



## FOOTBALL COMPLETES HISTORIC SEASON

*The Captains celebrate earning the Dulles District title after going 10-0 with a final victory against Heritage on November 4. Photo by John Klimavicz.*

**Tae Herron** | Staff Writer

The packed crowd did not waste their eight dollars with this regional championship football game in Leesburg, Virginia, a very close game that came down to the final minute between two undefeated teams, all under 60 degree weather. Not bad for a late fall football game. It was sad to see the Captains' historic season come to an end, but it was exciting seeing them fight to the last minute, when they ended up losing by one.

Leadership was a major part of football and a big reason why they were successful this season.

"We have great leadership from a lot of our seniors this year, and even some of our underclassmen," head football coach **Matthew Reidenbaugh** said. "I thought that was the difference between being a

really good team and being a great team."

The team worked hard every game and proved it by making history, being the first County football team to go 10-0 during the regular season.

"I feel like our team played like champions the whole year. We definitely were probably the best football team County's ever had since the school was opened, and I'm really proud to be a part of that," senior tight end **Joey Fitzpatrick** said.

Physically, the football team was very aggressive, and part of that was from the work they put in over the off-season.

"You know, every week when we stepped on the field I think we physically matched up with everybody, which is a testament to how hard our kids worked in the off-

season in the weight room to make sure they were physically prepared to play," Reidenbaugh said.

With the offense lineman averaging 252 pounds per player and the defense lineman averaging 223, it made both sides of the ball tough.

"We're the most physical football team that we've been since I've been here. We had a great offensive line and defensive line," Reidenbaugh said. "We're able to control the games every week through those guys and that's the recipe if you want to be good and make a deep playoff run."

The team was very close to meeting one of their team's goals, which was winning the region championship.

"And ultimately we said we just wanted the chance to win the region title and state title," Reidenbaugh said. "We had a chance and it didn't

work out, but you know, we were right there at the end, which is all you can ask for."

Being only the second time in school history that the football team won the Dulles District Championship, the team was very proud to be making history.

Senior center **Evan Stanley** describes their success as "a culmination of the work that we had done for years to get to that district title."

The team was proud of their perfect regular season winning the district championship.

"It was a great night to celebrate, you know, as a team, not just for what we did that night, but what we did all season long," Stanley said.

"When you look at the 68 years of Loudoun County football, this was the most successful team," Reidenbaugh said. "It says a lot about what they did." •

## Varsity cheer advances to States for second time in school history

**Alexa Sterner** | Staff Writer

Everything is on the line at the Regional Cheer Competition. With high energy and perfect ponytails, the LCHS Varsity Cheer team jumps and bounds to their starting positions. Their uniforms sparkle under the fluorescent lights, the music starts,

and the girls start their choreographed routine, which took months of hard work to prepare.

Through complicated flips that send them flying through the air, and rhythmic chanting, the team earns a first-place score from the judges, with a full 11 points more than the second-place winner.

That October 26 win brought

the cheer team to states.

Throughout the season, the team placed first at most of the meets and made school history by earning the first district runner up.

"Our team did very well this season. The most impactful moment for me was winning regionals. All of our hard work had paid off and it was the best

being able to celebrate with each other," senior **Emi Parker** said.

On November 5, the team headed down to Richmond to perform. Though their score at states was not enough to win, they had a great season leading up to their final competition

*CHEER, continued on page 13*

## Why rezoning is the worst idea for LCHS

Cat Pizzarello | *Managing Editor*

During the multiple school board meetings that occurred over the past few months, determined and passionate LCPS parents, students, and residents spoke up against the new school rezoning plan in LCPS. Despite many public remarks, the rezoning plans passed on December 13, 2022 and will be moving a select few communities (CL06, CL32, CL32.1, CL32.2) out of Loudoun County High School.

Loudoun County High School was established in 1954 for a much smaller community. With recent housing developments and population increases, the physical school building can no longer hold the large number of students filtering in from new communities, but that does not justify rezoning such a small number of students. With the recent grand jury issues regarding the sexual assault cases, abrupt switch in superintendents, transgender policy conflicts, and countless other significant changes in our school system, often putting us on the national news radar, now is hardly the time to be moving forward with a new rezoning plan even if its only a small amount of students being rezoned.

Along with the many problems LCPS has faced in the past few years, students and staff have also returned from the COVID-19 pandemic years where students' mental health plummeted into scary extremes. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention expressed in a 2019 study that

“the proportion of mental health-related visits for children aged 5-11 and 12-17 years increased approximately 24% and 31%, respectively,” since 2018 and has continued to stay high.

After such an isolated two years away from our schools, it's no surprise that students everywhere are experiencing challenges with their mental health, and rezoning will only increase the stress on the affected. As young and social beings, these students have created strong and meaningful relationships and bonded with their fellow students as well as teachers, coaches and staff. To completely remove them from the community they have spent so long building will negatively impact students even more than they have already been affected.

If that isn't enough, in studies by the American Academy of Pediatrics, it was concluded that “rates of childhood mental health concerns and suicide rose steadily between 2010 and 2020 and by 2018 was the second leading cause of death for young ages 10-24.” COVID-19 greatly affected and still affects students' mental health and thoughts of suicide. Forcing students to move to a new school so soon afterwards will only have negative consequences.

In the decision made by the board about rezoning plans, rates of negative mental health in students were not accounted for, regardless of how much evidence there is showing the decline in students' well-being.

Worsening of mental health in students also causes a decrease in

motivation which leads to a decline in academic performance. In an article written by **Joseph Gasper**, Gasper restates from a study, Rumberger & Larson, that “the majority of high school dropouts switched schools at least once, while the majority of high school graduates did not.”

For students with learning challenges, ELL students and other students who require different accommodations that have already been established at their prior schools (and fought for by parents/guardians to help them succeed) switching schools can affect their much needed resources and relationships with teachers.

If the decrease in student well-being and lack of good performance in schools isn't enough to show why rezoning is a horrible idea, the small switch of a total of 191 high school students and 126 middle schools is hardly making a difference in program capacity. By the 2028-2029 school year, Loudoun County High School's capacity will already be back to 99% and rezoning will yet again shift more small communities of students that don't make a dent in fixing the over-capacity issues.

School board members expressed that the rezoning plan was also modified due to the need for change in socio-economics throughout our schools. Although important, the mental health, strong relationships within schools, and education of students is of equal importance when considering the movement of small communities. •

## For the sake of our humanity, stop glorifying serial killers

Olivia DeWan & Liberty Harrison | *Editors-in-Chief*

Did you watch “Monster: the Jeffery Dahmer story?” If you did, you're a terrible person.

The general public has always had a fascination with serial killers. Monsters like **Ted Bundy**, **Harold Shipman**, and **John Wayne Gacy** have been a point of focus of TV shows, movies, podcasts, and more.

According to Dr. **Scott Bonn**, the fascination of serial killers comes because their actions can't be comprehended, but yet we feel compelled to understand them. This makes killers seem mysterious to the public, and many seek to find the answer to the question, “How could someone do this to an innocent person?”

So, the public likes to play detective and dive deep into the minds of murderers and cannibals. It's understandable, to some extent, why one would be interested in such a topic.

However, how far does this obsession go before it becomes toxic?

On September 21, Netflix released “Monster: the Jeffrey Dahmer Story.”

Never mind the fact that his sickening story has already been portrayed in the following films: “The Secret Life: Jeffrey Dahmer” (1993), “Dahmer” (2002), “Raising Jeffrey Dahmer” (2006), “The Jeffrey Dahmer Files” (2012), “My Friend Dahmer” (2017), “Dahmer on Dahmer: A Killer Speaks” (2021), and “Conversations with a Killer: The Jeffrey Dahmer Tapes” (2022).

The directors said that “Monster: the Jeffrey Dahmer Story,” would be different. It would tell the story of Dahmer's victims. It's ironic how the families of the victims had not been notified about the show in advance.

In the article “Jeffrey Dahmer Victim's Cousin Says Netflix's ‘Monster’ Is ‘Retraumatizing’ Family: ‘For What?’” published by People, **Anna Lazarus Ca-**

**plan** details how the film is “retraumatizing” the families of the victims.

“I'm not telling anyone what to watch, I know true crime media is huge rn [right now], but if you're actually curious about the victims, my family (the Isbell's) are pissed about this show,”

**Eric Perry**, a cousin of **Errol Lindsey**, posted on Twitter on September 22. “It's retraumatizing over and over again, and for what? How many movies/shows/documentaries do we need?”

Errol Lindsey was one of Dahmer's seventeen victims that he raped, tortured, killed, and then ate in Wisconsin.

**Rita Isbell**, Lindsey's sister, was bothered by the show, noting in a first-person essay in Insider that seeing herself portrayed on screen made it feel like she was “reliving it all over again. It brought back all the emotions I was feeling back then.”

Perry later tweeted that his family was not notified about

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the project, writing, “My family found out when everyone else did.” Isbell confirmed that Netflix “didn’t ask me anything. They just did it.”

So of course the new film is paying the utmost respect to the victims by not notifying their family members or even asking to use their stories.

We’ll say it again: It’s disgusting.

But that’s not where this ends.

Social media has a huge role in romanticizing and glorifying killers such as Dahmer, a movement most recently led by Tik Tok in addition to TV shows.

For example, @sadisticallysam, with 366.1K followers, cosplayed as Dahmer and posted a video of creating a makeup look to go for “I’ll eat your heart out vibes.”

Next, @the\_manii with 19.6M followers posted a video reacting to a scene from “Monster: the Jeffrey Dahmer Story,” which featured a shirtless Dahmer with **Taylor Swift’s** song “Wildest Dreams” in an attempt to sexualize the character of Dahmer in order to evoke reciprocal feelings.

On one of @strawberyglaxies posts, @the\_mannii commented “How am I supposed to hate Jeffery Dahmer if Evan Peters is making him so attractive.”

@makingatruecrimerer responded to a comment on one of his posts that said “HE [Dahmer] WAS NOT TARGETING ANYONE!! I’m tired of this debate!! The people he killed were people he cared for and liked.”

Tik Tok is also full of memes about Dahmer.

@itz\_chunky with 118.0K followers made a post showing Dahmer’s mugshot, saying how they “Didn’t realize Dahmer was 6 foot,” and then followed up with an edited picture of Dahmer playing basketball with the words “bro was catching the wrong bodies.”

Can some of the memes be jokes? Of course. In fact, there are several used to patronize Dahmer. We also noted a huge group of people who call out those who post videos and edits romanticizing and glorifying killers.

However, the role of social media was the original cause of the problem, and the startling number of followers and views shows just how many people are watching these videos.

The “Centre For Crime and Justice Studies,” a United Kingdom publication, studied the cultural and historical context of serial killing. “The Social Study of Serial Killers” states serial killing is statistically rare, but regardless is a “cultural phenomena” that is best understood as a media event.

This also means that many citizens are familiar with the dynam-

ics of serial killing and the lives of the offenders.

It’s usually easier to get information about the killer than the victims, and as a result, depending on what information is released, this can lead people to sympathize with that killer.

Maybe they had a tragic past of abuse. Maybe they had a mental illness that caused them to act the way they did. Or maybe they were just simply despicable people.

Regardless, the public will start to make connections based on the information presented. The common media focus of any murder is the killer and not the victims. The victims are seen as just a part of the terrible story, and it might be difficult for some to believe that they were real people with real lives.

The media does not do its given job of highlighting the lives of the victims. It’s the killer whose story is told, and that is why killers are not immune to the appeal of fame.

“The majority [of serial killers] seemed to enjoy their celebrity status and thrive on the attention they received,” “The Social Study of Serial Killers” also wrote. “Hence the complaint of a serial killer to local police is telling: ‘How many times do I have to kill before I get a name in the paper or some national attention?’ (Braudy, 1986).”

Some killers crave the attention that their horrific acts will attract, and let’s be honest, the media gives them exactly what they want. They’re basically saying “Hey! If you go out and kill a bunch of people you can get your own TV show, and countless documentaries!”

That’s another reason why the role of the media is so dangerous, and we’d like to highlight the fact that this is not just an issue with the Dahmer case.

Ted Bundy raped, kidnaped, and murdered young women and girls through 1974-1978. He confessed to 30 murders.

Like Dahmer, Bundy was considered to be extremely attractive. During Bundy’s trial, a group of fans supported Bundy and advocated for his ‘innocence,’ also known as The Bundyphilles.

According to an article on ABC Net News, many “couldn’t picture him carrying out such brutal crimes” as a result of his “handsome” looks. A force that was driven by the media.

**Richard Ramirez**, another infamous serial killer experienced this same phenomenon, with “fan” **Cynthia Haden** defending him to the media as a “caring guy” and **Doreen Liroy** going so far as to legally marry the serial killer-rapist.

A more contemporary example

of these twisted infatuations is with that of the Columbine shooters, which have held a steady fan base for years since their act of mass violence.

Why are these morally defunct people so attractive to a minority of the public? Many sociologists have speculated these fans have hybristophilia, a sexual interest in and attraction to those that commit crimes.

The cause of this philia is not fully understood, but theories include a want to nurture the criminal to a rehabilitated, functioning member of society, and the opportunity to have a relationship without actual interactions, due to the criminal generally being imprisoned or dead at the time of the attraction.

Not everyone who participated in this most recent romanticization, nor the general obsession has this specific paraphilia; however, many of the forums, created by these criminals’ most dedicated fans, are used by the more casual sycophants.

Whether purposeful or not, media created on these events can play into the public’s attraction to these figures through their portrayal’s romanticization. At times the media does reproach these responses to killers (although in our opinion somewhat half-heartedly, since they already benefited from the hype created by the attractive actors and glamorized plots).

When the film “Extremely Wicked, Shockingly Evil and Vile” was released starring **Zac Efron** as Bundy, Netflix issued a statement saying, “I’ve seen a lot of talk about Ted Bundy’s alleged hotness and would like to gently remind everyone that there are literally THOUSANDS of hot men on the service—almost all of whom are not convicted serial murderers.”

We would also like to point out that it’s fine to admire actors like Efron and **Evan Peters** for their performances in portraying these killers, but it’s not acceptable to admire the killer themselves.

That, however, is where the lines blur when it comes to the media. The term “pretty privilege” referring to the socio-cultural effect of attractiveness evoking sympathy and kindness, separate from the moral crimes of the subject, can be applied both to the on screen portrayal of these serial killers, and serial killers in real life.

While a general societal criticism can be levied against those participating in the exercise of pretty privilege, a critical lens should also be applied to the casting of attractive actors in the roles as serial killers, the effect of attractiveness a well known tool in Hollywood and media in general.

It is clear the public can’t separate the killer from the actor, as seen in the comment from @the\_mannii. This can become detrimental for several reasons.

This adoration of the killers, encouraged by media portrayal is clearly horrifying to the loved ones of victims, and victims that survived. Can you imagine the man who took away your child being praised everywhere you turn?

This admiration also encourages the normalization of serial killings in the societal consciousness, encouraging less horror, and more immediate expressions of sympathy and kindness given to a serial killer, especially one that fits societal beauty standards.

Potential serial killers, or criminals in general, observing the response to these crimes’ portrayal also potentially encourages them to take action, with the reassurance they will not go down in history as hated monsters but sympathetically beautiful anti-heros, something they are most definitely not.

Why are we glorifying them when we should be condemning them? Why are killers’ names the ones that are known, and not those of the victims?

Why do we forget the innocent? The young? The helpless? The manipulated and tricked?

Can you name any of Bundy’s victims? How about Dahmer’s?

Well, allow me to inform you, if you’re not already aware, that Dahmer’s youngest victim was fourteen years old and Bundy’s was twelve.

Do you know the names of those children?

Granted, some people are not crime fanatics and chose not to educate themselves on such matters. But if you find yourself watching documentaries about serial killers or one of the many, many films, remember that they were real people.

Remember that they were predators and not pieces of fiction.

Remember that the media will change your perception of those monsters.

Thus stems our call to action: don’t be oblivious to the image the media paints for you, and don’t play into it.

Don’t be fooled into thinking a serial killer “wasn’t that bad” because they are attractive or had a rough childhood. Nothing they went through can excuse their actions.

Decide for yourself if you want to allow the media more power in bringing unnecessary attention to serial killers, or if we should choose to remember the victims and honor the lives they could’ve had. •



Scan the code to read more opinions online.

# Why talk behind my back, say it to my face: The psychology of gossip

*Liberty Harrison | Co-Editor-In-Chief*

Who is the prototype for someone who gossips in your mind? Is it a middle schooler, a judgemental elder, a stereotypical “mean girl”?

The majority of people may need to picture themselves. A meta analysis of data published in the journal of Social Psychological and Personality Science found that out of the 467 participants, only 34 engaged in no gossip.

From celebrity magazines posting the hottest news on relationships to “tea”- centered social media accounts, the human penchant for gossip is pervasive throughout society.

So why is it seen as such a negative trait? According to the scientific study “Who Gossips and How in Everyday Life?”, “laypeople often view gossipers as immoral, uneducated, typically female, and of lower social class.”

The negative traits associated with gossip are likely due to the less common, but more observably impactful “malicious gossip.” This gossip is used by an individual to further their own gains, either by turning others against a specific person or group unfairly or to express

anger, jealousy, or resentment towards the person being talked about.

This form of gossip is often more desirable than direct confrontation by those who do not want to face the consequences of outright aggression towards others, particularly if they find the other has a higher social standing than themselves.

The personality type to participate in this kind of gossip is generally someone with low self-esteem, who in some way feels separated from the group they would like to be part of. Targets of malicious gossip tend to be those that the gossiper envies in some way. This is why one of the most common age groups for malicious gossip is teenagers.

In the adolescent years, while children transition to adults, finding their place in the world as they mature, the disruptive nature of this transition leads to lower self-esteem in teenagers, which can result in them lashing out, malicious gossip being one of the many ways this manifests.

Although it is important to acknowledge the struggles most malicious gossipers have, many studies have shown a correlation between being gossiped about maliciously, or having negative rumors spread, and increased de-

pression, anxiety, and generalized mental health issues. There is a reason why malicious gossip puts all gossip in a bad light.

While, at least to me, petty gossip comes across as pathetic, exposing one’s vulnerabilities so openly by putting others down, gossip can also cause serious damage, and those who engage in malicious gossip should seriously consider the effects of their actions on others, and the reputation they are creating for themselves.

But there is much more to gossip than “malicious” gossip. In fact, two other types, prosocial and epistemic, are far more common.

In fact, most gossip studied in the previous meta-analysis was deemed as neutral in nature. Rather than attempts to insult or demean, this gossip was used merely to relate information that was thought to be useful in some way to the listener. Professor of Sociology **Robb Willer** reported for NBC news that, in fact, studies have shown a correlation between people who exhibit higher levels of morality and generosity and people who pass on rumors they think could help other people. This is called “prosocial gossip.”

“Epistemic gossip,” or gossip

that has the motive to understand a social environment, is the other most common kind of gossip. In this case rather than positive, the motive is mainly neutral, although it could be argued a better understanding of the society one is part of would allow them to better navigate it when helping others, as well as themselves.

Both of these kinds of gossip have also been shown to improve social connectedness and strengthen relationships, suggesting a deep connection between gossip and humanity.

With this context in mind, the next time you want to share a secret with a friend, or join a conversation about a peer, consider what category your gossip falls into. Is it helpful to others, a drive springing from the human spark of empathy, or are you doing it for your own gain?

With so much going on in our modern day and each person facing their own unique challenges is it really worth short term gratification of spreading negativity out of purely selfish reasons? If you are a decent person, you’ll prevent yourself from speaking about others if you realize your motives are malicious, and maybe we can stop giving gossip a bad name. •

## Study hall woes: Students assigned to auditorium struggle to complete work in restricted space

*Sahar Siddiq | Staff Writer*

Our study halls are there for us to be able to complete homework or do late work, though it’s difficult to do so when you have a study hall in the auditorium. There are not any proper tables, some seats have little ones, but you can’t even fit your whole Chromebook on them, you have to have everything either on your lap or the floor, and the seating is also very uncomfortable.

Not only is the auditorium difficult to work in due to these reasons, but also because of how loud it can get, since there are three to four classes in the area at a time.

Senior **Evan Sutton** complains about “Having to balance all my books and classwork on the small tables. The floor is also very messy with random assortments of food.” If you have class in the auditorium, you aren’t

allowed to sit anywhere else in the school, even the library. Why aren’t we allowed to use the library? That’s the question I want to explore—and propose solutions.

According to the librarians, our main two problems with the library are student behavior and spacing issues. In previous years, many students come to the library to skip class or to meet up with friends to goof around. Though there was a minority of students causing problems, according to the librarians, a couple incidents happened, like students either staying there the whole block or going to the bathroom and not coming back, and kids would also do things such as jumping on tables and not respecting property.

This issue is easily solved, though. Those students who repeatedly abuse privileges should lose them and not be able

to come to the library as freely. With the behavior problems, the only solution is to create stricter rules. This could just be that if you’re being too loud after being told to quiet down, that you are sent back to your study hall. There should also be a limit. For example, there can be a limited number of passes made to the library at a time, or students could make appointments to come and work there.

Our other issue is the spacing problem. This applies to both students and teachers. Teachers use the library during their planning blocks, for meetings, and sometimes for lessons. The reason they do this is because there isn’t enough space anywhere else, but this can also take away the ability for students to come into the library. The spacing issue is probably the most difficult problem to solve since our school is overcrowded, but

there is one possible solution.

Adding a second story to the library would help this problem. It would create more space for students and teachers to be able to do work and have meetings. This would also solve library acoustics, which is something that the librarians said was a problem. Instead of the whole library closing when there are events, they could only close one floor and allow students and teachers to use the other. It would also allow for us to add more to our library. We could add a meeting room and private study rooms that both students and teachers could use when they need to focus. For some students this would be very useful since it’s difficult for them to work when other people are around them and it’s loud.

Junior **Charlotte Marland** asks, “Why do we have a library if we cannot utilize it?” •

# School board fires superintendent

*Liberty Harrison | Co-Editor-in-Chief*

On December 6, in a striking turn of events after months of relative silence, following the release of a special grand jury investigation into Loudoun County Public Schools, former superintendent **Scott Ziegler** was fired without cause.

Ziegler's firing, coming after two and one half hours of closed school board deliberation, was decided in the face of calls for his removal from the public, following the release of the special grand jury report.

A week after the release, on December 12, further documents were unsealed, releasing to the public that the special grand jury indicted Ziegler with one count of misdemeanor prohibited conduct, one count of misdemeanor penalizing an employee for a court appearance, one count of misdemeanor prohibited conduct, one count of misdemeanor false publication, and one count of misdemeanor penalizing an employee for court appearance.

The report, consisting of 92 pages, delivered eight official recommendations, most focused on increased communication and transparency, as well as a re-evaluation of LCPS procedures for dealing with juvenile delinquents, and general student discipline.

Copious email communica-

tions from those involved with the situation were published, detailing the handling of the incident.

Highlights include an admission by Ziegler that the incident at SBHS was related to policy 8040, although importantly the policy was not implemented at the time, and details surrounding the gender of the defendant are not fully known.

The emails mentioning 8040 directly contradict Ziegler's statements that he answered no to instances of sexual assault occurring, due to as he stated, "viewing the question in light of the general questions and debate the Board was participating in around policy 8040."

Many communications involving warnings from teachers and relatives of the student, about the student who committed the sexual assaults, were also exposed, further highlighting the negligence of the school board and school system in dealing with a dangerous student, in context of the rest of the report.

The grand jury report did not find an organized cover-up by the school board, as some have speculated, rather a continuous failure in communication and systems to deal with these incidents.

Messages of the students involved in the incidents were sent on Discord, a messaging application not monitored by

LCPS and downloaded without school oversight. The messages, including copious expletives and internet slang such as "hewwo," was also included in the report, resulting in the recommendation by the grand jury to "tighten policies regarding the types of apps available to students to download on their school-issued devices."

Many, including the families of the victims involved, have celebrated Ziegler's firing after the report's startling revelations, but have also called for the consideration of similar action for the other school board members who served during the two sexual assaults, due to their support of Ziegler.

"The firing of Ziegler was way overdue and we hope this is the first of many firings of all those who failed these young women who now have to deal with what happened to them for the rest of their lives," **Jessica Smith**, mother of the first victim, said to Loudoun Now.

"I was really surprised when I saw it was a unanimous vote," **Andrew Hoyler**, former school board member, said to 7News. "I had made it clear I was ready for change months ago, but we never got close to having even a simple majority—five—who we felt would be open to making change."

Dr. **Daniel Smith**, the then-current chief of staff, was an-

nounced to be the interim superintendent.

Ziegler put out a statement through his lawyer on December 13 expressing his disagreement with the consequences he was dealt:

"I am disappointed that an Attorney General-controlled, secret, and one-sided process—which never once sought my testimony—has made such false and irresponsible accusations. It appears clear to me that this process was and is aimed at advancing a certain political agenda. For example, they tout some relationship between the school bathroom policy for transgender students and the May 28, 2021 sexual assault at Stone Bridge High School."

As he has done multiple times, Ziegler once again utilized the issue of trans-students in his defense of mishandling two sexual assaults, further playing into the politicization and weaponization of this case against transgender people, rather than focusing on himself and the responsibility he may or may not face for his actions.

Although losing his job, and being publicly disgraced due to being fired without cause, Ziegler's contract dictates he will be paid his \$323,000 annual salary, due to his \$28,000 dollar raise from July, and keep his health insurance and retirement benefits. •

# School board announces change in attendance zones for next year

*Evelyn Kuzminski | Layout Editor*

After a few months of hearings and briefings, on December 13, 2022, the Loudoun County school board adopted a rezoned attendance plan for the 2023-24 school year.

The plan rezones several neighborhoods in Leesburg to different middle and high schools than they currently attend. Several of these neighborhoods are home to students that currently attend Loudoun County High School.

Students living in the Oaklawn and East Stratford communities currently attend LCHS,

but have been rezoned to attend Heritage High School. Students living in the Colts Run, Ketockin Farm Estates, Roxbury Heights, Shenstone, Church & Market, Crescent Place, and King Street Station communities also currently attend LCHS, but have been rezoned to attend Tuscarora High School.

Changes will take place in the fall at the start of the 2023-24 academic year. However, the school board's policy 8160 provides for several exemptions to changes in attendance zone assignments. Most notably, rising seniors (current juniors) will remain at their current school,

even if their neighborhood has been rezoned. This is in line with the LCPS policy of not enrolling a senior class in the first year of opening any new high school. Rising seniors stay at their current school through graduation.

Furthermore, any siblings of rising seniors may also stay at their current school through graduation. However, this applies to siblings already attending high school with their older sibling; rising freshmen (currently in middle school) with rising senior siblings will need to apply for special permission to stay at their current school.

In certain other cases, students may be granted special permission from the school board to stay at their current school for reasons such as educational continuity.

Additional information about the zone changes has been and will continue to be made available on the LCPS website, in principal **Michelle Luttrell's** weekly emails, and in the LCHS counseling department's monthly newsletter. Students can view the zoning map and if unsure of their zoning assignment, can use the resources on the LCPS website to enter their home address and find out. •

# Teachers catch a break with Adopt-a-Teacher



*New art supplies were given to Kyla Jenkins and Stephanie Woshner from the Adopt-a-Teacher program. Photo by Hannah Winegar.*

**Hannah Winegar | Staff Writer**

The last three years have been hard on everyone due to the pandemic. Teachers were heavily impacted by the pandemic, and a Tik Tok trend called Devious Licks made it hard on them to get classroom supplies. The Devious Licks trend encouraged students to steal things from teachers and their classrooms.

Even without those circumstances, teachers are in constant need of supplies for their classes and classrooms. One new way to help teachers is a Facebook page that started from The Real Ladies of Loudoun. This program is called Adopt-a-Teacher, and it gives people the opportunity to help teachers by donating needed and wanted supplies on their wishlist, which has boosted morale for many.

“When I posted my list, I got most of what I really wanted.” English teacher **Paige Illig** said. “I asked for staplers because last year when there was that TikTok

trend, Devious Licks, my stapler got stolen.”

The Adopt-a-Teacher program has helped teachers save money for other things they’d like to buy for their classrooms instead of having to spend it all on essentials like pencils, paper, notebooks, and more.

Teachers have already received supplies from the program, such as paper and pencils, cereal bars, notebooks, colored pencils, expo markers and much more. A lot of supplies for the art room were donated as well.

“Amazing paint markers, clay texturizers, tons of drawing pen sets, canvases and containers to hold art supplies,” art teacher **Kyla Jenkins** said. “Our fine arts parents are so generous!”

Before the Adopt-a-Teacher program was created, teachers had to buy a lot of their own supplies that weren’t already provided by the school. Some had come to accept having to buy their own supplies, but for some districts it can be a hardship.

When it comes to the school not providing certain supplies for teachers, English teacher **Shawn Simms** explained that she thinks everything has a budget and the people that make decisions about spending aren’t classroom teachers.

“I think it’s people who have an overview of what the budget needs are,” Simms said. “There has to be a limit to some things and those things become teacher supplies.”

“Teachers don’t make much as is, and the underfunding that some areas experience breaks my heart,” Jenkins said. “Education is truly the most valuable thing we should be investing in.”

Simms believes the school could be spending money on supplies and equipment that would directly benefit students or teachers.

“Some of the supplies that appear at the school don’t directly benefit students in the classroom. I see a lot of materials for athletics or technology, and

new desks in the science wing. I didn’t have a teacher’s desk this year, so I had to scrounge up to find a teacher’s desk,” Simms said. “I had to buy my own chair. So how do I feel about it? Mostly accepting but sometimes disappointed.”

For the teachers who didn’t participate in the Adopt-a-Teacher program, they are still given money from the Teacher Classroom Supplies Allotment funded by the school to buy supplies for their classrooms. Returning teachers receive \$100 and new teachers receive \$250.

This allotment was started last year due to COVID-19 and to give appreciation to the returning and new teachers.

“We just really want to emphasize and say we’re so happy that you came back, we’re so happy that you’re joining our team,” financial technician **Darla Palombia** said of the program. “We really appreciate you sticking with us getting through everything.” •

# Could a new “mystery illness” affecting VA schools affect LCHS students?



LCHS nurse Shannon Nerantzis reviews student health documents. Photo by Brianna Martinez.

**Brianna Martinez | Staff Writer**

There has been an increase in students across the state missing school because of what health officials are calling a “flu-like illness.” Even more local schools are being afflicted with this influx of illness, causing many students to call out of or leave school early, unable to return for days.

According to our County nurse, **Shannon Nerantzis**, our school has not been affected by this epidemic, but that has not discredited the number of students being affected by Flu A and feverish symptoms. “There’s definitely been several dozen reported cases of flu this year, but I wouldn’t say that it has all been at once,” Nerantzis said.

Although this has been the case for some students this past school year there hasn’t been a mass amount of flu-like illnesses. “It has been quite varied of

students with or without fevers, students with stomach issues, stomach [issues] with just congestion or sinus issues, so there hasn’t been a consistent pattern as far as that goes,” Nerantzis said.

Since the development of many variant illnesses such as Flu A and B, COVID-19 variants Delta and Omicron, and an increased number of RSV cases among young children, there have been an increased number of fever-like symptoms, especially during the colder months in Virginia starting in September all through March.

“During COVID, there was very little of the RSV going around and they [health experts] were saying how there was a huge influx but it’s not as much our immune system; more that things have changed and mutated at this time, so everyone is being exposed to more mutated viruses,” Nerantzis said.

Though this is true for the

years COVID-19 affected the world, there has been a major increase in the amount of people diagnosed with RSV since 2021. As reported on October 10, 2021 there were about 400 emergent cases of RSV reported in Virginia and this number was increasing steadily throughout the end of 2021 to 2022. Though, on October 9, that number had increased to over 900 cases making an approximate 125% increase in RSV cases across Virginia.

Concerning our student population, Nerantzis has had to send many students home early in the school day due to those feverish symptoms such as congestion, high temperature, stomach problems, or just feeling poorly in general.

Since we are a high school with teenagers rather than young children, Nerantzis has said we can be affected by those types of illnesses but not on a monumental scale. “Our student popula-

tion isn’t as likely to be hospitalized with something like RSV or anything like that, but they can definitely be sick from it,” Nerantzis said.

According to the CDC’s RSV research and surveillance, about 58,000 to 80,000 children under the age of five are hospitalized due to RSV each year while only about 9,000 18-49 year olds are hospitalized due to RSV each year.

Once students are sent home with these reported symptoms, such as congestion, fever, cough, stomachache, they are to be provided with an at-home COVID-19 test upon request, according to the 2022-2023 Loudoun County Public Schools COVID-19 mitigation plan.

County has not had a severe outbreak of these symptoms, but other schools in Virginia have. On October 21, 2022, it was reported that Stafford County High School in Stafford had a total of 1,000 students, about 48% of their student population, call out of school because of the same flu-like or gastrointestinal symptoms causing illness.

This past school year, though the causes are not related, there have been an increasing number of students either being called out of school or being sent home early because of flu-like symptoms.

According to a recent report done by the LCHS attendance secretary **Felisa Jalloh**, each day at LCHS there are approximately 35-50 students absent from school because of flu-like illnesses. “It’s been increased since I would say September, and it’s slowly progressing but it’s the same number as every day,” said Jalloh regarding the number of student absences in recent months.

There is a noticeable increase in students being sent home throughout the school day because of symptoms of illness, though not any one specific illness. “It’s no less than five [students]; it can be up to ten sometimes a day lately,” said Jalloh.

Though there is not one concrete answer to what could be causing these strings of illnesses that affect students’ attendance in school all over the state, we know it could spread and it can spread fast. In Jalloh’s words “It’s everywhere basically.” •

# “It Takes a Village”: Retired science teacher Felicity Francis leaves her mark on the school



*Principal Michelle Luttrell assists now-retired science teacher Felicity Francis as she adds her handprint to the new “It Takes a Village” handprint wall. Francis became the first person to have the opportunity to add their handprint to the influential wall as of June 2022. Photo permission by Michelle Luttrell.*

**Liberty Harrison** | Editor-in-Chief &  
**Alexis Shugars** | Staff Writer

The iconic senior handprints that line the walls throughout our historic school have become a tradition that each class looks forward to as they get closer to graduation. Now, teachers also have the chance to leave their mark on our school as they retire and move on to a new chapter in their lives.

This brand new addition to our existing tradition, entitled “It Takes a Village,” was formulated last year by principal **Michelle Luttrell**. She said that after discussing the idea with the family of a 2022 graduate the idea came to mind, and she pitched it to staff members, which evidently gained major support.

Student activities coordinator **Matthew Prince** summarizes the overall intended impact of the developing handprint wall as a time capsule-esque feature to our school. “The purpose of the wall is just to remind us that there were educators before us that came here that helped to create the culture that exists in the school,” Prince said. “A positive one,” he added.

“It Takes a Village” was first initiated with a handprint contributed from retired Environmental Science teacher **Felicity Francis**. Luttrell had confronted Francis with this opportunity, which she was beyond excited about. “Being the first was a humbling experience,” Francis wrote. She broadcasted her support for her past colleagues, stating that she wishes they would’ve had this opportunity.

“It Takes a Village” is located on a wall within the library, which Francis finds to be monumental due to the help from our librarians. “Our librarians have been instrumental in helping my students with developing and researching their projects, and with my AP Environmental Science students writing their children’s books on ‘Climate Change,’” Francis wrote.

While Francis was shocked to become the first handprint on the retired teacher wall, this came as no surprise to past and present members of our school community. Francis has been a key component to the development of our school’s Science department for the past 38 years. Becoming an educator after

her prior environmental consulting firm folded, she began to work in the field of substitute teaching. A year later, the administration at the school where she worked encouraged Francis to explore a career as a science teacher.

She first arrived at LCHS with a proposal to add an Earth Science program to the curriculum. “I was on the committee that wrote the course outline for the Environmental Science class (Environmental Explorations),” Francis wrote. Up until her retirement as of last year, she had taught the Earth Science class throughout all of her time spent at the school as well as AP Environmental Science when it was added as a course in 2015.

Although Francis is a beloved Science teacher with both her undergraduate and graduate degrees in the subject of Environmental Sciences, she was also active as a coach for the cross country team and the girls’ track team. “I coached track for five years, cross-country for 10 years, and was a classroom science teacher for 38 years, all at LCHS!” she wrote.

Francis advises future teach-

ers to “Be passionate about what you do, what you teach, and at all times be sure to communicate to students that they are why you are here,” she wrote. “Bring compassion, energy and enthusiasm to the classroom.”

Of course during her extensive time spent at LCHS, she has accumulated many unforgettable memories and experiences such as the amazing atmosphere of the school, winning sports and science competitions, and countless more.

“What I will always remember, and what kept me in the profession for 38 years, was how I always felt when I saw “the light-bulb” come on in students’ eyes,” she wrote. “When they finally grasped a complex concept, understood a difficult topic, or found success in my class.”

To Francis, being a teacher is far more than a job to pay the bills. She truly enjoys having been an educator to future generations. Francis writes, “Students’ mastery and success, building their confidences and belief in their abilities was always the goal. You cannot put a price on that.” •



# Terri Azie: Aiding students, saving puppies, and fulfilling her love for music



Terrie Azie sings and plays her keyboard at Dragon Hops Brewing hosting an event in 2019. This was one of her many solo projects throughout her music career. Photo courtesy of @TerriSings on Facebook.

Brianna Martinez | Staff Writer

Terri Azie has much to bring to the table regarding her abilities. Even though she is currently a teaching assistant for special education students, she is also a musician, playing the piano, keyboard, trumpet, and guitar.

She sings in her spare time at events and venues as a solo act and even fills in for other acts. “People will hire me to fill in if

their singer can’t make it for this or that gig,” Azie said.

With a minor in music at Virginia Tech, she knew she wanted to do something musically with her life even as a child being a part of various music programs. Azie studied and played music but never considered being a teacher in music. “I guess I knew it would always be a part of my life but I never wanted to teach music or anything like that,” she said.

Though she doesn’t teach music in school, she did vocal and speech coaching as well as audition prep for students auditioning for school musicals, though she lost the ability to teach inside her home during the worldwide COVID-19 outbreak.

Shifting her focus, Azie has spent the past four years fostering dogs in partnership with Healing Hearts Animal Rescue Group. Over those four years,

she has fostered over 30 dogs in her home along with her own two dogs.

Coming about this responsibility was a hard process, though. Her first dog, who she called her “soul dog,” passed before she started her time fostering, and that was the catalyst for the start of her fostering. She turned her grief into something incredibly productive and shortly after saved two dogs from a kill shelter. “I saw online that these two little dogs needed to be adopted or fostered,” Azie said. “I couldn’t save Chico [her first dog] but I’m gonna go save these two little dogs”.

Wanting to do “something more constructive” with her time, Azie turned to become a bus attendant for schools across the county, specializing in students of all ages with disabilities. After about eight months of doing work on school transportation, she applied to work at County to become a teaching assistant for students with disabilities. “I really loved that population of students and I wanted to do more with them than just be on the bus,” Azie said.

After all of the experiences Azie has had in her life whether it comes to fostering dogs or helping teach children, she finds that the tough trials you might find along your way can be the most rewarding experiences. “I think it takes a lot of patience and empathy and understanding,” Azie said regarding her current field of work. “It is challenging but it’s so rewarding.” •

## First snow day a snowless one

William Kluttz | Staff Writer

Early in the morning of Thursday, December 15, Loudoun County Public Schools announced its first snow day. This was a change from the night before, when LCPS said there would be a two-hour delay.

Temperatures in Leesburg stayed between 33 and 40 degrees, which meant no snow, and while some areas to the west were icy, it rained most of the day in Leesburg.

The snow day occurred two days before winter break.

Most students were happy for

a day off. “I loved it,” sophomore **Blake Brobst** said. “...It was all rain. No ice, just rain. I’m very glad I got the day off.”

Freshman **John Ayoub** agreed. “It was fun. I woke up at twelve. I didn’t even look outside. Today was hard to focus, but I didn’t have much work in my classes.”

Even teachers, like science teacher **Terri Moulds**, were glad for the break. “It was good because I was sick and I needed a break,” Moulds said. “The news kept saying there was snow, but I didn’t see snow, it was just all rain.”

Others agreed that perhaps

the weather did not justify the day off. “I mean, I’m glad it was a snow day, but I don’t think it should have [been],” freshman **Harper Keus** said. “I’m happy it was but I don’t think it should have been. It was literally rain.”

Similarly, freshman **David Allen** said, “I liked it, but it didn’t snow at all, so I don’t know why we got it off, but I still liked it.”

Loudoun County is a large county, and the National Weather Service divides it into east and west sections, so because of this LCPS might have to make a cancellation for weather that would only affect part of the county. •

### What Counties did for the Snow Day

**Loudoun**  
Cancelled

**Clarke**  
Cancelled

**Fairfax**  
Two-hour delay

**Fauquier**  
Cancelled

**Frederick**  
Two-hour delay

**Prince William**  
Cancelled

## Freshman Jane Garvey chosen for field hockey All-District



*Jane Garvey passes the ball during the October 17 game against Heritage, helping County to a 7-1 win. Photo by John Klimavicz.*

**Hannah Winegar | Staff Writer**

Hockey sticks clashing and goals in the net, freshman **Jane Garvey** has made First Team All District this year in field hockey. Playing field hockey since second grade, Garvey

has worked extremely hard to get to this point.

“I’m very happy,” Garvey said. “I’ve played for years and have put a lot of time and effort into field hockey so I’m happy to see it pay off.”

Field hockey Coach **Margaret**

**Darby** said that it is not common for freshmen to be chosen for the All District Team.

“It is a huge honor to be noticed in your district, region, and state by the other coaches,” Darby said.

When Garvey was informed she

made the team, she was confused at first for not knowing what it was. After learning that making All District Team meant recognizing the nation’s top student-athletes for their combined performances on the field, Garvey felt accomplished for herself and her teammates.

“I was incredibly happy for both myself and my other teammates that made it as well,” Garvey said.

Darby describes Garvey as “Extremely hard working, tenacious, a team player, considerate, and passionate.”

Garvey had helped the team this year by having fifteen defensive saves through the regular season district games and two goals in the postseason.

Garvey explains that she feels like her hard work has helped her make the team, but also the help from her teammates and coach is the biggest reason.

“One reason is the amount of time and effort I have put into field hockey,” Garvey said. “But the main reason would be my teammates and coaches. They have helped me improve so much and have been incredibly supportive.”

Garvey is an important member to the team and according to Darby, “Without her defensive skills our team wouldn’t have been as successful,” Darby said. “I think Jane will continue to be an active contributor for the team and will continue to help the team’s defense to succeed for seasons to come.” •

## Athlete of the issue: Luke Roberts

**Alex Sterner | Staff Writer**

He started wrestling ten years ago, when he was eight years old. Currently, senior **Luke Roberts** competes on the varsity wrestling team.

Roberts works out as much as he can, proving that dedication is required for success.

“I typically lift or practice in the morning, then practice at night. I also do a workout after the night practice,” Roberts said.

His routine also includes healthy eating.

“I try to keep a pretty strict diet. I usually eat oatmeal and/or eggs for breakfast and then chicken and rice for lunch and dinner. If I need a snack I’ll have some fruit,” Roberts said.

But for Roberts, it’s not all serious.

“I like to be loose before all of my matches. I make jokes with my coaches and teammates to lighten any stress I have about the match,” Roberts said.

Roberts is recently committed to

the University of Virginia for Division I wrestling, which is the highest division for college sports.

“I’d like to wrestle professionally but really I just want to see how good I can get,” Roberts said.

“Other than wrestling I just like playing video games with my friends and family,” Roberts said.

After the wrestling season is finished in high school, Roberts doesn’t play any other sports but does wrestle out of the high school season with a couple different club teams.

“One of my role models would be my dad. He was in the military for 22 years and he’s where I really learned how to work hard and keep a strong mentality,” Roberts said.

“I hope my coaches and teammates would describe me as light hearted or funny but hard working. Wrestling practice can get hard and dull, so I like to keep things light with music and dancing. Messing around a little bit so everyone can have fun,” Roberts said. •



*Luke Roberts wins king of the rock for the second time on December 21. Roberts’ performance helped the Captains win. Photo courtesy of Matt Murphy.*

# FLASHBACK: TEACHERS IN SPORT

Feature by Cat Pizzarello | Managing Editor • Layout by Evelyn Kuzminski | Layout Editor



## KATHRYN IVES, ENGLISH TEACHER

**Sport:** Equestrian

**Timeline:** Ives originally tried out for field hockey and ended up managing the team for a year before then joining the equestrian team at a private school.

**Favorite Memory:** In her college riding, Ives was complimented on her horse by an Olympic rider at a riding event. "I was just so excited that a horse that I brought along caught the eye of an Olympic rider," Ives said.

**Awards & Achievements:** A successful rider, Ives was given the Eagle Award, given to the rider who gave the most on the team, and the MVP, for the rider who made the most contributions to the team her first year on the team. "That was a big deal for me, because I'd never been, you know, successful in team sports," Ives said.

**Fun Facts:** Ives' first horse was named Cricket and she would often skip German class to get to the barn before school ended. •

## KATE CASSIDY, ATHLETIC DIRECTOR

**Sport:** Track & Field and Basketball

**Nickname:** Kater Tot, given to Cassidy by her friends

**Jersey Number:** "No special story, I just wore whatever jersey my basketball coach gave me," Cassidy said.

**Timeline:** Cassidy played basketball and threw shot and discus in track and field throughout high school and went on with sports for D3 school, Catholic University in DC.

**Favorite Memory:** "It's just the camaraderie and like the goofing around," Cassidy said, about practices while the band and football teams were also practicing and the overall enjoyment of the environment.

**Awards & Achievements:** Cassidy went on to break all her university's throwing records and went to the National Championships for hammer her senior year of college.

**Traditions:** "I had to listen to slow music to like, settle myself down and keep my nerves," Cassidy said. •



## VALERIE RIFE, READING SPECIALIST

**Sport:** Basketball

**Nickname:** Lewi, after her last name, Lewandoski

**Jersey Number:** 45

**Timeline:** "I'm six feet tall and I enjoyed it. I wanted to be in a team sport," Rife said. Rife had been playing basketball since she was in second grade and continued to play into high school all four years.

**Favorite Memory:** At a state basketball game, Rife recalled a particular memory of hoisting the team's coach up and cutting the net down.

**Awards & Achievements:** MVP and attended all state basketball games.

**Traditions:** "The Kingsman had a song, 'Louie, Louie,' so it was one of our warm up songs before the game," Rife said.

**Fun Facts:** "I decided not to play ball, but to study in education," Rife said because of her love for Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

**Words to Athletes:** "It teaches you how important it is to be a part of a team and to give and take and share and have patience," Rife said in response to what she believes is the importance of sports. •

## Senior JP Vanderloo eyes final varsity season

Olivia DeWan | Editor-in-Chief

Multi-sport athlete and senior **JP Vanderloo** cuts through the water with even strokes as he competes for the varsity swim team.

"I started swimming competitively at age five during the summer, and started on club when I was six," Vanderloo said.

He began swimming for County his freshman year and has been a contributing member of the team since.

"My favorite memory from the County team came from states my freshman year, when I was on the 4x50 freestyle relay with three upperclassmen—two seniors and a junior," Vanderloo said. "We swam pretty well in the preliminaries and qualified for the top final, but the two seniors especially wanted to end their high school careers even better. We swam our hearts out in the final, placed higher than we thought, and even broke the school record."

Vanderloo said he was extremely honored to have such an impact on his team and he tries his best to con-

tinue to do so.

"The team environment at County is honestly amazing," Vanderloo said. "We all love to have fun at practice and meets, but are also always there to encourage each other when we're maybe not feeling it. Everyone works hard, and it shows."

Like many athletes, Vanderloo has to balance the work between the pool, the course, and the classroom. His schedule is more packed than most.

"I swim five days a week. My morning starts with my alarm at 4:20. I drive to the pool, where I swim with my club team for two and a half hours," Vanderloo said. Then he drives home for breakfast and a shower before school.

During the fall, Vanderloo runs cross country and swims an additional hour-long practice two days a week.

In the winter, Vanderloo's activities are shifted to the night, where he runs on his own three days a week to stay in shape for cross country, and attends high school swim practice late at night at Ida Lee Rec Center.

"I fit in homework and other

responsibilities sometime between there," Vanderloo said. "One of the hardest things about swimming is its demanding commitment. There have been many times where I have been forced to miss social events or other activities for meets or practice, which can definitely be hard. However it's also taught me how to maximize the time I do have, which can make it even more rewarding."

With a heavy focus on athletics, Vanderloo has high hopes for his senior year of swimming.

"Personally, my goals are to win my events at our District and Regional meets, place at least top three in States in my events, and break the County school record in the 200 IM," Vanderloo said. "However as a team, I would love to repeat our men's Districts win from last year, and hopefully win Regionals as well."

Vanderloo places a lot of worth on the friendships he's made through swimming at County as well.

"One of my favorite things is our tradition of going to IHOP after every meet," Vanderloo said. "It's a great

opportunity to relax and bond with your teammates after a hard-fought meet, and the food always hits the spot. It's been a tradition for long before I was on the team, and I hope it continues to stay long after I'm gone!"

And like all seniors, Vanderloo will have to move on from his team, but he hopes to keep swimming in his life.

"I would love to continue swimming in college, and am actively pursuing it with several schools across NCAA Divisions I, II, and III," Vanderloo said. "My dream is to be able to swim and serve at the Naval Academy and study economics."

Vanderloo will carry all that he's learned from swimming to the next stages of his life.

"Swimming has done several amazing things for me, and what I've put into it has come back tenfold," Vanderloo said. "It's taught me to be determined, to have a strong work-ethic, how to deal with disappointment, and the value of a team around you." •

# On the ice: County's club hockey team hopes to rise to the spotlight



*The Freedom/County team stands with big smiles after a win. Freedom High School partners with County to roster a team large enough to compete in the Northern Virginia School Hockey League. Photo by Ethan Quinn.*

**Olivia DeWan | Editor-in-Chief**

Basketball, volleyball, swim, track and field, football, field hockey, and more are all sports offered at County. Most of them are accompanied by the Captains Crew, but one team, although not varsity, is left out: the ice hockey team.

“I joined the County team my freshman year when we were still paired with John Champe instead of Freedom, who we are now partnered with,” senior **Jack Kline** said. “I joined it just to have a good time playing the game I love with a different group of people contrary to my travel team.”

In the Northern Virginia School Hockey League (NVSHL), high schools partner up to fill a roster of kids that are then put out on the ice. County’s team is simply known as County/Freedom.

“We only practice twice a season and our practices are pretty laid back,” Kline said. “We’re just there to meet the fellow players rather than improving our game, because either way we play our top players who, for the most part, have been playing the game for a long time just like I have.”

Kline has been playing for the last thirteen years, starting when he was four.

With experienced and inexperienced players, they have won the first two games of their season.

“Unlike football or basketball, pretty much anyone can sign up and play,” Kline said. “I’ve got to play with people three years older than me and three years younger.”

However, you do have to know how to skate.

“After seeing my sister attempt skating with her friend, my parents got me into a small skating lesson which I took simultaneously when I played mini mites,” Kline said. “After a year or so of those lessons, I began being taught by who is now the Washington Capitals skating coach **Wendy Marco**, who taught me everything and anything there is to know about skating. She taught me all the way up until present day and has made sure I’ve mastered the basic concept behind hockey.”

Junior **Finley Armstrong** has been able to skate since she was younger, but continued to teach herself when she bought her first pair of skates.

Junior **Ryan Quinn** learned to skate through rollerblading.

Junior **Kira Catterton** followed after her brothers and participated in learn-to-skate events.

Hockey is a rather unique sport in the way that it requires a very specific practice space.

“There aren’t many places where you can just go and play hockey,” Quinn said. “There also aren’t many hockey teams around the area, so it’s hard to find a good team with good teammates.”

The County/Freedom team practices are mainly held at the Ion International Training Center in Leesburg, where their games are also located.

In addition to skating, hockey

requires knowledge of all different positions.

“Defense has always been my favorite position in sports, in hockey it’s a very physical position to play but I really like how physical the game is,” Armstrong said. “It’s my first time playing a forward position, but I think it’s important to score and pass to help the team win.”

Armstrong plays right wing, and that position is tasked with scoring goals, and they back-check to help out on defense, where their primary responsibility is the left defenseman of the opposing team.

“In high school I play center, which from a coach’s perspective is the first offense-man and the third defenseman,” Kline said. “My primary goal is to win faceoffs and score. Overall, I’m required to fill in for pretty much every position if needed and obtain the puck wherever it may be to eventually break out into the offensive zone.”

Quinn plays left wing and states that having a strong, accurate shot is extremely beneficial to that position.

Another unique aspect is the fact that it’s co-ed.

“Going into it playing co-ed can feel really intimidating especially on teams where there is only one other girl or sometimes no others,” Armstrong said. “But the team does a really good job of including everyone even if I’m a girl. There are definitely pros and cons about co-ed teams,

but I’ve felt really comfortable with the County/Freedom team this year.”

But just like any sport, hockey comes with challenges.

“In terms of travel hockey, the most difficult part is the commitment to it, and having to work 110% every shift for 45 minutes,” Kline said.

A shift refers to the amount of time spent on the ice. When a shift ends, the other players sub in.

Armstrong, however, has a different perspective.

“Something that’s really difficult is the mentality of the game,” Armstrong said. “A lot of people try to bring me down saying I’m not good enough, I started too late, or girls shouldn’t play hockey. It’s a really hard thing to get around, but I look past it and focus on just doing what I love regardless of what people say.”

Catterton finds a lot of support in her team to combat that negativity as well.

“I know that the boys have my back if I get knocked down or checked,” Catterton said. “It’s really fun playing with the boys because it’s so different from playing with the girls. Girls are a little less competitive and aggressive. Playing with the boys is much faster.”

Kline doesn’t think that the co-ed aspect of the game has made any difference, saying, “On the ice they’re just as much of a player as everyone else.”

They are in collective agreement that a very positive environment surrounds the County/Freedom team.

“My favorite thing about the team is just being able to go out there and enjoy the game with a different demographic of people who I’ve come to enjoy being around,” Kline said. “I just love being able to continue what I’ve been doing for my entire life, and with my years of playing possibly coming to an end here shortly, I just like having a good time enjoying the things that make the game great.”

Hockey also strengthens bonds differently than other sports in the way that players are teamed up together from different schools.

“I really like the relationships hockey brings, mostly with the coaches and other players around the county,” Quinn said. “My favorite thing about the team is that everyone is chill and high school doesn’t matter as much as travel, so everyone just wants to have fun.”

Regardless, County/Freedom is going for the win this season.

“My end goal this year is to win provisional states as last year we were runner ups to Kettle Run,” Kiline said. “Personally, I’d like to win a league award for the total number of goals, but we’ll see what happens.”

Something that the team would appreciate is more support from the students at County.

“Overall, I’d like to see some fans come out to the games,”

Kline said. “I truly believe that since hockey is off school grounds it’s one of the most fun sports to cheer for and hang out at.”

Armstrong is hoping that awareness about the team will spread.

“I didn’t know we even had a team until I asked about a team to join,” Armstrong said. “Also, I don’t think it’s really considered a school team sport, but having the students there really adds to

the environment of the games and makes it really fun.”

Catterton agrees.

“I just hope more people actually know we have a team and maybe come to the games and support us,” Catterton said. “The game changes, the fans are so energetic, it brings a really nice vibe.”

Anyone can follow County/Freedom on Instagram @county-freedom\_icehockey, where they post about upcoming games.

“Everyone is so supportive,” Catterton said. “We all cheer and support each other. Anytime anybody gets a goal we’re all happy. Like when I get one, they all come skating off the bench.”

Catterton encourages those who want to try hockey, but are unsure of committing.

“I’d say at first it might be hard if you’ve never skated,” Catterton said. “But definitely go for it, because it gets easier once you learn the basics.” •



The varsity cheer team poses for Region 4C Champions. The October 26 win brought the cheer team to states. Photo by John Klimavicz.

**CHEER**, continued from page 1 against many other cheer teams.

“States was definitely the hardest competition of the year because we were competing against the best teams in Virginia,” Parker said.

Parker, who is now one of three team captains for a second year in a row, explained that this is only the second time in school history the team has gone to states.

Senior **Mia Rodgers** is also in her second year as captain. While Rodgers admits it was stressful to try and make it to states, she says it was worth it.

“The stress was all worth it because we won our first region title in school history,” Rodgers said.

Senior **Ava Sheridan** agreed that the most difficult competition was at states. “Nobody on the team had experienced that kind of pressure before, and as a team we had never performed in front of that many people,”

Sheridan said.

Sheridan, in her first year as one of the captains, noted that the experience was made more difficult because the head coach could not be there that day.

Despite the coach being absent for the final competition, the team brought its own unity.

“I feel I brought encouragement and a safe place to talk to for my teammates,” Parker said.

“This is the best season I have been a part of yet, and the accomplishments as well as relationships throughout the team are indescribable,” junior **Ava Dekenipp** said. “This team went through so much and pushed through it all, and we ended up having an amazing season. Making school history was definitely a moment we will never forget.”

Dekenipp is also one of the captains, and this is her first year in that position. The cheer team had to make sure their routine was perfect with not many mess ups. Dekenipp said they really

had to push it to win.

“I think the hardest competition we had this year was regionals,” Dekenipp said. “This was our final push to get further than ever in our season, and going into round two of the competition we were behind by one point. However, we ended up placing first for the first time in school history by 11 points and moving on to states.”

“Making it to states was definitely the most impactful moment of the season. Our round two performance at regional was the best cheer routine I’ve done in my life,” said Rodgers. “The energy from that routine made me feel like we could win every single competition that we went to.”

The cheer team generally performs the same routine each time, but did change it up later in the season. The team dances and tumbles to music, doing stunts and tricks throughout the song, a far cry from the stereo-

typical image of a cheerleader that those unfamiliar with the sport might have.

“I think our success this season has to do with all the help we received along the way from guest coaches, parents,” said Sheridan. “Lots of adults who were unbiased towards our team dedicated their time to help us and give us feedback this season, so we were constantly getting better.”

This year many people helped with the success of the cheer team.

“We loved seeing our athletes become dedicated to the program so early on by coming to open gyms and pre-seasons starting all the way back in May,” head coach **Sam Mancini** said. “Seeing this much commitment to the program so early on made us realize we had to trust them with a harder skill set and a much more difficult routine than we’ve had in the past. We can’t wait to get back to work for next season.” •

## Students struggle after COVID-19 pandemic



*Left: Art 3 students use oil paints during art class on December 6. Students this year are able to utilize in-person classrooms. Right: Guest speaker and 2017 graduate Grace Fernandez returns to talk to students about the GIS industry on November 16. Students enjoy guest speakers in person following the 2020 school year. Photos courtesy of LCHS news (@LCHS1954).*

**Taylor Helfer & Alexa Sterner | Staff Writers**

As students get off the bus this year, they are faced with high violence rates, declining grades, and mental health issues at school following the 2020 school year.

For many students, mental health has been a heavy weight. According to the federal CDC emergency department, emergency visits for suspected suicide attempts among adolescents 12-17, usually around 6,000 per year, jumped 31% in 2020, compared with 2019.

Some students had trouble with the unprecedented nature of school closure, which happened without much notice toward the start of the pandemic.

“I became super depressed, just being isolated with my own thoughts and unable to see friends and family,” freshman **Ella Cortissoz** said.

The pandemic had added to the pre-existing challenges facing many students whether it be mental health, grades, or their social life.

“COVID sort of separated me from my family. I didn’t really talk to them anymore even though I spent so much time at home,” sophomore **Cole Terhune** said.

For others, the adjustment to life at home was easier. When they came back to school in person, it was difficult to readjust to social settings.

In either case, students over the last two years have experienced a general decline of mental

health. As a result, a rise in misbehavior and violence has occurred in many schools throughout the country.

“From a safety and security perspective, we did notice an increase in unacceptable behavior by some students,” school security officer **Daemian Korker** said. “The pandemic stopped students from maturing the way they naturally would in a school environment,”

In an article written by the Pew Charitable Trusts Foundation, **Sharon Hoover**, co-director of the University of Maryland-based National Center for School Mental Health states, “Nearly every child in the country is suffering to some degree from the psychological effects of the pandemic.” A loss of routine for many students, social isolation, and feelings of loneliness can increase the risk of mental health problems which can take time to recover from.

“What makes teenagers operate is routine in my opinion,” **Daniel Croyle**, the head of counseling, said. “With COVID, I think the routine with life, physically, mentally, and academically was disrupted.”

Even though rebellion and misbehavior is normal for many teens, an increase in disrespect and misbehavior in schools has reached an all-time high. The National Center for Education Statistics states that 84% of public schools reported misconduct of students, while also reporting that 48% of teachers describe acts of disrespect towards administrative staff.

“They think they can just not do anything,” PE teacher **Joel Caruso** said, referring to students who learned during the pandemic there were no consequences for not doing work. “I think it’s been horrible in society and in my kids.”

Many public school teachers explained how the students’ behavior has gotten so bad that some teachers retired earlier than planned due to the bad behavior. They also describe how stressful teaching after the pandemic really is.

“Their grades, work ethic, motivation, effort, all went down,” Caruso said. He later explained the difficulties with effort and motivation that he sees in his own students.

In the last six months of 2020 after the pandemic began in March, there were 5,644 teacher retirements in California, which is a 26% increase from the previous year, according to the California State Teachers’ Retirement System. By the end of the school year, 12,785 teachers had retired, which is 8% higher than the previous school year. In our own school, many teachers have started retiring, too.

“My teacher was tired of having students take her class and not wanting to learn. She was talking, explaining how teaching was no longer worth the trouble. I’m just frustrated that a great teacher could potentially leave,” freshman **Mark Giardina** said.

Due to the behaviors learned due to well-intentioned policies adopted during the pandemic, the productivity of many students

has decreased. In the current in-person learning situation, this leaves many students with bad test grades.

“There were some things that were in place to sort of support students and their mental health,” Croyle said, referring to pandemic policies. “I think people got used to that academically.”

In 2020, fourth quarter grades didn’t count in order to help students academically. This was to help students who might not have the ability to work on academic assignments while being required to watch younger siblings or even take jobs if their parents needed financial help due to pandemic-related job losses. Since the change back, where grades count again, students’ grades alone have been dropping rapidly.

“At home, there were a ton of distractions that I found getting myself into and so it was really tough to focus,” freshman **Collin Diem** said. Diem later explained how his focus made it hard for him to keep his grades up during the pandemic.

Though many of us have had our struggles with the pandemic, students have been faced with the ultimate struggle. With the impacts of academic pressure, mental health and behavioral issues, school has been a tough place for staff and students. However, just one year after returning to normal school, Croyle said, “I think this year is much better” compared to last year. “The staff and administrators did a great job tightening things up,” he said. •

# Students' 2022 Spotify Wrapped

Rachel Edgar | Staff Writer

Spotify, the most popular streaming platform in the world, with over 300 million users, creates a "Spotify Wrapped" at the end of each year. It collects how many minutes you spent listening, what five songs you played most, your number one genre, and more. Here's what some of our students listened to last year. •

## NATALIE KORITKO - FRESHMAN

Top Genre: Show Tunes  
Total Minutes Listened: 32,369  
Top Song: "Candy Store," Heathers the Musical

## NORAH LEE - FRESHMAN

Top Genre: Indie Pop  
Total Minutes Listened: 50,000  
Top Song: "August," Taylor Swift

## NOAH HENNING - FRESHMAN

Top Genre: Rock  
Total Minutes Listened: 1,000+  
Top Song: "Master of Puppets," Metallica

## SABRINA WADLIN - SOPHOMORE

Top Genre: Indie Pop  
Total Minutes Listened: 49,625  
Top Song: "Alien Blues," Vundabar

## MINDOMITON JOSIAS VISSOH - SOPHOMORE

Top Genre: Pop  
Total Minutes Listened: 17,923

## EMMA WRIDE - SOPHOMORE

Top Genre: Country  
Total Minutes Listened: 47,625  
Top Song: "This Side of a Dust Cloud," Morgan Wallen

## SNEHA MEHTA - JUNIOR

Top Genre: Indie Pop  
Total Minutes Listened: 9,306  
Top Song: "Everybody Wants To Rule The World," Tears for Fears

## WYATT SIMMONS - SENIOR

Top Genre: Rap  
Total Minutes Listened: 3,400

## Downtown Leesburg spotlight: ZEST boutique



Maisy Davies | Staff Writer

The holiday season for giving has begun, and it can be tricky to find the perfect gift. Zest, a locally owned clothing boutique selling "everyday essentials and stylish statements" suitable for all ages, comes to the rescue for the residents of Leesburg. **Jenny Haldeman**, Zest's manager, said, "Our audience ranges from children as young as 13, and our fine jewelry also attracts older shoppers." With the variety of products, customers are ensured to find the perfect gift.

Haldeman looks forward to the holiday season and collections that are coming to Zest. Haldeman says, "Be on the lookout for Christmas sales and events!" After just finishing their big Black Friday event and small business Saturday, Zest is currently having an exclusive Kendra Scott Jewelry trunk show. If a customer spends over \$125, they will receive a free gift from the jeweler.

Haldeman notices that Kendra Scott jewelry is

popular amongst teenagers, and that this trunk show will attract lots of customers, so if customers are looking, buy as soon as possible.

With the weather constantly fluctuating, Zest offers tons of different woolly sweaters, from thick cashmere to lightweight cotton. "Our special holiday sweaters, shawl vests, New Years outfits, and Christmas outfits are selling out quickly," Haldeman said, implying that shoppers looking for these specific items, Zest is the place to go.

Haldeman takes pride in managing this boutique. Her favorite product as of right now are ABLE purses, "I have three of my own, and Zest loves supporting small women owned companies."

The quality of Zest's clothing and accessories is incomparable to fast fashion pieces, and the price is reasonable. The boutique includes many timeless pieces and dainty, classy jewelry that will last a lifetime. Each customer knows they are guaranteed a long wear time. •

# Quest for the perfect latte in Loudoun

*Maisy Davies & Rachel Edgar | Staff Writers*

With the colder weather, the season of warm cozy coffee makes its way into the agenda. We traveled around Loudoun in search of lattes, sampling three varieties and comparing the atmosphere of the shop as well as the cost and quality of the lattes. As avid coffee lovers and drinkers, we channeled our experience into featuring local businesses and not large franchises like Starbucks, whose drinks range from \$5-\$8 per drink. Although many prefer Starbucks because it is consistent and mobile order/drive through appeals to many, supporting local businesses is becoming more and more important during these costly times.

## **BLEND COFFEE BAR (ASHBURN) - 9/10**

Our first stop was Blend Coffee Bar in Ashburn. Maisy ordered the "Turtle," one of their signature lattes, which is a blend of chocolate, hazelnut, salt, and caramel. With strong notes of caramel, overall it was a sweet coffee, lacking the salt flavor. We definitely recommend it for those with a sweet tooth. The cost of a hot "Turtle" latte was \$5.05. For the standard twelve ounces, and solid quality, we recommend this drink.

Rachel ordered the "Golden Graham," which had a combination of honey, vanilla, and cinnamon. True to its description, it was a delicious sweet coffee with all elements balanced and present.

The atmosphere at Blend Coffee Bar was very comforting. There are lots of different styles of furniture and many options of places to sit and enjoy. They have an outdoor seating area with heaters for the colder months. Rachel and I chose to sit on two industrial looking stools with a beautiful furnished wooden table, surrounded by plush looking couches and beanbags.

Looking back at the menu, we noticed that the overall price of hot lattes was less than the iced lattes by a dollar, but were the same size. Because of our love of iced drinks and appreciation for value, we deducted one point from an otherwise perfect experience. Our rating was a 9/10.

## **KING STREET COFFEE (LEESBURG) - 7.5/10**

Second, we went to King Street Coffee and both ordered their holiday special, a classic peppermint mocha, with skim milk for Rachel and whole milk for Maisy.



There was definitely a difference between froth texture as there is a higher fat content in whole milk. Maisy's mocha had a thicker froth than Rachel's.

Warm, chocolatey, and sweet; this is the perfect holiday drink. However, the peppermint flavor was lacking, as this drink tasted more like a high quality mocha than a five dollar latte. If you are comparing this drink to a peppermint mocha from Starbucks' holiday menu, it is incomparable, as there is little to no peppermint flavor.

A downside to King Street Coffee would be the food options are scarce. Their pastries and cakes are delicious, but there are no savory food options if a customer is looking for a selection of soups or bread.

King Street Coffee's atmosphere is cozy and homey. There is a small room for seating inside, furnished with art pieces hanging on the walls for sale from various local artists. Outside the entrance, the front porch is accompanied with rocking chairs and lots of Christmas decorations. It seems each time we stop by King Street there is a new gallery on display. Since this is in the middle of downtown Leesburg, it is more a grab and go at your convenience kind of coffee shop, we give it a 7.5/10.

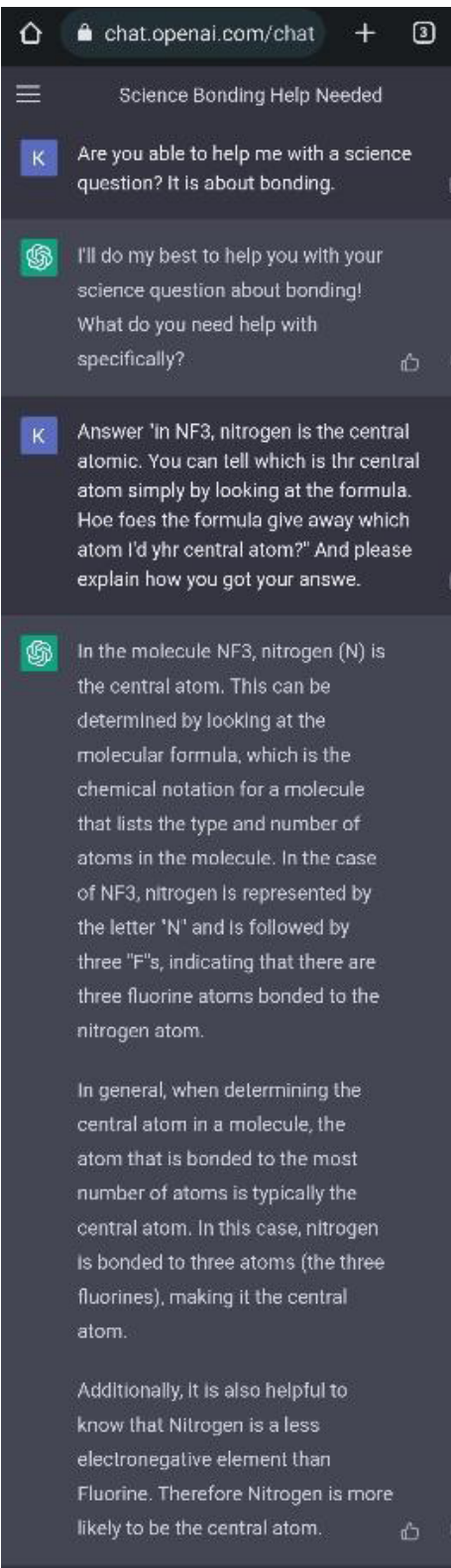
## **SOUTH STREET UNDER (LEESBURG) - 9/10**

Last stop for us was South Street Under, located in Market Station downtown. This is a place both of us go to frequently and enjoy for both food and drinks. The atmosphere is always very positive, there are tons of options for outside seating and some inside as well. Their selection of pre-packaged food is also a big bonus of purchasing at South Street. We went after school, and it was surprisingly quiet. We thought both people that served us were very friendly and talkative with all customers.

We both ordered a delicious 12 oz white chocolate latte with whole milk. The quality of coffee was lovely, not very bitter, and had just the right amount of sweetness coming from the white chocolate. Along with our drinks, we got our favorite, their potato and leek soup that comes with freshly baked bread, which never seems to fail. If a customer values money more, South Street Under is a top choice because of the size/quality/atmosphere. We give South Street Under an overall rating of 9/10. •



# ChatGPT modernizes workflows for students



*This screenshot of a chat session with ChatGPT illustrates how students can use ChatGPT to assist with schoolwork. Screenshot by Berek Harrison.*

**Berek Harrison & Ethan Kopp | Staff Writers**

As high school students continue to adapt to the changing landscape of education, many are turning to new technologies to help them stay on track and succeed in their studies. One such tool that has recently garnered attention is ChatGPT, a language model developed by OpenAI.

If you thought that opening paragraph was written by a human, you'd be mistaken. That text was generated by the revolutionary new AI, ChatGPT. ChatGPT only came out November but has already amassed a user base of over one million monthly users.

ChatGPT is made by the company OpenAI whose goal is to "ensure artificial intelligence benefits all of humanity." The reason why so many people use ChatGPT is likely due to how responsive it is in conversation. "The dialogue format makes it possible for ChatGPT to answer followup questions, admit its mistakes, challenge incorrect premises, and reject inappropriate requests," Open AI writes on its website.

ChatGPT has the capability to write a variety of forms of text such as poems, essays, and stories. ChatGPT can also translate, summarize information, change the style, and generate grammatical errors. It can also assist students in basically every subject by being able to answer questions and give explanations for those results. It can even add quotes from certain books or movies if prompted.

Writing an article with ChatGPT is very simple. Simply boot up the website, put in a prompt, and details that should be included, hit enter and watch an article be generated near instantly.

All in all, it isn't difficult to see why ChatGPT is taking the educational

world by storm, but students are using it to cheat in ways not possible before.

ChatGPT can be easily used to cheat on English assignments. "I know that it's an AI that can write a paper for you, and apparently it's pretty good too. You can't really catch it," English teacher **Carla Lopez** said.

The issue caused immediate concern in school districts around the country back in December, and many school districts such as New York Public Schools (the largest school district), Los Angeles Public Schools, and Baltimore Public Schools blocked it from school issued devices and wifi networks.

ChatGPT has had an effect here at Loudoun County schools too. It has already been banned from Chromebooks and the wifi, but that hasn't stopped students from accessing it. Like many other English teachers, **Alexandra Strosnyder** suspects her students have already used it to cheat. "I do suspect that's already happened," she said.

The school system hasn't taken any official action other than blocking it, but teachers are still talking about how to prevent it from being used to cheat on their assignments. "No action has been taken. The English department has emailed each other about it just to note that students have talked about it and been using it in classes," Strosnyder said.

Another problem teachers are facing is the different experience each teacher will have. "So everybody kind of has a different experience for me. My students all do their work in class, so I don't really have to worry about it. And then I also am very specific on what I asked my students to do, so I feel pretty good, but I know that especially the AP and the DE teachers are going to have a trickier time," Lopez said.

Until teachers find a fix to the situ-

ation, they are having to rely on their knowledge of the students to moderate assignments. "I know the way my students talk, I know how my students write," Lopez said. "And so I would know at this point in the year. I think if it was at the beginning of the year, it might be harder. But often, if you read a sentence as a teacher, I've caught a lot of students plagiarizing from other places, and if I just read one sentence, I'm like, this doesn't sound like them."

Although many teachers and school systems are in favor of attempting to ban ChatGPT, many think in the end students will always find a way around the barriers. Instead they should embrace it as a learning tool. "Instead of starting an endless game of whack-a-mole against an ever-expanding army of A.I. chatbots, here's a suggestion: For the rest of the academic year, schools should treat ChatGPT the way they treat calculators — allowing it for some assignments, but not others, and assuming that unless students are being supervised in person with their devices stashed away, they're probably using one," **Kevin Roose** said in a New York Times article.

Some of the possible uses advocates like Kevin say are using it to create outlines for an essay and then writing in freehand, explain subjects like a teacher outside of school, or using it as a debate partner.

"ChatGPT is a popular AI tool in education, but its potential for cheating is a concern for educators. School districts have blocked access, but students still find ways to use it. Teachers are discussing ways to prevent cheating while still using its benefits. Some suggest embracing it and teaching responsible use, rather than trying to block it. Educators must find a balance between ChatGPT's benefits and preventing cheating," ChatGPT, revolutionary new AI, wrote. •

## UPCOMING CALENDAR

### FEBRUARY

2/3 -2/5 - Student-Directed One Act Performance  
2/16-2/18 - Winter play performances  
2/20 - Student Holiday (Presidents Day)  
2/20-2/22 : Spring Tryouts

### MARCH

3/1 - Wellness Wednesday  
3/2 - Strings Pre-Assessment Concert  
3/4 - Broadway Dessert Cabaret Performances  
3/8 - Strings Pre-Assessment Concert  
3/13 - Student Holiday  
3/24 - End of Third Quarter  
3/27 - Student Holiday  
3/31 - Spring pep-rally

### APRIL

4/3-4/7 - Spring Break  
4/14 - SCA Mini-thon  
4/21 - Student holiday (Eid al Fitr)  
4/26 - Wellness Wednesday  
4/28 - Prom

### MAY

5/5-5/7 - Spring Musical performances  
5/10 - Guitar/Orchestra Spring concert  
5/11 - Spring Band Concert  
5/18 - Choir spring concert  
5/29 - Student Holiday (Memorial Day)  
5/30 - Senior Picnic / Yearbook photo

### JUNE

6/5 - NJROTC Field Day  
6/8 - End of 4th quarter  
6/9 - Graduation 2023

## Artist of the issue: Banner reveals hidden talent, playing two instruments at once

Taylor Helfer | Staff Writer

Throughout the hallways of County, you may hear the various tunes and melodies of long time student musician player, senior **Emily Banner**. What originally started as a random suggestion, turned into a lifelong passion in music.

At only four years old, Banner started playing the piano. But, when a bassoon quartet suggested that Banner start playing, everything changed for her.

“I was like, I’m not interested in playing two instruments at once,” Banner said. She was very hesitant to play two instruments at once since it would take up so much time. Years later, she changed her mind and is now juggling playing two instruments.

Playing both the bassoon and the piano has allowed her to grow as a musician. Although she has learned a lot from her teacher, **Darron Young**, there are still unexpected things that happen during her performances. Most notably, a shared experience amongst bassoonists seems to be cutting their lip on their reed.

“I swear it’s like a curse or something, or maybe some blessing. If you get blood on your reed, that reed is going to play perfectly for the rest of the concert,” Banner said.

While looking for performance opportunities, Banner’s dad suggested that she play a piece that was recommended to her on YouTube, P.D.Q. Bach’s “Sonata Abassoonata.” That simple suggestion became her senior recital piece in which she would play all three parts. At the Catoctin School of Music, seniors choose a song to play for their last piece before graduation.

“So, I bought the music and I

started practicing. I’ve been practicing for like a year now,” Banner said. “It’s a very fun piece to play.”

Although this is a big project for Banner, she notes there are other pieces she loves playing for performances. Whether it be an opera piece, or something on the radio, Banner will take the time to learn it.

“I heard this song on the radio on the way to a hike somewhere. I was like, I could play that on the bassoon. So I printed out the music and spent like two months learning that piece, which is really fun on the bassoon,” Banner said.

Just recently in early November, Banner got the opportunity to play for staff here at school. She decided to play a satirical piece, P.D.Q. Bach’s “Abassoonata” that tricked those in the crowd. Before she played, she announced that the pianist would not be able to make it and she would have to play both instruments.

“I had a few teachers that came up to me and were like, I’m so proud of your ability to play no matter what. I just don’t think they got the joke of the piece,” Banner said.

When talking about her future in music, Banner isn’t planning to major in music in college but wants to keep up this hobby throughout college. Although she doesn’t want it to be her career, she says that it can aid her emotionally.

“It definitely can be kind of calming sometimes. If I’m really frustrated about something and I sit down and play for a bit, it’s good. It forces my breath to get normal because I have the reed,” Banner said. “It’s a really good calming tactic,” she added.

Throughout her music journey and many music lessons, she has learned tips that could potentially help other current or future bassoon players as

well as developing pianists.

“Practice and find something you love to play. If you’re forcing yourself into something you don’t enjoy, you’re not gonna go that far,” Banner says. Although she was talking primarily about music, her words of advice go for any hobby you may have.

Lately, her recitals have shown the work that Banner has put in throughout the years. Banner plans to become a great bassoon player and pianist, while continuing her music hobby. In fact, Banner said, “I wanna keep playing like the rest of my life if I can. It makes me very happy.” •



Emily Banner plays both the bassoon and the piano for P.D.Q. Bach’s “Sonata Abassoonata” at the same time during a faculty meeting. Banner had principal Michelle Luttrell play along with the piece’s satirical theme by announcing that the pianist was unavailable and Banner would be playing both parts. Photo courtesy of LCHS News Twitter.

## Winter concerts: Photos from student performances



Photo by Brianna Martinez

## CHOIR

Brianna Martinez | Staff Writer

The 2022 winter assembly was kicked off by the festive choir. Lead by choir teacher **William Rosenfeld**, the boys and girls sang two classic holiday songs, Carol of the Bells and an original rendition of Jingle Bells. Dressed in their best holiday attire, these vocalists set the stage for many more performances from the other music departments. •

# ORCHESTRA

William Kluttz | Staff Writer

On Tuesday, December 2, the Orchestra performed in the auditorium for their winter concert. The concert opened up with a three song performance from a student quartet that included **Felicity Banner** and **Pierson Lee** on violin, **Carlos Escobar** on viola, and **Grant McMillan** on cello.

During the main concert the orchestra performed three songs by the Trans-Siberian-Orchestra: Requiem, Wish Liszt, A Mad Russian's Christmas, and Christmas Eve/Sarajevo 12/24.

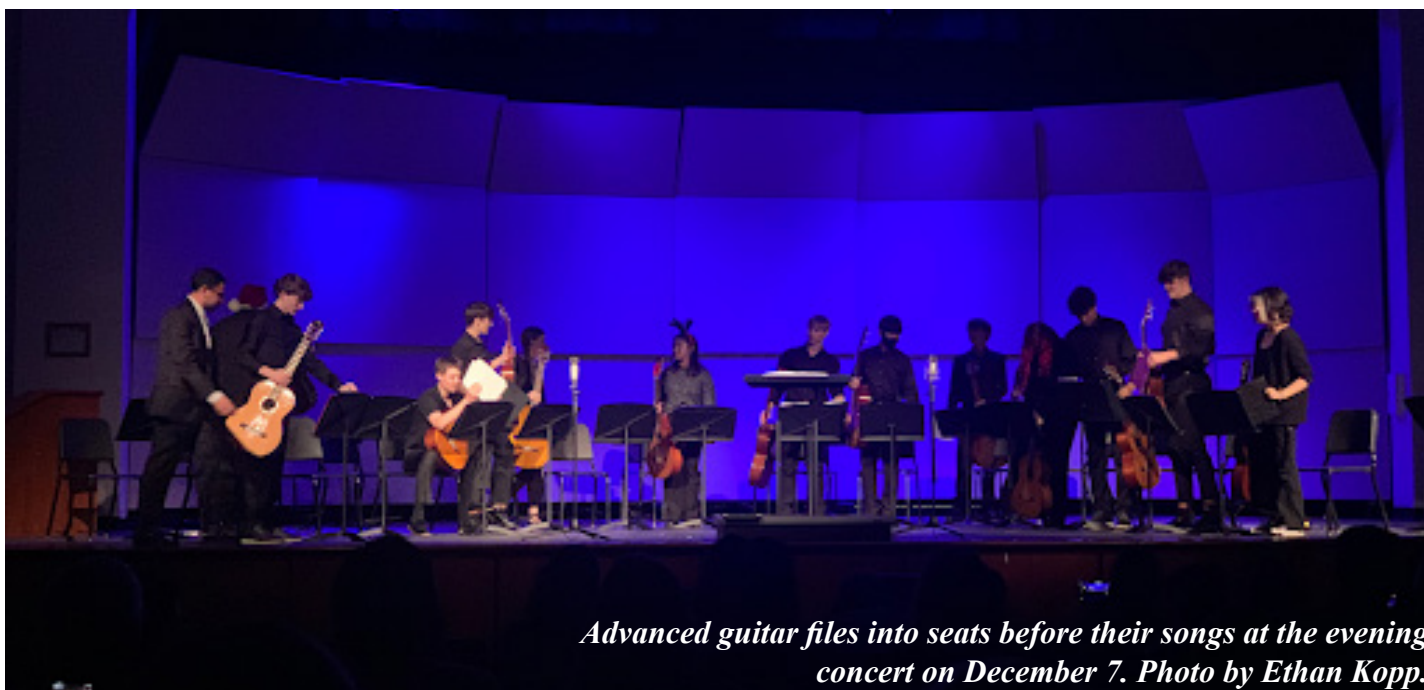
"The concert was awesome, everybody had a blast," **Matthew Trkula**, the Orchestra director, said. "The kids had fun, the audience had fun. They sounded good, it looked good." The Orchestra was joined by **Wayne Griffin** on electric bass and **Grant McMillan** on electric guitar. McMillan had also played cello in the opening quartet. They gave the concert the feel of Trans-Siberian-Orchestra.

"I'm very, very happy with it," Trkula said. •



Above: Mr. Trkula (left) claps with Kevin Costillo and Felicity Banner after performing "Christmas Eve/Sarajevo 12/24." All the songs performed were by the Trans-Siberian-Orchestra. Left: Wayne Griffin and Grant McMillan perform during the December 2 Orchestra concert. Photos permission by William Kluttz.

## GUITAR



Advanced guitar files into seats before their songs at the evening concert on December 7. Photo by Ethan Kopp.

Berek Harrison & Ethan Kopp | Staff Writers

On December 7, the guitar performed their winter concert which had been in preparation for a long time. "We started preparing probably the second or third week of school," **Matthew Trkula**, the Director of Guitar and Orchestra, said.

This is Trkula's second year at

LCHS. "Mr. Trkula is a very talented and well informed teacher," sophomore **Beaunita Nith**, sophomore said. "Class is always super fun and enjoyable. We have a lot of inside jokes and a very specific dynamic."

This year the students had more say in song choice than in years prior. "It used to be that we had less of a say in the song," senior **Alexander Seymour** said, "but we're

really close to our instructor."

"When we choose the music, it's a partnership," Trukla said, "I show them some things that I've pulled out and been thinking of, and then we kind of vote on it and see what we're gonna do."

During the concert a variety of songs were played by the Combined Ensemble, Artist Guitar, Advanced Guitar, and some solos. Favorites of the guitar students were "la Cump-

arista" by **Gerardo Rodriguez** and performed by the Advanced Guitar, and "In the Hall of the Mountain King" by **Edvard Grieg** and performed by Artist Guitar.

At the end of the concert, the Combined Ensemble performed holiday songs like "Deck the Halls" and "We Wish You a Merry Christmas."

"The activities that were planned by the director and by the members of the guitar group I think were excellent for the holidays," **Barry Deuel**, American Sign Language instructor said. "They made everybody feel like it's time to celebrate and enjoyed it immensely."

During the concert, the audience erupted into applause after each song, and guitar students who were not performing at the time would yell out the names of their friends as they cheered.

"I'm amazed that we can reach the level of excellence with high school students playing a very specialized instrumen," Deuel said. •

## JAZZ BAND

Brianna Martinez | Staff Writer

The final act of the day was the Jazz band. Lead by band teacher **Darron Young**, groups of brass instruments was accompanied again by electric guitar players **Wayne Griffin** and **Grant McMillan**. The musicians played two songs, the first called "Ab-

racadabra" then followed by "Bringing It On." They featured a few soloists for each instrument in their final song which prompted a roar of applause from the audience ending the final music performance of 2022. •

Photo by Brianna Martinez.



# Master Chief Deanna Foust is leaving after 12 years of serving as Naval Science Instructor at Loudoun County High School



*Foust salutes as the colors are brought in to begin her retirement ceremony at the Women's Military Memorial in Arlington in December 2010. Foust retired from the Navy after 28 years of service shortly before starting her job with the Loudoun County NJROTC. Photo permission by Deanna Foust.*

**Tae Herron & Karen Martinez-Melendez | Staff Writers**

Master Chief **Deanna Foust** has decided, after 12 years of work as the Naval Science Instructor for NJROTC, it is time to leave in order to spend more time with her grandchildren and children who, due in part to the demands of her job, she hasn't seen in years.

"I'll be moving up to Minnesota to be close to two of my kids and my grandkids and I don't know what I'll be doing yet," Foust said.

During her years as a naval science instructor, her experiences involved teaching the naval science

curriculum, coaching, and completing paperwork for the Navy.

Foust said she would "coach any teams that happened to fall my way," including the marksmanship team, the CyberPatriot team, which focuses on cyber security and the SeaPerch team which does underwater robotics.

Foust struggled to narrow down her memories to just one favorite, but she said that relationships with students is a stand-out.

"You know it's not just a science class where you only get to see them for one year or one semester," Foust said. "I see them typically for four whole years so you really get to know the people. I'd say that was the best part."

Another memorable event for Foust was her time working with Vietnam Women's Memorial

"We met the founder of the organization and had the chance to interview Vietnam veterans about their experience as Vietnam nurses," Foust said "Your perspective changes after talking with some of those folks."

Working with high school students instead of sailors also changed her perspective. During her time in the Navy, Foust worked as a Master at Arms, which equates to Navy Military Police.

"Before 9/11 it was basically law enforcement just maintaining good order and discipline on the ship,"

Foust said. "But after 9/11 everything kind of changed, so it was more force protection, anti-terrorism making sure that the ship was safe from outside trouble."

When in the Navy, it was difficult for Foust as a woman joining in the 1980's, when many obstacles stood in the way of earning her the title of Master Chief.

"Women had a rough time, some things were pretty dumb, it's changing, it's getting better," Foust said. "I was able to overcome it because I stayed 28 years, and not everybody gets to be master chief; only one percent of the enlisted force can do that."

The transition from sailors to students was not a difficult one, but came with its own unique challenges.

"The most difficult thing was to remember that [the students] were not my sailors and you have to have similar conversations but in a different way," Foust said. "I couldn't go off on the kids like I used to on the sailors."

Still, being in the Navy for 28 years has taught Foust some things to always keep in mind, no matter where she works.

"Never take anything for granted, people or experiences," Foust said. Her time in the Navy also taught her to "be able to work with just about anybody because you're working with people all over the world."

For Foust, it has always been about personal connections. "Whether you like the person sitting next to you or not, they may be saving your life someday, so you have to be able to work together," Foust said.

Being in the Navy, she prepared for life-or-death situations, which necessitate high standards. She brings those standards into her teaching.

"She won't accept anything less than your best, and it's obvious how much she cares about each cadet's success," senior **Kathryn Homa**, Cadet Command Master Chief, said.

Foust brings those high standards to our school as a way to give back, since she had been a part of the same program in high school.

"I was in JROTC when I was in high school for three years, so I thought it'd be really cool after retiring from the Navy to come back and do the same thing," Foust said.

Foust has mixed emotions about leaving after working here since 2009, she feels happy but sad at the same time.

"I'm sad to leave the people here, but I'm really excited to go and be with my grandkids because they're getting older and I'm missing them too much." Foust said. •