blankets and sweatshirts as they wait for the first call for their event. The meets usually last three to five hours, depending on the number of teams and entries, and the majority of that time is spent sitting in the cold. Winter track is not for the faint of heart, and it takes an extremely persistent athlete to not only participate, but to succeed.

“Alex Ahedo is a very hard worker, and when the gun goes off I know that he is giving his all,” head coach Courtney Campbell said. “I think that he leads by example, that other kids see that is the way it’s supposed to be done.”

Ahedo has been part of the LCHS track team since his freshman year, when he started off with running cross country as

cross-conditioning for soccer.

“I disliked running long distances so I took up being a sprinter for winter track,” said Ahedo. “I immediately fell in love with the atmosphere that was created at every meet and practice”

Ahedo, however, is not only a sprinter. He’s a long jumper as well. After taking inspiration from his sister, Ahedo began long jumping his sophomore year.

Long jump is an event that combines speed, strength, and agility as the athlete attempts to complete the longest jump forwards after a running start in a single leap.

This season, Ahedo broke the school record, now setting it at 20-09 feet.

“I have watched Alex grow from a freshman running XC [cross country] to a motivated senior who steps up and does what I need, and the team needs,” Campbell said.

On February 6, the athletic department released the athletes

of the month, and for the boys’ winter track team, it was Ahedo’s name on the list.

“I knew that I was working hard in practice, so it felt great that my hard work was noticed and reflected in my performances for Coach to award me with athlete of the month,” Ahedo said. “This was my first time getting this award in my high school career, so it felt great to finally get one.”

Ahedo’s goals for the season were to break the school records in both long jump and the 300 meter dash.

“I still have a little time to shave off in the 300,” Ahedo said. “I also hope that I can medal this year at states in the long jump. It would be the perfect ending to my track career.”

Sabrine Toumi was awarded athlete of the month for the varsity girls’ winter track team.

“I felt super grateful towards my coaches and all my teammates who pushed me to earn the title,” Toumi said. “Everyone is super supportive even when you don’t have the best day.”

Toumi’s goals for the season were to qualify for regionals in long jump and shot put, both of which she accomplished.

Toumi began track in eighth grade where she fell in love with the sport, and decided to continue in high school.

“I think I did have a good season, and ended it off with some nice PRs,” Toumi said. “It also taught me to not take any workouts and conditioning for granted, because if I want to become a better athlete my performance matters 24-seven.”

Toward the end of the season, at the track banquet on February 14, the Coach’s Award was also announced, and the prize went to junior Grace Porter. Campbell said that Porter showed “unques-

tionable support” for her team.

Similarly, Ahedo stated that it’s the team that really drives his love for track and field.

“We are always able to balance messing around with each other in practice and working hard to get better,” Ahedo said. “Track has created friendships for me outside of practice and meets.”

The track team spends a lot of time together as the meets are long and practices can be grueling, which creates an automatic bond between teammates.

“I just really have fun with this team,” Campbell said. “They care about performing well and race when the gun goes off, and work hard, but we can also have fun and laugh.”

This season’s hard work paid off for many of the athletes.

The 4x200 school record was broken by Dean Morrad, Matt Thorne, Ahedo, and Xavier Hernandez. The 55 Hurdles school record was broken by Jason Guevara. Ava Woehr broke the 1000 meter school record by eleven seconds, and Toumi broke the shot put school record.

While the team didn’t snag Regional Champs, Campbell said they had a “very solid season,” and continued to run strong at states.

Senior Randy White placed sixth in the 1000 meter run, placing him as a member of the All State track team.

Ahedo did not end up medalizing at states, but Campbell commented on one of his Twitter posts, “Great season for Alex despite the disappointing end.”

Regardless, the close of the winter season brings high hopes for spring track, where athletes plan to run just as hard without the difficulty of the frigid cold.

“I love the connection between the coaches and the athletes,” Toumi said. “Rather than it being a team, it feels more like a family.” •

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Athlete of the issue: Abby Chinn



Abby Chinn runs up the court to help her teammates play against Briar Woods on November 20, 2022. Ultimately, the Captains lost the game to Briar 14-47. Photo by Kiko Dudley.

Alexa Sterner | Staff Writer

Six years ago, junior **Abby Chinn** started officially playing basketball, but her story began with her brothers in her backyard.

“Originally my parents were looking for a team sport for me to be involved in,” Chinn said. “I had tried a bunch of other things like soccer and ballet and none of them stuck with me until basketball.”

During the season Chinn practices for around 12 hours a week, not including games. In her past, she participated in many sports

that took up a good portion of her time, but she was forced to make a choice.

“I’m only committed to basketball,” Chinn said. “I did play flag football up until high school, but I decided basketball was where my heart was at.”

Adding to her connection for basketball, she needed a number that conveyed her passion for it.

“My number is two,” Chinn said. “Originally I just chose it, but later I began to associate it with the two people who influenced my game the most, my oldest brother and my dad.”

Basketball influenced Chinn’s relationships with her family and her teammates.

“Outside of the game, basketball gives me a sense of community with my team and a better relationship with my dad and brothers as another way to connect with them,” Chinn said. “I love my teammates that I’m currently with. They are so motivating and fun to play with.”

But basketball comes with its difficulties, as it’s a physically demanding sport.

“The biggest challenge was the mental challenges and get-

ting through injuries,” Chinn said. “I got two concussions back to back last year and missed my entire first varsity season because of that and resulting health issues. I also tore cartilage in my hip later that year and needed surgery.”

Regardless of her injuries, Chinn was still able to push through and be a contributing member of the girls’ varsity team.

“My greatest accomplishment is probably getting to the varsity level,” Chinn said. “I was worried because I thought I had started too late compared to everyone else to make it.”

In addition, Chinn won athlete of the month in January for girls’ basketball. Chinn’s pre-game rituals contributed to her performance on the court, which led to her award.

“I like to practice before games and practices, just me in the backyard to build up confidence,” Chinn said. “I also like to listen to music.”

Through her hard work, she earned many treasured memories.

“There’s a lot of games I’ve played, but I’d probably say the Rock Ridge game from this year and the Valley game from my freshman year,” Chinn said. “The energy was just so intense from everyone on the floor and the bench.”

Chinn owes her success to her constant source of inspiration: her dad.

“I’d say that my dad has been my biggest coach and influence on my basketball career,” Chinn said. “He was in the backyard with me coaching me through my first made basket and he’s still giving me pointers today.” •

Wrestlers complete another successful season, finishing with a state winner and a state runner up

Tae Herron | Staff Writer

The team finished first in districts and regions and had 14 wrestlers punch their spots to the state tournament in various weight classes. At states they placed seventh as a team.

Luke Roberts finished again as the state champion with a season record of 27-0. Even though he won once again he was not pleased with his performance.

“I dealt with a major injury, congenital vertebrae irregularity, which made it very hard to wrestle and lift in practice,” Roberts

said. “I won states but I would have done better if I was healthy. It’s still disappointing to me a month after states.”

Roberts credits his wins to his workouts, which help him also prepare his college career since he’s committed to the University of Virginia for wrestling.

“To prepare for the off-season and mostly college, I’ve been lifting in the mornings and practicing with my club team at night after my practices. I train grip, strength and core,” Roberts said.

Roberts’ favorite moment was his team winning the regular season

title, especially since all the current seniors have been working since freshman year.

“Everyone on the team was so happy, but more so the seniors,” Roberts said. “Knowing we started and ended in a successful season from being freshmen to seniors was a great feeling.”

Roberts also enjoys watching his teammates’ work payoff when one of his teammates, **Troy Chong** won districts in his weight class at 132.

“Troy hung at 132 is one of the hardest workers in the room and always willing to consume knowl-

edge,” Roberts said. “It was a super cool moment to see all of that hard work come to fruition.”

Bryson Rios came up short as repeating as a state champion due to multiple injuries, but he still finished as runner up.

Bryson tore the left LCL on his knee at the Region 4C finals, only five days before states. “States was my last ride, so I was definitely finishing that,” Bryson said. “I wrestled with two torn LCLs at states, and unfortunately came up a little short in the finals.”

Off season is very important according to Rios, and has shaped

him into the wrestler he is today.

“Off-season training is the most important thing to becoming a better wrestler during the season,” Rios said. “Off season training is what made my wrestling skills take off, especially going out of state to wrestle in tournaments against the best kids in the country.”

Rios’ favorite moment of the season was wrestling in a tournament called Beast of the East for the first time.

“Every match was tough and I wrestled some nationally ranked and good kids for other states like PA and Jersey,” Rios said.

After all the injuries he been through he was glad to be able to punch a spot in the state finals once again.

“My state semifinal match was my favorite match of the season because I was so hyped to go back to the state finals for my third straight year, even with all the injuries I was dealing with,” Rios said.

Even though he was out injured for a while, senior **Kylan Dagstani** still worked his way back to place at states.

“I have been injured a lot this season, I had a torn meniscus, which kept me out for a while,” Dagstani said.

Dagstani put in a lot of work this season and a lot of training.

“I train non-stop, I go to Ohio for wrestling like four times a week,” Dagstani said. “I try to find



The wrestling team holds up the region flag after winning their second region title in three years on February 11. Left to right: (Back row) Lincoln Kelley, Darrin Sever, Brandon Ahearn, Troy Chung, Octavian Ashford, Andrew Bedrousky. (Second row) Joshua Buchanan, Jayden Pearson, Grace Roberts, Eli Eastlake, Jackson Snyder. (Front row) Justin Lowry, Carson Kelley, Bryson Rios, Drew Eastlake, Alexis Cuatlacuatl, Josiah Smith. Photo by Mike Petrella.

places that will challenge me so it exposes my bad habits or things I need to work on.”

Wrestling is about your confidence and how much work you really put in, Dagstani said.

“The more work you put in the

more confident you are. Wrestling is really based on how much you want the win,” Dagstani said. “How hard you’ll work for it, if you don’t put in the work it will show.”

According to Roberts, wrestling is the most competitive sport.

“However I viewed other sports--their practices, games, injuries, mentality, strength training, and conditioning.” Roberts said, “Wrestling is far more challenging in every aspect even at just the high school level.” •

Sports Marketing teacher Schuyler Henderson begins first year as boys’ tennis coach



Schuyler Henderson looks on as the players warm up during practice on March 13. This is Henderson’s first year as boys’ tennis coach. Photo by William Kluttz.

William Kluttz | Staff Writer

First year teacher **Schuyler Henderson** is starting his first year of coaching as well, taking

over the boy’s tennis team.

Henderson originally didn’t expect to be a coach going into this year. “They needed someone who could be there everyday for prac-

tices, things like that, and I was available, so I thought it would be kind of like a good opportunity to get into coaching sports,” Henderson said.

Eventually, senior **Nick Serway**, who is in Henderson’s Sports Marketing class, persuaded him to become coach. “I saw him, got to know him a bit, really nice guy. I was like, ‘okay, you know, sports...you seem like the right guy for tennis,’” Serway said.

Although Henderson hadn’t played tennis before, he had watched his brother play on the varsity team during high school, so he had plenty of knowledge of the game. Henderson hopes to learn how to play through the players.

“I kind of try to pick some of the players’ brains to learn a little bit myself. I’d like to think that I’ve gotten better since the start, but it’s a work in progress,” Henderson said. “Hopefully they can teach me a few things.”

The prior coach, nicknamed

“Coach Flo” has remained as more of an assistant coach. Henderson says that Coach Flores has been a help with technical details of the game. “He’s got a lot more to offer the players in that aspect than I do... it’s really nice to have him, especially for more of the instructional things,” Henderson said.

Freshman tennis player **Aiden Armstead** said that Henderson has been good for team motivation. “I like him,” Armstead said.

The first scrimmage was on March 8, and the first match was on March 13. Henderson said they will take the things they learned from those and “carry them through the rest of the season.”

When Henderson isn’t coaching, he enjoys attending games of his favorite NFL team, the Minnesota Vikings. He also enjoys golfing.

Henderson is excited for what this season will bring. “We’re strong and... we know what to focus on.” •



Students raise money and awareness in blood cancer fundraising campaign



Juniors Emma Pearson and Cat Pizzarello won second place in the Student Visionaries of the Year Campaign hosted by Leukemia & Lymphoma Society. Pearson and Pizzarello led a team to raise \$66,849.98 for LLS throughout January and February, which will go both directly to helping affected families and research on blood cancer. Photo courtesy of Cat Pizzarello.

Evelyn Kuzminski | Layout Editor

\$66,849.98. Maybe it's the cost of a car. Maybe it's the cost of a year of college. In this case, it's how much money seven people raised in two months to benefit the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society.

There are countless organizations contributing to the fight to end cancer, locally, nationally, and everywhere in between. In the past couple months, juniors **Emma Pearson** and **Cat Pizzarello** took part in the fight, fundraising, campaigning, and ultimately raising the second-great-

est amount of money out of fourteen teams in northern Virginia.

"I've always loved being able to help people and I never thought I could raise so much money to help people who really need it," Pearson said.

For Pizzarello, the opportunity to help others resonated most soundly with her. "Helping others is a life skill any person should have and understand the importance of," she said. "This campaign has given me a great deal of happiness and has provided me with so much meaning as to why helping others is so

important."

Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS) is a national nonprofit organization that raises money for blood cancer research. Although LLS continuously accepts donations, shorter campaigns may run a few months at a time, led by individuals looking to make a difference.

Pearson and Pizzarello served as team leaders for their campaign, working to raise both funds and awareness for LLS since their campaign launched in January. Their initial goal was to raise \$25,000, but they quickly surpassed that and raised their goal to \$50,000, which they also ultimately exceeded. The money they raised will partially be used by LLS to host events spreading awareness, but most will go towards treatment research and helping families with hospital bills.

Pearson and Pizzarello raised money both through individual donations as well as larger events. Emailing was one of the most effective methods to collect donations, Pearson said. "And keep emailing them until they respond!" she added. The team reached out mostly to family and friends, but donations also came in from some indirect contacts, like a parent's coworkers.

The most successful fundraisers, however, were the larger events that they hosted in coordination with local businesses. The team partnered with Loudoun Kitchen & Bar to host a spirit night where a percentage of the revenue was donated to their campaign. Loudoun Kitchen & Bar matched the donations, doubling what the spirit night raised. The team also had their donations matched after the fundraiser at Club Pilates, where they set up a table marketing to the pilates classes.

"It was inside the building, so people there, before and after the classes, came over and looked at our information and donated,"

Pearson said. Pizzarello's mother, **Michelle Pizzarello**, matched the donations raised from that event.

But aside from donations, the campaign aimed to share information about LLS. "Our goal in this isn't just to raise money, but to also spread awareness about blood cancer and what LLS's mission is," Pearson said. "I am leading a team to try and get as many people as possible to know about the campaign, donate if they can, and know about the organization as a whole."

There were five other members on Pearson and Pizzarello's team, including both other students and family members. Preparations for the campaign started in August, and putting together a team was a big part of that.

"We sent emails and did social media posts for our friends and family and then had a meeting about it to tell them about the campaign and what their role would be," Pearson said. "We did a lot of prepping email templates to have ready to send. We gathered our team members, that was a major part of it, and told people about it so that when it did start they'd be ready to donate or tell people about it."

Their campaign was indisputably successful, but Pearson said it was also both challenging and rewarding. "I've loved every step of this campaign, even though it's been super stressful at times."

Although their campaign ended with a second-place finish, the fight against cancer has certainly not ended, and neither has the juniors' involvement. "I would love to continue working with LLS," Pearson said. "I've met some amazing people and I love their mission." Pizzarello agrees. "I will most definitely be participating in the campaign again next year and looking for other opportunities similar to it," she said. •

UPCOMING STUDENT CALENDAR

March 24 - End of 3rd quarter
March 27 - Student holiday
March 28 - FIRST DAY OF QUARTER 4
March 31 - Spring pep-rally

April 3-7 - Spring Break
April 14 - SCA Mini-thon
April 21 - Student holiday (Eid al Fitr)
April 26 - Wellness Wednesday
April 28 - Prom

May 5-7 - Spring Musical Performances (Little Shop of Horrors)
May 10 - Guitar/Orchestra concert
May 11 - Spring Band concert
May 12 - Last day of classes for seniors doing Outreach
May 29 - Student holiday (Memorial Day)
May 30 - Senior picnic/yearbook photo

June 5 - NJROTC Field Day
June 8 - Last day of school / End of 4th quarter
June 9 - Graduation 2023

Prom Dress Pop-Up shop offers students affordable, upcycled prom dresses

Olivia DeWan | Editor-in-Chief

Prom is one of the most anticipated moments of high school. However, not everyone can afford the steep costs of a dress, shoes, and jewelry.

The Ladies Board of INOVA Loudoun Hospital is partnering with the honor society at Woodgrove High School to create a pop-up prom dress shop so everyone has a chance to wear the dress of their dreams.

“It will be held on Saturday, March 25 at the Twice Is Nice Thrift Shop,” Denise Goff, a member of the Ladies Board of INOVA Loudoun Hospital, said. “The prices are around \$25 for each dress.”

The Prom Dress Pop-Up shop is made possible by donations. Anybody can donate their old prom dresses, jewelry, and shoes to the Twice Is Nice Thrift Shop, or the Nostalgia Clothing Store in Purcellville. There will be some items for guys as well, but the event is mainly for the ladies.

“We upcycle the dresses, it’s all about that,” Goff said. “We sew, we clean, we do everything so they will be in very good condition.”

Hosting the Prom Dress Pop-Up shop is not the first time the Ladies Board of INOVA Loudoun Hospital has gotten active in their community. Founded in 1912 with the inception of the Leesburg Hospital, the Ladies Board of Managers was organized by local churchwomen

to provide volunteer supervision of housekeeping, and to raise funds for the hospital.

The initial 40 Board members supplied kitchen and dining equipment, bedding, and food for the hospital and its patients. That hospital is now named INOVA Loudoun Hospital, and the Ladies Board hosts many projects such as The Annual Rummage Sale, which was established in 1926, the Hospital Gift Shop at Lansdowne, the Lights of Love remembrance program, and the Polly Clemens Nursery Fund.

Their mission is to promote good will between the community and the hospital, and to raise funds for patient services, nursing education, and hospital projects. The Prom Dress Pop-Up shop is one of their many ways of accomplishing that.

The funds from the Prom Dress Pop-Up shop are going to a section of the INOVA Hospital called FACT (forensic assessment and consultation teams). FACT provides survivors of sexual assault with medical care and an emotional support team. They make sure that all survivors have everything they need, including follow-up medical care, referrals for advocacy, and mental health services.

FACT also helps gather evidence if a survivor chooses to report the crime to the police.

“I would encourage all students to get involved,” Goff said. “Things like this that are recycling



Flyers of the Prom Dress Pop-Up were put up around school and handed out in the morning. All students are encouraged to get involved with the event by donating dresses, jewelry, and shoes, or by volunteering at the event. Photo courtesy of Olivia DeWan.

and upcycling for a good cause are fabulous.”

This is the second year of the Prom Dress Pop-Up shop, which was started in 2019. COVID caused the shop to be put on hold again until 2023.

However, events like the Prom Dress Pop-Up shop only happen with the support of the community.

“We would love to have student volunteers at this event and the thrift shop,” Goff said. “We run the thrift shop all year long, and we’re open from 10-4 every day,

even Saturdays, so we try to work around the schedules of student volunteers.”

Working hand-in-hand with the local community, the Ladies Board hopes to inform more people about the work that they do in order to touch the lives of others.

“I would encourage students to donate their prom dresses and help spread the word about the pop-up shop,” Goff said. “You know, things like this can be done anywhere, you can even do it at your own school.” •

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Looking For work?
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Search for the best local environmentally friendly restaurant



The “Burrata Grilled Cheese,” is a seasonal dish at Cowbell Kitchen, consisting of burrata and cheddar cheese, as well as mushrooms, and marinara sauce. Cowbell Kitchen is a local restaurant that takes action in creating a thriving environment. Photo by Taylor Helfer.

Taylor Helfer | Staff Writer

As the world ages and we continue to create new technologies that harm the Earth, implementing environmentally friendly practices is more important than ever. These local restaurants help by sourcing their food straight from farms, use compostable utensils, and believe that keeping the Earth healthy, as well as their customers, is the most important thing. Although buying from big businesses is easiest, supporting the Earth is much more beneficial.

CAVA (Ashburn) 10/10

CAVA takes care of the things that matter most, the Earth and the community. They also claim to not take shortcuts when it comes to freshly sourced foods and have many partners who believe the same. In 2018, CAVA made the switch to biodegradable utensils, bowls, and straws, which has long lasting benefits to the environment.

CAVA specializes in Mediterranean food and has several different options free to customize. As for myself, I got a grain bowl which I customized with various options such as cucumbers, tomatoes, lentils, and grilled chicken. One of the best things about CAVA was the amount of options for customization as well as the freshness of the ingredients in my bowl. I paid \$10 for this bowl which is exceptional, considering the fact that I got plenty of quality food.

CAVA’s staff was kind and helpful while the atmosphere was calm and comforting. For those looking for a good bite to eat and a quiet study spot, CAVA is the place for you.

As CAVA is a chain restaurant, it is more local and frequent, which really appealed to me. With more than 250 locations, dining is made easy, while also environmentally friendly,

which many big corporations don’t integrate into their mission.

I was pleasantly surprised with the overall environmentally friendliness of CAVA, with the biodegradable utensils as well as bowls and straws. Their staff was great and helpful, and their options and pricing were perfect. I would give CAVA an overall 10/10.

Cowbell Kitchen (Leesburg) 8.5/10

Cowbell Kitchen is a “farm and local produce” driven small business located in the heart of downtown Leesburg. They believe in bringing locally grown, raised, and produced food right to your table. Their efforts significantly reduce the use of fossil fuels during transportation, which in turn makes the Earth healthier by reducing harmful greenhouse gasses.

Cowbell Kitchen had just recently moved to Leesburg, and specializes in sweet pastries and savory lunch and breakfast options. Cowbell Kitchen is solely women owned and staffed in many areas of their store. Cowbell Kitchen has their very own set of items to purchase, as well as their fresh food items.

I got a seasonal dish, the “Burrata Grilled Cheese,” which comes with burrata and cheddar cheeses, mushrooms, and marinara sauce. The cheeses were melty and delicious, and the marinara was the perfect addition to this dish. They blended perfectly with the mushrooms, which added a change of texture to the dish, although, the overall dish was very messy, as it was greasy and almost soggy.

In addition to this meal, I got a lavender lemonade, which was sweet, with the right amount of lavender to make this drink a must have. With the addition of the drink, my total came to \$18, \$15 for the

sandwich, and \$3 for the lemonade. Personally, I think that this was a little pricey, seeing as both the sandwich and lemonade were smaller.

Cowbell Kitchen is very local and quiet, which makes it a perfect place for a quiet study spot. In the dining areas, there were many people working or reading, which added to the comforting, calm vibe of the store. However, there was a lack of adequate seating, which made it difficult to truly enjoy the environment.

Throughout the store, there were books for sale that were all written by women. I really like this addition to the store, as it advocates for women in literature. In addition to the mass amounts of books, there were also other items such as fashionable jewelry or cute dishes that were for sale.

Cowbell Kitchen is very dedicated to keeping their restaurant sustainable. It’s easy to see in the recyclable aluminum water bottles that read, “More Ocean. Less Plastic,” as well as in the recyclable containers, and of course their locally grown ingredients.

Cowbell Kitchen is one of the best places to visit if you would like to support a small business that takes action in creating a better environment. They had delicious foods, drinks, and a welcoming, enticing environment. Although the seating was slim and the pricing was unfavorable, I still would rate Cowbell Kitchen an 8.5/10.

First Watch (Leesburg) 8/10

In May 2021, First Watch opened in Leesburg with the promise of fresh ingredients and happy customers. Just recently in 2022, First Watch partnered with WinCup to further improve sustainability in their restaurants by replacing their regular plastic straws with plant-based straws.

The environment of First Watch was satisfactory with a rustic farmhouse vibe and upbeat music in the background, although, the seating of the restaurant was slim and I was met with an hour-long wait due to

this. It would be preferred to make a reservation beforehand when visiting.

First Watch is primarily a breakfast or brunch establishment and has various breakfast sandwiches, omelets, or even what I ordered, the “Farmhouse Hash.” This dish consisted of bacon, peppers, and avocado cushioned on potatoes as well as an egg that was prepared to your liking. This meal also consisted of an assortment of seasonal fruit, whole grain bread, and strawberry jam.

At first bite, the egg, avocado and peppers were very present as well as the cubed potatoes, which seemed to be a bit undercooked and hard. The bacon was seasoned nicely and added a nice crunch to my meal. For those who prefer savory over sweet, this dish is a must have.

The whole grain bread was toasted evenly on both sides and buttered nicely. The strawberry jam truly made the toast for me as it was very sweet and even all-naturally made. The cost of this meal was \$14, which seems like a good deal considering the quality of most of the dish.

Personally, I prefer sweet over savory so this meal didn’t appeal to me too much. Although this meal wasn’t to my liking, the restaurant was balanced with a refreshing environmental touch. Many condiments on the table were fresh and all natural, while customers could also receive paper straws upon request. There was also a specific freshly squeezed juice menu, which had natural ingredients in one single sip.

For those who prefer sweet over savory, First Watch had limited appealing options for sweet dishes. They have french toast, sweet all-natural acai bowls, and a variety of pancakes and waffles all at an affordable price, ranging from \$6-\$12 a plate.

I was very happy with the overall atmosphere of First Watch and am glad to know it is one of the local businesses that advocates for a better environment. The food was enjoyable, the atmosphere was welcoming, pricing was fair, and is an overall 8/10 for me. •



The “Farmhouse Hash,” which is a popular dish at First Watch, features potatoes, egg, bacon, avocado, and peppers, with a side of fresh fruit and toast. First Watch is one of many local businesses that strive to create a better environment. Photo by Taylor Helfer.

How to hike Leesburg

Liberty Harrison | Editor-in-Chief

You are sitting in your house on a Saturday afternoon, stressed about your latest test, relationship drama, or the AP tests looming on the horizon. You just drank a too-sugary soda to get some quick energy and quench your sugar cravings, and felt the overwhelming sense of doom as you threw the plastic bottle into the recycling, wondering if you are doing enough to save the environment that's collapsing around you. What is a zoomer to do?

It might seem like no one activity can cure this range of fears and problems, but in fact, one exists.

Hiking has plentiful benefits across a range of areas. Spending time outdoors reduces stress, releases endorphins and improves your health. Exercise allows you to get out nervous energy, release dopamine, and keep fit, which produces sustained energy in your body. Walking your local forest paths supports the programs and organizations that care for those environments, which along with providing homes to flora and fauna, induce peace and relaxation in forest visitors. Forests are also a natural environmental cleaner, sucking in carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen gas.

Now your only problem is which path to choose, and that depends on what you want...

Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve

Banshee Reeks, located 11 minutes from our school, boasts 20 miles of hiking trails over 695 acres, a catch and release fishing pond, and dog-friendly facilities.

There is plenty of parking, a porta-potty at the entrance, and an information desk, nature center, and proper bathroom in an old stone farmhouse.

You are welcome to hang out on the wide porch at the back of the farmhouse, where relaxing in rocking chairs you can look out across a wild meadow.

Trail maps are available at the front of the house, which is good, because there are so many trails at Banshee Reeks that you can actually get lost in this enormous park.

Not only does Banshee Reeks have long paths, there is also a variety of trail types including open fields, watersheds, forests, stream walks, and ponds. Very little of it is steep, and the trails are extremely well-tended, although not particularly well-marked.

This park is so large, it is not uncommon to see no one else on the trails, so you might feel isolated.

However, this park attracts nature enthusiasts, many of whom show up regularly for the set volunteer hours on the third Saturday of every month. The one downside of Ban-

shee Reeks is that they are closed on Mondays and Fridays (but you should be in school anyway).

Red Rock Wilderness Overlook Regional Park

If you are looking for a less isolated hike, Red Rock Wilderness Overlook is a short drive down the road from Leesburg's Costco, on Edwards Ferry Road.

This 67 acre park is bounded on one side by the Potomac River, and a 1.2 mile trail navigates the perimeter of the park. Just walking the perimeter trail takes about 30 minutes, but you can extend your enjoyment and exercise by following any number of trails that crisscross the park.

This park is great when it is hot, since mostly you will be walking through shady forests. Ravines from creeks create a few steep scrambles at points, which are fun as long as it is not rainy.

In fact, you might avoid this park for hiking after a rainy spell. The trails will be muddy near the parking lot and along the riverfront, and the steep slopes become extremely slippery.

Near the parking lot, historical buildings from an 1800's farm have informational markers, so you can get your hiking fix and pretend to be intellectual all in one go.

Ball's Bluff Battlefield Regional Park

Another favorite hiking spot in Leesburg is Ball's Bluff Battlefield Regional Park, where a Civil War battle was fought in 1861.

This is another park where you will not feel isolated, as it is popular enough that on weekends with pleasant weather, it can sometimes be difficult to find parking.

This might also be from visitors for the historical talks and tours that are offered fairly regularly for free. Ball's Bluff has a variety of trails. A wide gravel path cuts through the meadow where the Civil War battle took place, and smaller trails with scant tree cover border the battlefield, where multiple historical and educational markers give you an in depth understanding of the fight between North and South.

Beyond the battlefield, narrow well-kept trails meander through forests, up and down steep slopes, beside the Potomac River, through bowers of wildflowers, and across crystalline creeks. You can follow a series of trails southeast along the Potomac and unknowingly leave Ball's Bluff behind, entering into Edwards Landing Park.

One reason Ball's Bluff is so popular is because it is easy to calibrate your hike to how long you want to be outdoors. There are short, medium, and longer hikes, and none of them are difficult.



One of several overlooks to Harrison Island at Ball's Bluff Battlefield Regional Park, where Union soldiers fled to in retreat in 1861. Photo by Liberty Harrison.

Rust Nature Sanctuary

If you only have a pocket of time to do a quick dive into nature, then choose Rust Nature Sanctuary, which is about a three-minute drive from school, just beyond the North Star School on Childrens Center Road.

The hiking trails at Rust can be divided into two halves: a meadow loop, and a forest trail. At the base of the forest loop there is a pond surrounded by cattails, but the meadow loop boasts its own vernal pond as well.

Trails along the meadow loop are wide and grassy, and during the summer and early autumn you can pick wineberries and wild blackberries as you wander.

The forest trails are narrow and uneven, meandering through deciduous groves and conifer thickets.

The entire property is 68 acres, and both loops together can be walked in 30 minutes. Although there are plenty of picnic tables at the front, there is no bathroom. The parking lot is small, which is only a problem when events like weddings or parties are being held at the Rust manor house, which dates from the early 1900s.

Simple gardens surround the

old house, and you can relax on the benches overlooking the lawns. Rust Nature Sanctuary seems to be an unknown gem. It is easy to get to, and yet rarely will you see another person on the trails.

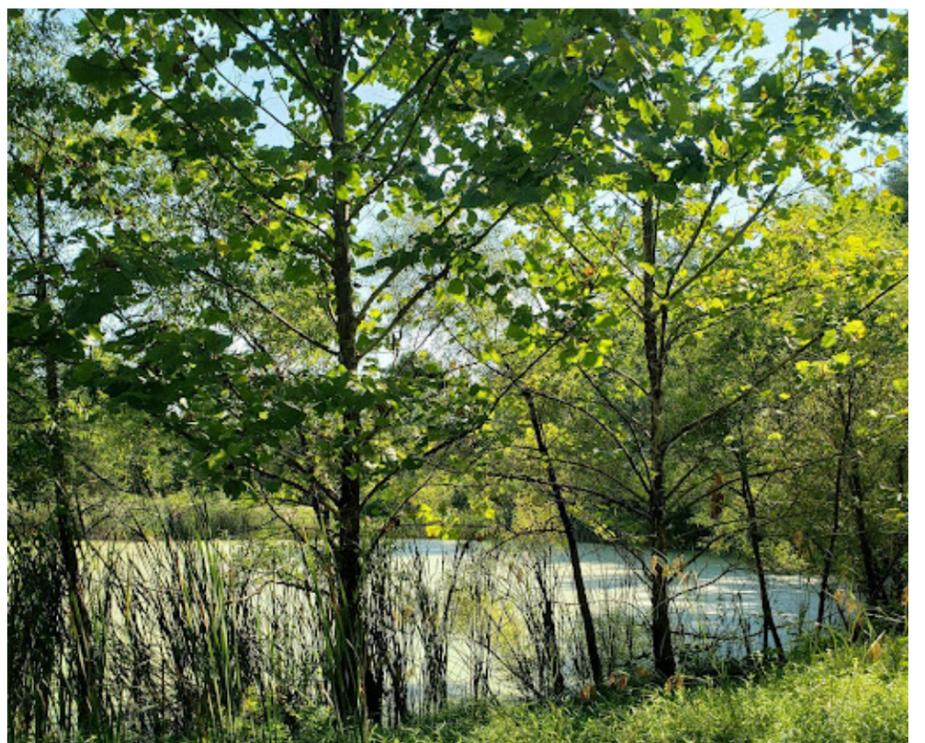
The Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park

For those who want a dose of nature without the dirt and rough paths, the W&OD is a good option. Cutting right through Leesburg, this paved path is popular with bicyclists, so you will need to watch out particularly during the weekend.

The W&OD trail stretches from Purcellville to Shirlington, near Washington, DC, and because it used to be a railway path, it is wide, flat, and usually straight.

You can find cafes, restaurants and playgrounds just off the trail. Although it is popular, there have been assaults along the trail, so it is best to walk it in a group and during the daytime.

These are just a smattering of the many hiking opportunities we can enjoy in Northern Virginia, but they are also the easiest to get to, so no excuses. Get out there and soak up nature. •



The pond at Rust Nature Sanctuary supports a wetlands habitat with frogs, turtles, ducks, voles, and snakes! Photo by Libery Harrison.



Artist Sydney Tamsett

Micro gallery displays student's creative passions

Evelyn Kuzminski | Layout Editor

Like many others, senior **Sydney Tamsett** spent much of her time in quarantine working on a hobby: her art. "I needed something to do," the senior said. "So I started spending more time on it."

Now, Tamsett's work is part of a student gallery on display at the Brambleton Library. Her contribution to the exhibit takes the form of six four-by-four watercolor paintings with ink well. "They are a series of plants in decay," Tamsett said. "Each plant is a different reference photo that I painted it from." The coloring of the plants fades from shades of green to yellow to brown across the panels, which Tamsett said speaks to how she uses the plant as her muse.

Tamsett used a combination of watercolor and ink to complete the paintings, although it isn't her medium of choice. "Pencil is my favorite medium, but I think watercolor shows up better," Tamsett said, adding that watercolor is her favorite medium to paint with. "It has more color capacity."

Although quarantine was an opportunity for Tamsett to develop her skills, it was by no means her first stroke of creativity. "I've been doing art seriously pretty much since high school,



Senior Sydney Tamsett (left) with her great aunt, Ada Patroni, and mother, Anasofia Montebalanco, at the exhibition of Tamsett's work "Decay" on display at the Brambleton Library. Tamsett created the six watercolor panels over the course of a few weeks in her Art III class. Photo courtesy of Sydney Tamsett.

but I was doodling long before then and I started to get better with more practice."

Tamsett is now enrolled in Art III, her second year in a class taught by **Kyla Jenkins**, who Tamsett credits with encouraging her to submit her art for display. "She really pushed me to apply for the micro gallery," Tamsett said.

Tamsett said it was a simple process to get her art into the gallery, consisting of little more than some paperwork and a QR code leading to a Google Form. "It was really easy," she said. "It

took like five minutes."

Despite the ease of application, Tamsett didn't expect much to come of submitting her work and was taken by surprise when she found out she was selected. "I was really shocked because I just kind of tossed it in there on a whim," she said. "I didn't really think it would get in, but here I am."

Tamsett created her work for the gallery in class, spending a little over an hour on each piece, or about one per class. The art room provides not only dozens of supplies for students to work

with, but the opportunity for peer collaboration and feedback.

"I think it's a cool environment to bounce ideas off of people and get your friends' opinions," Tamsett said. "And say, 'Oh this is color match, right? Do I need to add more green here? Is this decayed enough?'"

Tamsett doesn't see herself majoring in art or pursuing it as a career, but she does anticipate staying involved with it in the future, "maybe in a club capacity."

"I think art is more of a hobby, but I definitely want to continue doing it." •

Spotlight on Alphonso Young

Local guitar teacher and drummer on being in a band for twenty years and performing at the Kennedy Center

William Kluttz | Staff Writer

Students who went to Simpson Middle School will likely remember **Alphonso Young**, and the nicknames that he gave to students. Young is a guitar teacher at Simpson and Smart's Mill Middle Schools, and a jazz percussion professor at Shenandoah University and Gettysburg College. On top of that he is touring with his band, the Eric Byrd trio.

"I don't sleep," Young said.

Young began his Jazz career freelancing, playing with different acts, until he joined the Eric Byrd trio as their drummer in 2001, and

they began touring that same year. During their first tour, they left the United States on September 9, two days before 9/11. "It was crazy," Young said. "We got over there and the world blew up and... it was insane, but that kind of brought us together."

The name for the trio comes from founder **Eric Byrd**, because "he does most of the work," according to Young.

Byrd was looking for two musicians who were similar musically, and Young became one of them. "It worked with us, we were about the same age," Young said. "It was a dream."

Young prefers the live atmosphere to that of a studio. "What we do is we usually go out on tour first so that the music has a chance to develop, and then when we get off our tour, that's when we go into the studio, so we kind of do it a little bit backwards. I think it allows the music to kind of go through those changes," Young said.

Performing live before recording helps the band "keep that sense of real in the music," Young said. "We don't want to be a studio band." He added. "...when you're with one core group, it allows you to really kind of develop

a sound."

Pre-pandemic, Young was performing roughly 120 shows a year with the trio. "We used to play gigs for like, nothing...just to play. You know, fifty dollar gigs...just to have opportunities to play, and we stuck it out, we paid our dues and now we don't play for fifty dollars anymore!" Young said, laughing.

Young wants to be thought of as a drum player. "I could say that I play guitar, I could say that piano, you know, but it's nothing in comparison to what I can do behind a set of drums," he said.

Some of his favorite drummers



Alphonso Young during a performance of "Christmas is coming" from the "A Charlie Brown Christmas" soundtrack, with the Eric Byrd Trio. He has been performing with them for over twenty years. Photo courtesy of Alphonso Young.

are **Elvin Jones**, **Max Roach**, **Brian Blade**, **Neil Peart**, and **John Bonham**. His favorite albums are "Kind of Blue" by **Miles Davis** and "Off the Wall" by **Michael Jackson**. "Off the Wall" was Young's template for learning how to play drums as a kid, as well as "Brick House" by the **Commodores** and "YYZ" by **Rush**. As he discussed drumming, he tapped his fingers to demonstrate the rhythms.

One of the things students

of Young will remember is the nicknames he gives some of his students. Some of his favorites are "Big Red" and "Father Time."

"Guitar players are kind of unique in the music world...we have unique personalities, you know, and all my classes have always been sort of like a family, a family type of thing, so you get to know everybody, and you know things that they do, and you know some of the quirks and things, and so that's how it hap-

pened," Young said.

Young picks his nicknames at random. "I never, you know, pre-conceive it, it just kind of comes out of nowhere."

The idea to cover "A Charlie Brown Christmas" came from **Sandy Oxx**, of the Carroll County Choir. "I thought it was the dumbest idea ever. I was like 'this is ridiculous. I'm not doing this. I'm not going to sit here and play 'A Charlie Brown Christmas.'...I hated it."

But Oxx had booked three shows, and all sold out. "Afterwards, we're like 'this actually works!'" Young said.

"We get tired of it, sometimes, you know, after like, the thirtieth show! But you know, it's fun, it's always fun and it's always packed. I mean, it's just sold out shows every just about every single time, everywhere we go...we're literally booked from Thanksgiving weekend all the way up until Christmas Eve," he added. "It's great."

Even though the work is written by someone else, Young still finds a way to put his own spin on it. "It's a great format for what we do. You know, we improvise in the music...the format's already set. We just kind of put our own spin on a body of music that was created by **Vince Guaraldi**, like, years ago."

Young said his shows have become a tradition for many families during the holiday season.

"It takes me back to when I was a kid, like in my garage...I had like this little piece of trash drum set, and this little turntable...but it would immediately take me back there, because that was the happiest time. When I go back there, it's like you, you get...rejuvenated...so this is why I'm doing this, because...it was fun," Young said. •



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Captains' Playhouse presents unforgettable performance of "Almost Maine"



Alexis Shugars & Tae Herron | Staff Writers

Loudoun County's drama department put on an outstanding performance of "Almost Maine" on February 16-18. This Valentine's Day themed production tells the story of nine different couples within the small borough of Almost, Maine, navigating their way through relationships and love. •

Where It Went

(Left) Seniors Jada Venson (Marci) and EJ Faal (Phil), play a couple on an ice skating trip, as they start to argue due to Marci's missing skate. Marci accuses Phil of never listening to her. Phil strongly disagrees until Marci reveals that it is their anniversary. She hands Phil her wedding ring before leaving him standing alone. Photo by Tae Herron.

Story of Hope
(Right) Sophomore Frey Williams (Hope) visits the longtime home of her past significant other to answer his marriage proposal, only to find an unrecognizable man answer the door. After explaining to the man her reason for showing up on his doorstep, she finally recognizes him as her boyfriend, sophomore Kirby Pena (Daniel). Suddenly, another woman, sophomore, Jazmine Wills (Significant Other), emerges from the front door questioning who Daniel is talking to. After the new couple return back into their home, Hope screams "yes!" twice before sadly walking away. Photo by Tae Herron.



This Hurts

(Left) Senior Anna Takemoto (Marvalyn) and freshman Collin Diem (Steve) play a pair of renters that meet in their apartment's laundry room. After going through his life without the ability to feel pain, he finally experiences it after being hit with an iron board by Marvayn for the second time, referencing his new ability to feel love. Photo by Tae Herron.



Sad and Glad
(Right) Freshman Rae Creppon (Sandrine) encounters past lover junior Alex McKay (Jimmy) at their local eatery, the Moose Paddy. Jimmy attempts to win back Sandrine's heart, as waitress freshman Keira Pulley (Villain) interrupts the pair, eventually revealing Sandrine's engagement to another man. Photo by Tae Herron.



They Fell

(Left) Two longtime friends, senior Evie Holmberg (Shelly) and sophomore Jamie-Faye McKnight (Deena) discuss their unfortunate experiences with men, as Shelly explains her resentment to the idea of continuing to go out with different male partners. Shelly then confesses her love towards Deena, to which she responds in a nonmutual way. As Shelly begins to walk away, she falls on the ground multiple times followed by Deena also falling on the ground, representing the pair falling in love. Photo by Tae Herron.



Getting it Back

(Left) Junior Cy Starr (Gayle) and sophomore Will Senger (Lendall) play a couple who believed they were on different pages when it came to the next step in their relationship, marriage. Gale begins to carry countless garbage bags full of the love he gave her, into his house, stating that she is returning it to him and asks for the love she gave Lendall back. Lendall returns with a small box, appalling Gayle, until he reveals a ring inside of the box. Photo by Tae Herron.

Her Heart
(Right) Sophomore Devin Carpenter (East) and junior Katlyn Guevara (Glory) meet outside of East's house, as Glory is camping out in his yard in order to see the neon lights. Glory's husband has just died, and she believes she will see him in the neon lights. East grabs a paper bag she was carrying, as Glory begins to hyperventilate, revealing that her heart is inside the bag. She tells East the story of her and her husband's love, as East suddenly blurts out that he loves her. Glory backs away as she doesn't want to fall in love with anybody, and breaks her new heart, eventually caving into the love story. Photo courtesy of Citrus Maddux.



The Bench Scenes

(Left) Sophomores Zea Davis (Pete) and Dulaney Luhrs (Ginnette) sit together on a bench, discussing their complex love for each other. The story spreads out between the prologue, interlude, and epilogue. Despite their apparent fear of love, in the end they embrace each other's warmth on the wooden bench, as the story comes to an end. Photo courtesy of Citrus Maddux.

Seeing the Thing
(Right) Senior Maxwell Mcknight (Dave) gifts his friend, sophomore Ryenn Bostian (Rhonda), a handmade painting after an exciting ski trip. The painting holds a hidden message that Rhonda struggles to interpret, leading Dave to blurt out his frustration as to why Rhonda never invites him to her house. He offers to teach Rhonda how to "paint" after stripping off his outer layer of clothes, revealing a white painter's jumpsuit. Rhonda excitedly takes his offer, finally inviting him inside. Photo courtesy of Jada Venson.



DOWNTOWN LEESBURG EVENTS	DC/MARYLAND CONCERTS	VILLAGE AT LEESBURG MOVIES RELEASES
Leesburg Flower and Garden Festival (April 15)	blink-182 at the Capital One Arena (May 23)	"The Super Mario Bros Movie" (Action, Comedy, Adventure) (April 5)
Keep Leesburg Beautiful Community Service Event (all throughout the month of April)	Paramore at the Capital One Arena (June 2)	"The Little Mermaid" (Fantasy/Musical) (May 26)
Leesburg's Memorial Day Ceremony	Pixies at The Anthem (June 10)	"Barbie" (Family/Comedy) (July 21)
Leesburg Music Festival (July 1)	Dermot Kennedy at The Anthem (June 13)	"The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes" (Action/Adventure) (November 17)
	Morgan Wallen (August 26)	
	Beyonce Renaissance Tour at Fedex Field (August 5)	

UPCOMING ENTERTAINMENT

Artist of the issue: Music captures the heart of musician and performer Collin Diem

Taylor Helfer | Staff Writer

As the lights shine and the confidence beams on the stage of County’s auditorium, you will see freshman star **Collin Diem** improvising for his theater class. Growing up in a “musical household,” Diem has always had an interest in music. Now, he has started using music to manage his day to day life.

Starting in fourth grade, Diem joined the chorus as his mom and sister both sang, while his dad played various instruments. As he got older, he attended many of his older sister’s performances at County and became fascinated.

“I went to go see hers and was just thinking, ‘that’s crazy,’” Diem said. He later added, “It was the most fun she’s ever had and so I thought it would be good for me to try it.”

Starting in fourth grade, Diem joined chorus and started to progress over the years. He began working more on harmonizing, which also translates over to the musical aspect of drama and continues to build his performing confidence.

“The more you advance in choir, you’re going to start doing more harmonies, which is really fun. When people think of two different notes, or even three, or four or five,

it blends together really cool,” Diem said.

In early August of 2022, Collin tried out for the football team and made it his first year of high school. Although he was excited, the struggle with balancing his extra-curriculars got tough.

“The football schedule is annihilating, and on top of that I had at least five pages of material to study,” Diem said. He later explains that he has no real method of studying, but rather simply being confident in himself before activities.

Although Diem explains there is no real method of studying, he uses music to manage other aspects of his day.

“It’s definitely a big part of my life. It’s a source of fun, entertainment, and even background noise when I’m working or doing homework and stuff,” Diem said.

Outside of school, Diem doesn’t do too many projects, but does a few simple things to keep music in his life.

“Sometimes I’ll sit and play guitar in my basement, or I’ll sing in the shower,” Diem said.

Aside from music itself, drama, acting and performing has also been helpful in managing things for Diem.

“It’s given me an outlet. It also

showed me possible career choices for me. I know I want to write movies, I know I want to direct. I just think it’s really cool and something I want to pursue,” Diem said.

Diem has had a lot of practice in a performing role lately as well as getting into film studies. Diem was in the most recent County drama club production of “Almost, Maine” starring as **Steve**, a character who is adventurous but closed off.

“As a freshman, the cast has been so welcoming and they’ve

helped bring me up to speed on the great system they run. It was really great to work with **Lili Robles** who believed in me and gave me a shot for this role,” Diem said.

With the influence of his sister and the experiences Diem has had at County, he is hopeful to be able to continue and pursue a career in drama and music. “I would want to do as much of it as I can. I really just want to be part of the community. I really do love it,” Diem said. •



Freshman Collin Diem (left) and Gabe Cunnington (right) sing and pose during the performance of “Seussical” last year at Simpson Middle School. Diem is a freshman participating in Loudoun County’s productions and performances. Photo courtesy of Collin Diem.

The Eras of Drama 1000BC - Today

Taylor Helfer | Staff Writer

What is drama?

Drama comes from the Greek word meaning “to do” or “to act.”
Nowadays, drama is related to situations with emotions, conflict and storytelling.

Timeline

Greek and Rome

Both Greek and Roman drama consisted of mythology, songs, masks, and culture. The traditional setting included amphitheatres or the Colosseum. These types of drama “set the stage” for future eras of drama.

1000 BC - 146 BC & 753 BC - 476 AD



Victorian Era

1837-1901

The Victorian Era, named during the reign of Queen Victoria of England, was characterized by longer plays, stage lights, and extensive architecture. The theater became a common pastime for many middle class citizens. Social plays became popular in this era.

Elizabethan Era

1558-1603

This era was best known for the work of William Shakespeare who was known for his dramatic and influential works. This era is when romance and dramatic shows became very popular.

Broadway & Today

1910s-Today

Nowadays, our modern-day theater ranges from big productions on Broadway to local shows in our own schools. As architecture, engineering and fashion have progressed, the world of drama has caught on and is presented in every production.



Sources

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