



THE SENIOR ISSUE

Kat Blackwood to give commencement speech at 2023 graduation



Senior Kat Blackwood poses with LCHS welcome sign for the official announcement of her as the Class of 2023 commencement speaker. Photo courtesy of @itsgreattobeacountycaptain via Instagram.

Alexis Shugars | Staff Writer

June 9, a day that our senior class has been waiting for their last four years, a day that celebrates all their accomplishments and academic merit. Following recent LCHS tradition, one graduating

student is chosen from a pool of applicants to deliver a commencement speech at the event. This year senior **Kat Blackwood** has been chosen to fill this honor.

Blackwood has been working on her speech since March, and it has gone through many alterations

since then. “The writing process was a bit hectic,” said Blackwood. “So much changed from this version to the final speech.” She states that the most important part of the writing process was getting peer feedback. As a result of many teachers and students having

had the opportunity to read Blackwood’s speech per her request, the speech has become the best it could possibly be.

After months of planning and editing her speech, Blackwood was ready to submit her speech among many other student submissions to be reviewed, and ultimately chosen as the speech to be presented at graduation.

According to Blackwood, her speech highlights the changes that the class of 2023 has gone through, and will continue to happen throughout the future. Additionally, the commencement speech will focus on things that she believes her class has learned within the last four years as well as commemorating memories of the past.

“Preparing for graduation itself will involve practicing the speech over and over and making any final edits to make sure it sounds the best it can,” Blackwood said.

Blackwood has been heavily involved within the Captains’ Playhouse drama department since her freshman year, making her an experienced student when it comes to public speaking and the ability to capture the attention of an audience.

She hopes that students will be able to reminisce on the best memories of their high school years, as they take away a positive message towards their past, present and future. “I feel incredibly honored to be able to have this opportunity,” Blackwood said. •

Commitment signing honors student athletes



Read about the student-athletes and their athletic and academic commitments on page 12. Photo by John Klimavicz.

The importance of news

Olivia DeWan | Editor in Chief

Through my time with The County Chronicle, I learned that news reporting is so much more than what it appears to be on the surface. Words have the unique ability to sway people and their emotions. They can plant false information and ridicule, they can encourage and promote. As I've grown my writing experience, I've seen just how brutal the world of news has become, how detrimental it can be to society, and how important it is.

At The Chronicle, we use news to inform our fellow students about organizations and events going on at the school. I've gained some of my favorite high school memories here, like passing out fresh print copies of our publication. We highlight those who have accomplished great things and deserve recognition, and when we cover national, or regional, topics, we do so without bias.

Bias, I've learned, is the most detrimental part of news. Journalists get so caught up in their own opinions, or the opinions of those for whom they work, that nearly all writing is biased. It's impossible to tell if you're reading something truthful, or something exaggerated. Especially in politics, there is no easy way to get trusted information, and that only

divides us as a country.

"If you don't read the newspaper, you're uninformed. If you read the newspaper, you're mis-informed," American author **Mark Twain** said.

I find this quote sums up our reality perfectly, extending beyond newspapers and into television broadcasting. We need to write the facts. Without the truth, we have nothing. It doesn't matter if you're a Republican or Democrat, or a third party. What matters is we've convinced ourselves that no matter what, the other side is wrong. Stories are often blown out of proportion. Small details are enlarged and inflamed to the point where you start to wonder if the story is completely made up. No wonder everyone hates the news.

I can't even blame them. I stopped watching the news a while ago because stations are either Republican or Democratic, both sides twisting the information to suit their own agendas. There is no simple news. No matter what side you're on, there's no winning. We only report the bad, the good is mostly ignored. And there is so much good in this world.

Of course, reporting "bad" events can bring attention to issues that need to be rectified. As journalists, we also have a responsibility to speak for

those who can't. However, reporting constantly about the bad brings drama. It brings a crowd and publicity. It also brings depression and a lack of faith in humans as a whole. I've seen first hand that there are people who do amazing things for others, who give parts of themselves away to help those in need. We don't hear about them often, and we should.

Journalism is founded on the belief that human beings deserve respect and truth. Today, we've failed that ideology. It's time for a new era of journalists to rise: unbiased. Words are power and we forget that, journalists have abused that. We need to change quickly before we sink to somewhere we can't swim. That battle starts with journalists, but extends to the normal person. Do your own research. Don't just believe something because someone posted it on their Instagram story. One day I hope that we can achieve a world where everything you read is true, but now is not the case.

However, working with my fellow peers on our publications has made me confident that we can write without bias. I watch the Chronicle staff do it every single day. We strive for it and we don't write the easy story, we write the true story. In a world of chaos, you can trust The County Chronicle. Here our top principle is truth, and we will simply give you the facts. •

Read a newspaper!

Liberty Harrison | Editor in Chief

In the age of information, many people feel less informed than ever before. How can this be? One aspect of the issue is the way people are now taught to consume media: being bombarded with information from all topics from all corners of the world everyday without the time or encouragement by media sources to really understand and analyze what one is consuming. This can create an information overload and a comprehension deficit.

One way to combat this is working to actively add critical analysis to one's information consumption routine. Reading versus watching actively helps this. Human brains are wired to evaluate things we see as automatically true, while the human brain naturally views the written word more critically. Because of this, one way to consume information in a way that leads to more comprehension and less passive consumption is by limiting oneself to text-based media. This is one way newspapers shine; whether online or on paper, newspapers are still one of the best ways to consume information, because of the way our brains works and also because the action of reading, taking the time to comprehend letters on a page, jump-

starts one to become more thoughtful about how one is consuming information.

Still this natural analytical assessment is only surface level. Working on a newspaper staff for several years, the importance of reading every article with purposeful suspicion has shown to be paramount to ensure complete understanding. Working to contextualize information in our greater knowledge as well as immediately searching for corroboration or contradictions of information is also vital to full understanding. Using newspaper articles as a main source of information assists this, because most newspaper articles come from reputable organizations and authors, even acknowledging the ubiquitous bias of these sources. Having several newspapers in one's rotation to cross check is an easily implementable way to gain a deeper understanding of what one is reading.

People are often scared to say "I don't know" with access to centuries worth of information at our fingertips. Admitting ignorance has become almost taboo in many societies. One has to become comfortable with this idea, however. Using reading as one's primary source of information is a slower process, meaning less infor-

mation can be consumed per day. Admitting one is not educated on something should be normalized as long as one doesn't carry a strong (or any) opinion on it.

Another aspect of the fear of appearing uneducated is a focus on global and national news versus local events. This has led to an underestimation and undervaluing of local news. This news often, however, has the largest effect on individuals and is the easiest to fully understand. Beginning to read local papers not only supports a dying institution that provides a source of community information, organization, and care for our society that is often lacking today, but also helps one become more aware of how to actively engage beyond the apathetic viewing of information. One of the largest critiques of modern socio-political culture is the commonness of education without use. Even understanding global policy issues or national economic issues, without beginning in our individual communities, ways to create change are often inaccessible for one person.

Therefore using newspapers, rather than social media or even TV news networks, as a primary source of information can assist with the problem of passive consumption of information and the negative effects it has on our socio-political climate, mental health and community. •

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

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NJROTC earn top places at orienteering nationals



Members of the Loudoun County High School orienteering team pose after earning trophies at the NJROTC Orienteering Nationals on March 19, 2023. This was the team's final competition of the year, culminating in ranking second nationally. Top row, left to right: Ryan Colavita, Octavian Ashford, Luke Beaupre, Michael Du Plessis, Tyler Jones, Andrew Wilson, Connor Quinn, Fred Cleary, Alan Crouse, Fallon Murphy, and Mary Homa. Bottom row left to right: Rowan Mendenhall, Tucker Boos, Logan deLadurantaye, and Jaden Gilespee. Photo by Ruhann Du Plessis.

Andrew Wilson | Guest Writer

After earning first place for Area 5 (an area encompassing NJROTC schools in Virginia, Maryland, and D.C.) Orienteering Championships, the LCHS NJROTC Orienteering team was invited to the NJROTC National Orienteering Championships at Hard Labor Creek State Park in Rutledge, Georgia, where they placed second overall in the country. The 15 cadets were split into three teams: Varsity, Junior Varsity, and Intermediate. The Varsity consisted of **Luke Beaupre, Fred Cleary,**

Alan Crouse, Michael Du Plessis, and Rowan Mendenhall. The Junior Varsity team's competitors were **Octavian Ashford, Ryan Colavita, Jaden Gilespee, Tyler Jones, and Andrew Wilson.** Finally the Intermediate team, a squad made up of freshmen only, included **Tucker Boos, Logan deLadurantaye, Mary Homa, Fallon Murphy, and Connor Quinn.**

The cadets practiced twice a week all year, developing the skills required for orienteering, including map reading, decision making, endurance and stamina, land navigation and using

a compass. The team attended local orienteering events throughout the year to practice land navigation in a timed race.

Each individual team's score went into the total score for LCHS. The Varsity team placed third, the Junior Varsity team placed fifth, and the Intermediate team placed second. Cadets could earn individual medals for their performances on their courses. Individual medalists include Beaupre, Du Plessis, and Mendenhall from the Varsity course and Boos, deLadurantaye, Homa, and Murphy from the Intermediate course.

Team captain Crouse said that the meet went as expected. After winning at Area 5, the national team competed at Quantico Orienteering Club events almost every weekend. Crouse says this meant "running harder courses than we would be running at Nationals itself. In turn, we were more than prepared for the level of difficulty and course length that we would be faced with at the event." While cadets run individually, their scores combine to form the team score, and Crouse agreed that "every one of us works to contribute, allowing us to place the way we did."

In addition to competing, nationals allows cadets to make friendships and bond on the trip. This year the team stayed at a lake house near the competition. Traveling, eating out, and encouraging each other at the course were all big parts of the event, according to co-captain Mendenhall. "A great experience overall, the lake house was special. I feel like the team mentality was overall amazing, everyone supporting everyone else as they ran in was amazing to see," Mendenhall said.

Freshman Murphy ran first place overall for the women's intermediate course. Murphy said that the course "was a lot more about speed, especially on the second day. It was pretty hilly and the erosion gullies were confusing, but other than that it was pretty easy to navigate the course."

Senior Naval Science Instructor and retired U.S. Navy Captain **Bill Johns** was pleased with the team's performance, "especially with all the challenges the team faced throughout the year. I'm very happy with the performance of the freshman as well, having four out of the five medal (getting top 10). The future is bright for the team." •

School resource officer finds passion in helping students

Tae Herron | Staff Writer

School resource officer **Jacob Dryden's** previous job was pretty stressful compared to his current assignment.

"The stress here is not as stressful as it was in my previous position," Dryden said. "I don't have my hands on so many things, I can focus on one or two tasks and complete them."

Dryden spent 11 years at previous work location interacting with all different types of people, which Dryden describes as, "People that had special needs, people that didn't have special needs, people that needed extra guidance and people that just needed people to vent to."

After 11 years Dryden thought it was time to change and he wanted

to get back in a school environment.

According to Dryden, County is a "better environment, and I have degrees in health and physical education and I really wanted to get back into the school setting," he said.

Dryden enjoys communicating with students about different things. "It's never stressful conversation with y'all, it's a relaxing conversation even when you guys [students] seem to be a little stressed out and aggravated because I can help you in that situation," Dryden said.

As much as he enjoys talking to the students, he also has a few other tasks he has to do everyday.

"Sometimes my interactions with students and staff are great, sometimes they need work, but that is life," Dryden said. "I also help people as much as I can whether it be

directions, helping them find something or someone, or just someone to talk to. I also have lunch duty a few days a week."

Sometimes his job as an SRO can get a little difficult when students don't listen.

"Sometimes somebody just doesn't listen and I'm hard headed as well and it just gets a little aggravating, but over the years I got used to it," Dryden said.

Even though he came at the end of the seniors' school year he built good bonds to remember them.

Dryden is proud of the seniors he had encounters with. "In just a few months they have all changed and grown in some way, watching them get excited for their futures as well as their summer break," Dryden said. •



New SRO Jacob Dryden smiles as he receives another radio call about a student. Photo by Tae Herron.

Dagstani retires after thirteen years at County

Tae Herron | Staff Writer

Librarian **Tonya Dagstani** is retiring after thirteen years in the school filling three different teacher roles.

Dagstani has decided to retire so she can move to Ocean City, Maryland, with her husband, where she hopes to volunteer.

“I will probably volunteer either with the local fire department in the administrative capacity or maybe with the Coast Guard Auxiliary,” Dagstani said.

Dagstani was fortunate to have her son end up going to the same school where she teaches because she loves the environment.

“I think the staff really cares about students,” Dagstani said. “I’m grateful for the people that have helped to frame his life and his career, and the coaches here for wrestling were outstanding.”

Dagstani will definitely miss helping students and the people as well.

“I will certainly miss being able to pick out books and give kids ideas about what to read,” Dagstani said. “The laughter and the light-heartedness and the fun and the support, and it’s just a smile on my face everytime I walk in the building because I feel so lucky to have been working here.”

But it’s not all sunshine and rainbows. Dagstani will definitely not miss the paperwork part about being a staff member.

“There’s a lot of paperwork that goes on and I won’t miss that part of it,” Dagstani said.

For her, dealing with paperwork is still worth it to get to spend time with students.

Dagstani thinks she has had the same approach even after switching from a special education teacher to reading specialist to a librarian.

“I think everybody has different abilities and I think it’s up to the teacher to make sure that they work with each student in their own learning capacity,” Dagstani said. “I think we all have our strengths and weaknesses, and it shouldn’t just be one streamlined fashion of teaching kids. It has to be different and I think I’ve always done that.”

Dagstani decided she wanted to be involved with students after graduating high school. For her, it was a way to give back.

“I had what I consider some of the best teachers ever. They had high expectations for us, they were no nonsense and disciplined and made us accountable for everything we did,” Dagstani said.

Librarian **Christina Burge** enjoyed working with Dagstani since she helped make things easier.

“We worked very well together because we have different strengths that balance each other out nicely. She is a wonderful listener and is always supportive with any new idea,” Burge said. •



Librarian **Tonya Dagstani** stocks shelves for one of the last times this year, as she is retiring in June and moving to Ocean City, Maryland. Photo by Tae Herron.

Kathy Garrison retires after 20 years as main secretary

Alexis Shugars | Staff Writer

Any student who has ever interacted with the main office in the past 20 years will probably recognize **Kathy Garrison's** tell-tale smile. Much of the faculty agree that Garrison is part of the glue that holds the school together.

According to English department chair **Beth Williams**, Garrison “is the organizer of the chaos that is subs, sub plans, coverage, time cards, and Smart Find.”

Secretary **Michelle Gettier** describes Garrison as “kind” and having “an unbelievable level of patience.” According to Gettier, Garrison is “a creative genius.” Secretary **Amy Perkins** calls Garrison “selfless.”

“She makes this school run on the daily and does it with a smile on her face and a kind word,” Williams said.

Garrison had originally started her career as a bus driver, before working as a field trip coordinator at the transportation office, until she ultimately decided to change career paths.

“When the opportunity to work at LCHS became available I jumped at the chance to return to my alma mater,” she wrote. As a student of the class of 1982, Garrison had very fond memories from her time at our school. “I played clarinet in the marching band and enjoyed going to football games and competitions,” Garrison said.

After taking a typing class at LCHS, Garrison came to the decision that she wanted to seek out a career in an office.

In the last two decades she has spent as a staff member at LCHS, Garrison has made countless memories with fellow staff, as well as thousands of students to come in and out of our school. Garrison recalls her most frightening memory to be a bomb threat that had been called in against the County. “My best friend was still on the phone with the caller while we were having to evacuate the building,” she said. “I didn’t want to go without her.” In the end, the threat was a hoax; however, it was still one of the worst days of her time at LCHS.

On the contrary, Garrison shared multiple memorable moments over the last 20 years, one of which being able to witness her own two children graduate from the same school she had many years prior. “It has been a wonderful experience working here,” Garrison wrote. “I will truly miss all

the friendships I have made during my years at LCHS.”

“She will be missed beyond belief,” Gettier said.

“I will miss chatting with her daily when I get to school,” Williams said. “She will leave some big shoes to fill.” •



Kathy Garrison enjoys the nice weather outside her home as she prepares to retire from her position of main office secretary. Photo courtesy of Kathy Garrison.

Local law enforcement admonishes recklessness of annual senior water balloon game

Hannah Winegar | Staff Writer

With water balloons flying and hitting targets, this year's senior water balloon game is making a splash. Towards the end of the school year, the seniors sign up to participate in a game of throwing water balloons at each other to win a cash prize. This yearly student-organized event is not sanctioned by the school.

116 seniors have signed up to play in the game this year. The rules to this game are simple, participants try to eliminate each other by hitting each other with water balloons and afterwards have to get a picture of who they eliminated, while also having to get at least one person out every five days. There are more specific rules that prohibit things such as participating in the games on school property or throwing balloons inside buildings.

The first place player will receive 50% of the total pool while the second place player and the player with the most kills receives 25% of the total pool. The cash pool keeps racking up, coming to just under \$2,000.

While this may seem like a light-hearted game, school administration

has sent out an email concerning the game. According to the email, things are getting out of hand with daily reports by parents, students, and law enforcement partners of participants speeding in the surrounding neighborhoods, driving on sidewalks and backwards down streets, almost hitting elementary students at bus stops with water balloons, hitting parked cars, and ambushing others while at work.

The Loudoun County Sheriff's Office published a public statement concerning the games, one sentence saying, "LPD has received reports of speeding, a hit-and-run, and reckless driving involving these pranks." and "These actions are illegal AND extremely dangerous for both vehicle occupants and pedestrians."

Senior **Braxton Griffin**, who is the organizer of this event, has since told everyone participating "to calm down and be respectful."

Griffin says that as the game goes on and more people are being eliminated that the games haven't been as hectic. "Most participants are playing smartly and safely," he said. "As I have made it very clear, that is the first priority." •



Seniors Senior Randy White (left) and Davis Melzer (right) pose after Melzer eliminated White. One rule is participants have to take pictures with whoever they eliminate. Photo courtesy of @lchswaterballoon-game23 via Instagram.

School board proposes all-gender bathroom renovations, faces backlash

Olivia DeWan | Editor-in-Chief

On March 14, the school board proposed an \$11 million plan for all-gender bathroom renovations. Several staff bathrooms at Loudoun Valley and Broad Run High School will be renovated to become three single-user gender neutral bathrooms complete with sinks. At Heritage, Dominion and Woodgrove High Schools, plans show "private toilet rooms" with shared sink access for all students and staff. The stalls here will be floor-to-ceiling. If all Loudoun County schools undergo this renovation, the cost would exceed \$21 million.

The renovation was proposed under the LCPS policy 8040 of Rights of Transgender and Gender-Extensive Students, section C, that states, "LCPS shall modernize school restrooms and locker rooms to improve student privacy and to promote the creation of single-user restrooms that are available to all students in a ratio appropriate for the enrollment and size of the school."

There were rumors that all bathrooms would be converted to all-gender, leaving no gender-separated bathrooms. However, these rumors were recently addressed by the superintendent.

"I want to be clear that LCPS is not doing away with the standard configuration of multi-fixture restrooms assigned specifically to boys or girls in any of our schools. All students can

use the multi fixture gender specific restrooms," acting Superintendent **Daniel Smith** stated in an article published by WTOP news. "We are, however, increasing the number of and access to gender-neutral single-use restrooms that offer more privacy."

This plan has sparked a number of concerns, especially regarding student safety in the restrooms with floor-to-ceiling stalls. Many parents are worried about student drug use.

This stems from issues with drug use in neighboring schools and counties. On January 30, two girls at Bethesda High School in Maryland were found on the bathroom floor, one described as "clearly drunk," and the other was in a state so startling that the witness "immediately started shouting for help," according to an article published by "MoCo360."

The proposal stated that there would be "monitoring" of the new restrooms, however, they did not state how that monitoring would occur.

Another reason why the restrooms are being questioned is because of the cost, and where that money is coming from. Funding is being cut from special education programs, leaving special-ed teachers all across the county to beg for staff and subs, according to the article. The school board is cutting three speech pathologists, one special education supervisor, three occupational therapists, and fourteen teachers, as stated in information provided by ABC7News.

In addition, according to a survey conducted by LCPS's superintendent search firm, GR Recruiting, new bathroom designs are not among the priorities parents, teachers, and community members said they would like the next superintendent to focus on.

The top results of the survey are as follows: "School safety 38%, staff recruitment and retention 37%, teacher quality 37%, and academic rigor 35%."

I conducted a survey to gather student opinions of the topic, and out of the 20 students who replied, 17 of them stated being uncomfortable with sharing a bathroom with the opposite gender.

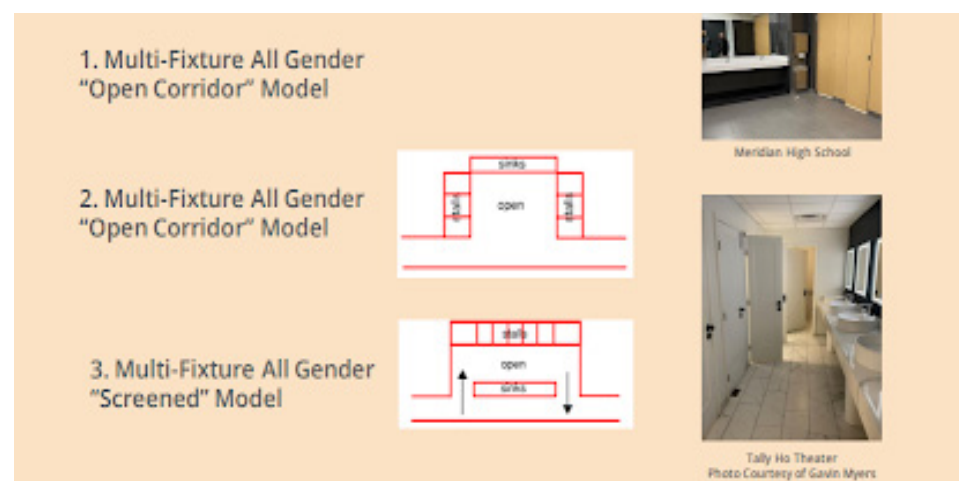
However, some students feel the bathrooms could be a positive addition.

"I think that the option for LCHS to have a co-ed bathroom would be

extremely beneficial," a female senior, who asked to remain anonymous because of the historically controversial nature of these types of issues in Loudoun County, said. "If certain students would be uncomfortable personally using a co-ed bathroom, there are still one-gendered restrooms available."

Regardless, the renovation plans leave many questions unanswered. For example, the number of bathrooms in each school being renovated is unknown, as well the number of restrooms remaining as gender separated. We also don't know if the renovations will be complete in time for school.

At the time of publication, several school board members were contacted but we could not connect for an interview. •



Taken directly from the school board's Safety and Privacy in School Restrooms Item Presentation (3-14-23), several bathroom plans were proposed. Above features images of how the floor-to-ceiling bathrooms would look. Photo courtesy of school board presentation 3-14-23.

Senior athlete of the issue: Valerie Encinas



Valerie Encinas cheers on her teammates as she sits at the end of the lane on January 28. LCHS won 302 to Broad Run's 255. Photo by Kiko Dudley.

Alexa Sterner | Staff Writer

Ever since senior **Valerie Encinas** was born she had been swimming, but once she turned 12 she really wanted more, so she started to swim competitively.

When in season, Encinas makes sure to keep in shape. And for her, the season lasts almost the entire year.

"I swim 11 months out of the year

for a swim club. I wake up every morning at four and swim for two and a half hours. On Tuesdays, I go to strength training for 30 minutes," Encinas said.

When not in high school swimming she is doing another club league to help train, swimming for USA Swimming in the summer and then for Old Dominion Swim League.

Encinas also needs to make sure

she has a good diet along with her workout routine.

Encinas avoids corn and corn products, sugar, and dairy. "Every once in a while, I can have these things but I usually avoid it in high competition months. This diet helps me train better," Encinas said.

This diet helps Encinas perform well in swim meets and helps her train better with her workout.

Right before a swim meet, athletes usually have a routine of doing something special.

"I usually just listen to any type of music before a meet," Encinas said, noting that she seeks any music that gets her pumped up for the meet.

When with her teammates and coaches, Encinas hopes they describe her as "Hard-working and dedicated. I'm always pushing myself to do my best," Encinas said.

With her hard work Encinas is able to swim at Penn State at a division three level while also studying biology.

"I'm going to a satellite campus for Penn State called Penn State Behrend. I'll be swimming division three and studying biology," Encinas said.

Out of school and swimming Encinas says she doesn't do much.

"I don't have many hobbies. I usually just watch movies and hang out with friends," Encinas said.

Even though Encinas has little time outside of swimming she hopes to swim professionally.

"It will take a lot of work and dedication but I hope to maybe make it," Encinas said.

To help Encinas' hard work she got her inspiration from her role model.

"My role model is **Missy Franklin**, she is a retired Olympic swimmer who has used her image to help others around her," Encinas said.

Encinas hopes her hard work is enough to become a professional swimmer. •

Boys tennis rebounds from last season by clinching playoff seed

William Kluttz | Staff Writer

After winning well under half their games last year, the boys tennis team is playoff bound this year. "The first couple practices, we talked a lot about our goal being 10 wins in the regular season," Coach **Schuyler Henderson** said.

The team is likely to achieve that goal, with a few games still remaining in the schedule, and it will be many players' first time in the playoffs.

Henderson, who is in his first year as coach, has been generally impressed. "I think individually, I know there's some guys who probably wanted to do a little bit better than they have this year and maybe some guys who weren't expecting to do as well. So I think all things considered, we did pretty well with our expectations," Henderson said.

Players' expectations were similar. "I think the expectations coming into the season were that we would try and definitely improve from what we did last year," sophomore **Trevor Frost** said. "I think we've definitely met those expectations, as we have

improved quite marginally."

Sophomore **Mathew Ramarge** expressed similar feelings. "I thought we were going to have a great team because we had a lot of new younger people," Ramarge said.

Junior **Jinu Manalel** was happy not only with the product on the court, but how the atmosphere has changed since last year. "It's actually a lot more fun than it was last year and I feel like it's going to continue and we're going to get better... so my expectation for this year was that it's just going to be another year that it's going to be just playing tennis, it was boring. You know, just playing matches, practicing. But no, it was more, like, it was more immersive," Manalel said.

The team is likely going to be playing Loudoun Valley to start the playoffs. They lost to Valley earlier in the season 5-4. "Last match, we did not do very well in serves. So, I'd say we practice serves a little bit more this time," Manalel said.

Henderson is hopeful his team can win. "I think our strength is in our depth. We have a really deep team compared to a lot of teams in the dis-

trict who maybe are a little more top heavy, so I think that's definitely an advantage for us, but as far as things we need to work on, I think we know that our strong suit is singles and we can definitely work on our doubles a little bit more," Henderson said.

The team will be playing six singles games and three doubles. "I think

now that we've seen them at least once, we know what they're good at. We know where we might be able to exploit some of their weaknesses," Henderson said.

Players' attitudes were similar. "I'm going to try and win. I'm going to do the best that I can, but whatever happens, happens," Frost said. •



Sophomore Mathew Ramarge warms up his forehand during practice on May 8. Ramarge currently is ranked fourth of the twelve on the team. Photo by William Kluttz.

Captains triumph over Huskies in cross-county rivals district game

Tae Herron | Staff Writer

On May 1, a huge rivalry game pitted County against the Tuscarora Huskies, both teams having a good record to start the season with. The Captains had just one loss going into the game, while the Huskies went into the game undefeated 8-0, which changed after the game, as they were knocked off 2-1. Watching the players play in the non-stop rain and seeing the crowd on both sides cheering their team on yelling under big umbrellas to avoid getting wet provided a unique experience in addition to the excitement of the game.

Senior player **Bryan Mora** knew going into the game that it was going to be a fight into the end and knew his team had to be ready for the fight.

“There’s always a bit of nervousness going into a game against an undefeated team but we were confident in our ability and preparation,” Mora said. “We knew that we would have to bring our best performance to the field to stand a chance, and were ready to rise to the challenge.”

The Captains’ head coach **Christopher Mazzatenta** was pleased to knock off such good talent and a well-coached team.

“It felt great,” Mazzatenta said. “Tuscarora is well coached and has extremely deep and talented pool of players.”

Mazzatenta felt like the fan support was a big key in their victory against the previously undefeated Tuscarora.

“Our fans were incredible,” Mazzatenta said. “We owe a lot of last night’s victory to their spirited support. I hope we can count on the hundreds of students and family members to get out to our remaining games.”

Junior team captain **Jack Martin** was very pleased with his performance and the big support from the crowd.

“It was a relief knowing that we won and that my goal won the game,” Martin said. “The crowd was crazy and I’m glad I could show them what I can do. They deserved to see a win for being so loud all night and staying through the rain and cold.”

The defense was a big part of the victory as well, not just the offense.

According to Mazzatenta, both goalies that played were able to play stable and bring confidence to the defense, and **Connor Campbell** was successful in stopping Tuscarora leading scorer from scoring all game.

Even with missing five players that game, the team stayed

confident.

“We believe in the saying, Next man up. Our players train to be able to play multiple positions,” Mazzatenta said. “During a single game each player wants to contribute anyway they can.”

This game was for the first place in the district, so it was very important especially with the playoffs approaching.

“This was a must win. The teams were separated by one point in the standings,” Mazzatenta said. “Whoever won this game last night would control their destiny the rest of the way into the playoffs.”

After a tie scoring first half, Mazzatenta and his coaches came up with a strategy to convert in the second half.

“Our coaches came up with a strategy, discussed it with our team leaders, and we made some adjustments based on their recommendations,” Mazzatenta said.

The coaches knew that the game was going to be close at the end of the first half due to both teams being talented.

“In the first five minutes of the second half we wanted to set the tone and came out playing at a higher tempo hoping it would create more scoring opportunities,” Mazzatenta said.

Even though the game was

played in non stop rain, the players were prepared due to previous practices in bad weather.

“Weather wasn’t an issue. I give the boys credit that we have been training in the rain, the cold, blowing winds all year with no complaints,” Mazzatenta said, anticipating they would eventually play games in less than perfect conditions.”

The team looks forward to wrapping up their regular season well and getting ready for the playoffs.

“We have four games over the next eight days with no time to really practice in between just resting and playing,” Mazzatenta said. “Having a loud, boisterous group of fans at our games would really help keep our energy high.”

The senior players were very happy that the team was able to come out with the victory at the end of the very intense rival game.

“The joy and happiness was overwhelming, and I couldn’t help but feel a deep sense of satisfaction knowing we came out on top,” Mora said. “In that moment, it was as if nothing else mattered except the win. It was truly an unforgettable experience, and one that I will cherish for a long time to come.” •



The Captains celebrate their game-winning goal, scored by Jack Martin. Left to right: Rudy Lovo, Connor Campbell, and Ryan Appel. Photo by Hideko Dudley.

Crew team works together to fuel their upcoming competitions

Cat Pizzarello | Managing Editor

Their team may still be in the building stages, but the crew team values teamwork above everything. As they prepare for the long season ahead, sticking together as one seems to be the one thing all these athletes have in common.

“It is a demanding sport as it requires everything from endurance, strength, power, and technique, to teamwork, boat maintenance, and commitment, not just to yourself but to your entire team,” head crew coach **Cindy Deugo** said. Deugo expressed how much she sees these athletes work as a team during their practices.

Sophomore **Dean Stillings** joined the team for the first time this year. “I can’t wait to become more experienced,” Stillings said.

Stillings stated that they have a multitude of varying practices in a given week. “We have morning and then evening,” Stillings said. Morning practices for the team typically last from 6:45 to 8:30 and during that time they use rowing machines while they can’t get out on the water.

“We practice Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays,” junior **Emma Pearson** said. This is Pearson’s second season on the team and she plans to continue her rowing career into college.

During evening practices at Algonkian Park, these athletes lift 400 pound boats into the water to begin their training.

“We get there, we put the launch boats in the water, which are essentially the guide boats,” Stillings said. “Then we row, row, row, and row.”

“The athletes train mentally and physically and show up for each other every practice doing their best,” Deugo said, commending the athletes for how much they get out of their practice time.

These practices are necessary as the team has many upcoming regattas in the season. “We usually have three or four a year and we usually have to get up super early to get there,” Pearson said.

The team has four regattas in total, April 22 and 29 and May 6 and 13. “We usually have several boats in different races so we cheer them on and when it's our turn, we have to go up to the starting line,” Pearson said.



Evening practices for crew are at 5:15 and last for two hours. They practice at a nearby lake located at Algonkian Park. Photo courtesy of Cindy Deugo.

“We finished last in both races, but it was still fun going to the regatta and everything,” Pearson said in regards to their first regatta.

“We are currently in the process of building our team,” Deugo said. The team hopes to make it on past Districts this year, but overall just want to work together to do the best they can.

“Rowing is a sport that is under the radar in the County and we continually look for ways to get it on the radar of LCHS athletes,” Deugo said about the team's growth. Crew requires a lot of specialization in a very specific area of athleticism that athletes on the team enjoy about the sport.

“There is so much teamwork, like if you don’t put your own weight behind what you are doing, you are going to like drop the boat on someone else,” Stillings said. Even if they can’t make it on to bigger championships this year, this group of athletes formed a true team this year.

Pearson says much of the team's positive attitude and success came from their coaches. “She [Deugo] does lots of different things at her day job, all involved with fitness, so she's a great person to have helped us

with our physical strength, and she's also just an amazing person so she helps us become better people,” Pearson said.

Eric Simmons recently joined the team as an assistant coach, who Pearson thinks has been a great addition to their team. “He has a lot of technical knowledge about the sport, which has helped our team a lot,” Pearson said.

“Success can be defined in many ways,” Deugo said. “Each and every athlete this year has achieved success in terms of learning what it takes to be a rower, what it takes to be a member of a tight knit team, and how to take the principles they learn in the boat to the rest of their lives.”

These athletes have gained a great deal of unique leadership and teamwork skills, along with complete respect for each other and their coaches. “You are doing stuff by yourself, but you're working as a team to accomplish those things,” said Pearson.

“It's something quite remarkable to be in a boat with your teammates, working together, feeling the sun and the wind, listening to the oars and the water, smelling the oarlock grease and the sweat of the rowers,” Deugo said. •



The crew team works together to carry their boats out of the water after a long practice. Photo courtesy of Cindy Deugo.

Athlete of the issue: Sophie Webb

Alexa Sterner | Staff Writer

Around fourth grade, freshman **Sophie Webb** started playing softball. After her hard work through the start of ninth grade, Webb made the varsity softball team.

To keep in shape and be ready for softball, Webb trains throughout the year.

"I do weight training at Performance Edge as well as agility and practice with my team," Webb said.

To help with the training, Webb also has a diet she sticks to.

"My diet consists of tons of fruits, vegetables, and protein," Webb said. "Vitamins also help my body get nutrients that I need to help my body stay healthy and strong. My parents help me with meal plans and remind me everything in moderation. So you can eat pretty much anything as long as you keep it pretty balanced between junk food and healthier food,"

Webb's diet and training helps her because Webb is committed to playing softball all year round.

"I play on a travel team year round but during the high school season, we take a break to go play with our school teams," Webb said.

On both teams, Webb had to choose a number to be.

"My number for my travel team is 32," Webb said. "I don't remember why I chose this number, but I did during the first season I ever played



Sophie Webb walks across the softball field to accept her trophy during the award ceremony after her travel team won the 16u division championship for the USSSA Blast in Manassas tournament on September 18, 2022. Photo courtesy of Sophie Webb.

softball. For high school I'm #15. I just chose this number because this was normally one of my backup numbers if I didn't get 32."

To get ready for games, Webb has a way of getting mentally ready to play.

"I have a Spotify playlist that helps me get into the right mental space before a game," Webb said.

Outside of playing softball, Webb has a few hobbies she enjoys.

"My hobbies outside of school are hanging out with my family and friends and traveling," Webb said.

At the moment, Webb is planning to attend college. She isn't sure where yet, but wants to go somewhere warm.

After college, Webb does not want to play professionally right now.

But to keep Webb going, she does have some role models.

"My biggest role models are my coaches," Webb said. They are expected to set the best examples for us to look up to. Some teams have captains, I look up to my captains on the high school team because they have the most experience and set examples and expectations for the team." •

Retiring computer math teacher reflects on running career

Cat Pizzarello | Managing Editor

Better known as our former computer math teacher and cross country and track and field coach, **Courtney Campbell** has made running a part of his life for years.

"In my area every male played football," Campbell said. Campbell participated in football and track and field all four years of high school, along with two years of basketball. He was the captain of both the football and track teams.

"Basketball was fun but I wasn't that good," Campbell said. "Track was my favorite." Campbell's main events in track were the 1600 and the 3200.

"I went to region all four years in track and state three years," Campbell said. Campbell was the champ for his district and region championships his junior and senior year and all-state as a senior.

Campbell set multiple school records at his high school and took all his wins for granted. "Track I was a single A and didn't have a lot of competition back then," Campbell said.

Originally committed to Hampden Sydney College for football, Campbell made the decision to switch to

running cross country instead. "Best decision of my life," Campbell said. "I was captain and MVP for XC."

After college running, Campbell took to ultra races, and was very successful in some of the biggest ultra races in the US. "I have done over 100 ultras, which are races over 100 miles," Campbell said.

"I've raced 50 miles averaging 6:53/mile and 100 miles averaging 8:23/mile," said Campbell. "I also raced 271 miles to set a record on the Long Trail, where I lost about 10 to 15 pounds in those five days."

"I still attempt to run now," Campbell said. Campbell has had some recent knee injuries in the past few years, which has hindered his ability to run, but he still takes part in runs with the cross country and track teams as a coach.

Campbell has been a coach for 36 years, originally as a football coach before switching to coaching cross country and track and has been coaching ever since.

Campbell will continue to coach track and cross country even after his retirement from teaching computer math. "Running for a large part has been my life," Campbell said. •



After switching from football to cross country in college, Courtney Campbell regularly ran the 8k. In the picture above he was participating in his school's home cross country meet at Hampden Sydney College. Photo courtesy of Courtney Campbell.

Senior night honors tennis team's achievements



Top left to right: Harleen Pannu, Anoushka Aggarawal, Sneha Mehta, Cora Wildman, Vivian Lun, Jocelyn Ortiz, Laysha Ricci, Lindsey Ricci, Charlotte Edmonds. Bottom left to right: Leina Young, Sachi Kataria, Amanda Haug. Photo courtesy of Laysha Ricci.

Liberty Harrison | Editor in Chief

Celebrating a year of growth, community, and hard work, our girls varsity tennis team honored its seniors during a transition from singles to doubles on the afternoon of April 20. However, the work of the team goes far beyond one afternoon. This year has been standout as the first normal year for tennis since the pandemic's shutdown, bringing unique challenges and plentiful opportunities for achievement.

Kate Putt, the girls' tennis coach and an avid tennis player herself, has worked to support her team in learning, perfecting, and dealing with the balancing act between school and tennis, one that is particularly difficult for seniors.

"Seniors have a lot going on [during spring sports season]. Tennis starts back at the end of February, when everybody's still for the most part waiting on some college acceptances and things can be a little tedious for them as they're trying to navigate their choices and make decisions about their future," Putt said.

The spring season itself, with variable temperatures and frequent storms, can also pose difficulties to practice.

"It tends to stay colder longer than you hope and it can be pretty windy, which isn't ideal for young tennis players, as anytime the ball goes up in the air it's going to catch in the wind

and that's going to change its trajectory," Putt said.

Every practice follows a schedule of warm up, practicing serves, and scrimmages. Due to the time constraints and sharing the tennis courts with our boys tennis team, practice can run into hurdles that make it difficult to practice all the skills required.

Practice can also be challenging to organize because of the vastly differing skill levels of the team.

"Probably the largest challenge of coaching high school girls tennis is because you have some very skilled players and you have some players who are clearly new to the game who need a lot of skill development," said Putt, who found a work around to this problem by pairing her team by skill level in practice and encouraging the newer players to learn through practical application and observation of more experienced players.

But through it all Putt has seen the team make great progress over the year. In fact, seeing the growth in her players has made some of her favorite memories of the season.

"I have watched a couple of players struggle this year," Putt said. "It was frustrating to me to watch them struggle and I'm sure it was very frustrating for them and trying to figure out what it was that they needed in order to get back to the same form they had last year. So when two particular players that I can think of got over that hump and won that first

match, it made me feel good to know that it would help to rebuild their confidence."

Much of this growth has been from the group of seniors, diverse in play style, experience, and personality, that have made up the team this year.

Senior night celebrated each of them and their accomplishments throughout the year, highlighting what each girl brings to the team.

Harleen Pannu is one of the co-captains on the team and the longest playing senior, having spent all four years on the team, but in her words has been playing "pretty much [her] entire life."

From informal teaching from her dad to playing seriously her freshman year of high school, Pannu values not only the sport but the team bonds she has formed through playing.

Her favorite memories of her time on the team are "hanging out with the team after practice, goofing off, eating food, and having fun." But she also loves the game itself. "It's really satisfying, hitting the ball," Pannu said. "When I hit a really good forehand and the opponent can't get back or when I hit aces on my serve."

The game has also helped Pannu with her self growth.

"Playing tennis has helped me become mentally stronger, because it's a single person game, so you're just out there on the court by yourself, you have to think through the game by yourself, so it's a mentally tough game," Pannu said. "Pushing through that to be able to up my game has helped me to become a mentally stronger person both in tennis and outside of tennis."

This year has been a testament to that growth, which stems from Pannu's biggest weakness in the game. "I struggle a lot with the mental aspect of it," Pannu said. "I get really panicky, a lot of anxiety, and that diminishes my performance when I'm playing, but over the years I've been able to work through it and I've risen through the ranks of the tennis team."

Putt also acknowledged Pannu's struggles, and her overcoming her fears to succeed on the court, especially as Putt said, "Harleen has a really strong game. She has great ground stroke, really good top spin. Nice serve." Putt said that without fear holding Pannu back her skill level has been able to shine through.

Laysha Ricci has been on the tennis team for three years, sophomore to senior, and is known not only for her strong game but kindness that brings the team together.

Through these years Ricci has observed her own improvement. "I've definitely gotten better, and a lot more confident in my playing skills, which has helped my playing game overall," Ricci said.

This year posed a particular challenge in its start.

"I was very down on myself when I started doing bad in the beginning of the season," Ricci said. "I had new opponents that I wasn't sure how to play and it was a real challenge and I was really stubborn minded trying to continue what I had been doing for the last years before I realized I had to make a change."

The variety of the game has in fact proven to be one of Ricci's favorite parts. "I really like how it's one on one but still has teamwork, for example the variety between doubles and singles," Ricci said. "There's a lot of different strategies to use while playing too, which I find very interesting, especially in how I can make them work for me."

Ricci has also brought continuous unity to the team in her attitude, no matter her performance on the court.

"Laysha is one of the kindest, friendliest, most easy going people you'll ever meet," Putt said. "She always approaches everything with a kind of calm and tries her very best every time she's out there."

Leina Young is the newest member of the team and has made progress from beginning with almost no background in the sport.

"We brought her on because she had a really good attitude and she seemed to really want to be part of the team," Putt said.

With this attitude Young has improved in her abilities, as much through her intrinsic motivation to support the team as her appreciation of the sport itself.

"It seemed like fun and I really wanted to have a team sport in high school," Young said. While never playing tennis before, Young reminisced about playing badminton with her dad as a child, applying the same concepts to her beginnings in the sport.

While Young enjoyed being on the team, starting with such little experience had its drawbacks, as she admitted some of her least favorite memories came from watching others playing at a level she wished she could reach sooner, in order to participate more.

As an individual, Young's improvement has developed immensely over the season, as Putt said she has evolved a strong foundation of the sport, with her strokes, rallies, and general understanding all strengthening.

"From a personal perspective, I've improved," Young said about her improvement, acknowledging she still has a way to go to reach the level of some other members of the team, but emphasizing the importance of the journey, and the memories she's made along the way, her foundational reason for joining the team.

"Bus rides, karaoke, snacks, being a team, karaoke," Young said about her favorite memories. •

Commitment signing honors student athletes



On May 10, athletic director Kathleen Cassidy introduced each student and their various commitments for sports, along with some of their accomplishments throughout their time at LCHS. Photo by John Klimavicz.

Cat Pizzarello | Managing Editor

Nick Alexander will be playing golf in the fall at Division III school Christopher Newport University. Alexander played both golf and basketball and helped the golf team to three region titles. Alexander was named All-State and individual champion at the Dulles District Championship last fall.

Corey Costello will be attending Division I school East Carolina University as a pitcher next year and will major in cybersecurity. Costello played one year of basketball and four of baseball at County. "In 31 innings pitched this year, Corey has struck out 60, giving up only 12 hits, with a 1.12 ERA," Cassidy said. "At the plate, Corey leads the team in batting average .490, hits 25, second in runs scored 17, and has only struck out twice in 60 at bats."

Olivia DeWan will be attending Division III school Bridgewater College and will major in communications and media studies. DeWan played field hockey and ran indoor and outdoor track. "She was a captain of the field hockey team as a junior and senior," Cassidy said. DeWan helped her team to Second Team All-District as a junior

and First Team All-District and First Team All-Region as a senior.

Valerie Encinas will be swimming at Division III school Penn State-Behrend and will major in biology. "Valerie swam for the Captains for four years and served as team captain," Cassidy said. Encinas excelled in the 200 and 500 yard free and earned All-District honors in both events.

Jackson Snyder will be attending Division I school James Madison University to play football. Snyder was a part of the football and wrestling teams for all four years and played one year of lacrosse. "This year in football he earned First Team All-District, All-Region, and All State Honors," Cassidy said. In addition, he was named the District and Region Defensive Player of the Year."

Brady Solomon will be playing baseball at Division III school Stevens Institute of Technology and will be majoring in business and technology. Solomon played both baseball and basketball. "Our number two pitcher all year," Cassidy said. "Brady has a 3-1 record. In 19 innings this year, has struck out 27, with a 2.57 ERA."

Evan Stanley will play football at Division I school Furman University and will study business marketing.

Stanley was a varsity football captain two years and earned second team All-District honors. "In addition, he was awarded the Ownership and Work Ethic Award by the football staff," Cassidy said.

Matt Starchville will be attending Division III school, Neumann University, and will play on the baseball team and major in pre-physical therapy. "Matt is currently hitting .349 (3rd on the team), third on the team in hits with 15, [and] leads the team in rbi's with 19," Cassidy said.

Sofie Steel will be attending Division III school York College as a member of their lacrosse team and will study criminal psychology. "She has been named team captain and MVP twice," Cassidy said. Steel earned All-District and All-Region honors and over 100 career goals.

Luke Roberts will be wrestling at Division I school University of Virginia and will major in kinesiology. "As a team captain for the wrestling team, he helped lead the Captains to three straight district and region titles," Cassidy said. Individually, Roberts has been honored with four district championships, three region championships, three all-state honors, and back-to-back state championship titles.

Thomas Tyler will be playing Division III school Stevenson University and will study business. "While he earned All First team All-District, All-Region and Second Team All-State honors in football and All-District honors in Indoor Track, he will pursue lacrosse in college where he earned Second Team All-Region honors as a junior," Cassidy said.

JP Vanderloo will be swimming at Division III school Washington University, and majoring in economics. "JP ran cross country and outdoor track, but is best known for his swim accomplishments as a Captain," Cassidy said. Vanderloo led as a swim team captain and as a senior won four individual district titles, one region title, three region runner-up honors, and all-state honors in the three events. Vanderloo also broke the school record in the 400 yard free relay.

Randy White will be running at Division III school University of Lynchburg and will be majoring in history. White has run cross country and indoor and outdoor track for all four years of high school. "He earned All-District and All-Region honors in Cross Country and All-District, All-Region, and All-State honors in Indoor Track in the 1600m run," Cassidy said. •



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STUDENT LIFE

Students raise over \$2500 through SCA's mini-thon



Maisy Davies | Staff Writer

SCA organized a mini-thon to raise money for cancer research.

According to the American Childhood Cancer Organization, in the United States, more than 16,000 kids are diagnosed with cancer every year. That is one child being diagnosed every 33 minutes.

The SCA's mini-thon is working to raise awareness and money for pediatric cancer families, as well as research to better prevent, diagnose, treat, and most of all, cure childhood cancer.

Mini-thon was created last year by senior **Kristy Cam**. Cam grew up participating in these events all throughout grade school, and her aunt owns a cancer non-profit organization.

All money raised goes toward the Four Diamonds Foundation, whose mission is to conquer pediatric cancer by helping the kids and families with care, and extensive

and innovative research. "Mini-thon is a great way to bring people together to work for a common cause while also allowing students to be a part of something bigger than just themselves," Cam said.

Some fundraisers that mini-thon has hosted include sponsored restaurant fundraisers and the rowdy ruff, which was purely a funding event.

Mini-thon has and will continue to have many fundraiser opportunities finishing the school year, including their next main event which will be on June 2. Cam says, "Expect bouncy houses, carnival games, and many other fun activities. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to donate!"

At the end of the event, the total amount of money raised will be displayed for everyone to celebrate. To keep an eye out for additional meetings and events, follow SCA's mini-thon Instagram page: @lchsmminithon •

Lexi Donnelly, Sydney Schaefer, Alli Donnellu, Olivia Brown, Leah Bianchini, and Austin Trinh came out to rowdy ruff, one of SCA's mini-thon events. Students played volleyball against each other by grade. Many came out to support the Mini-Thon. Photo courtesy of Kristy Cam.

Spring spirit week concluded by teachers' narrow victory over students in pep rally basketball game

Evelyn Kuzminski | Layout Editor

It was a weird week, between the relief of finishing the third quarter and the eager impatience for spring break to arrive. Students did have somewhere to channel their restless energy though: spring spirit week, concluded by an energetic student-vs-teacher pep rally basketball game.

The four-day week included spirit days ranging from Twin Day to Salad Dressing Day and prompting varying levels of participation from the student body. "I only saw a handful of people who did them," junior **Gracelyn Daniel** said. "But the people who did them, they were really clever."

"It had some participation, but not a lot," junior **Anthony Tran** said. Many students came equipped with aprons and spatulas for Wednesday's Soccer Moms and BBQ Dads theme, while seniors embraced the idea of Greek salad dressing with togas and white dresses on Friday.

Friday wrapped up spirit week with an adjusted schedule to accommodate the pep rally at the end of the day.

"My whole day was just really easy going and even the altered schedule was nice," Daniel said. After shortened classes, students flooded down to the main gym to watch a handful of teachers and

students play a short but eventful game of basketball.

Senior **Tae Herron** signed up to play in the game after seeing a post about it on SCA president **Alex Ahedo's** Instagram story. "Score on teachers is my role," Herron said.

Herron, who was previously a part of the winter break pep rally, was determined to win the game. "I participated in musical chairs," he said. "I didn't do so good, I didn't win it. That was my goal. So this time, my goal is to beat the teachers."

The students, coached by players from the varsity basketball team, led the teachers definitively to begin, ending the first of two seven-minute halves with a resounding 12-4 lead. While the players took a halftime water break to regroup and get their substitutions in order, the game's commentators, seniors **Herbie Hermann** and **Donovan Claybrooks**, took a break from providing play-by-play remarks to bring out a few spectators to attempt to shoot a basket from half-court. None were successful, but their efforts were met with encouraging applause from the rest of the crowd.

When the teams took the court in the second half, the teachers began to build their comeback, although the students remained in the lead. The second half was just as spirited as the first, with



Junior Charlie Seventko warms up before the student-teacher pep rally basketball game at the end of spring spirit week. Although the students led for most of the game, the teachers won with a final score of 17-16. Photo by Evelyn Kuzminski.

plenty of turnovers and attempted three-pointers. Every time it looked like a three-point shot was headed straight for the net, students all across the bleachers held up three fingers in anticipation, then let out a collective cheer or groan, depending on whether the shot was converted.

As the clock ticked on, many students started paying less attention to the game, but the teachers continued to close the gap, getting within only a few points of the students. But the game went on, and

the players were no less focused. With 26 seconds remaining, business education teacher **Stephane Longchamp** made a basket that brought the score to 17-16 in their favor. The students scrambled into a final effort to regain the lead, but the buzzer sounded and the bell rang, cementing the teachers' win and the end of spirit week—and signaling the long-awaited beginning of spring break.

"A pep rally is the perfect way to go into spring break," Daniel said. •

Juniors found first Black Student Union to build a stronger community



Jeremiah Davis, Dashaun Trammell, EJ Faal, and Madison Ruff run the concessions table at the Black Student Union’s showing of “Spiderman: Into the Spideverse” in late March. The movie night was the first event hosted by the club. Photo courtesy of Madison Ruff.

tional community within the school that helps students celebrate Black culture and provides an understanding space for County’s Black minority, according to Ruff and Cummings.

The BSU has plans to hold events bringing the community together, and hopes to work with student unions at other schools as well as local businesses to make these events happen.

“These events will achieve our goals by helping everyone come together and socialize,” Cummings said, and will include activities such as movie and game nights.

BSU meetings will focus on having serious discussions about current issues and microaggressions, planning events, as well as more lighthearted activities like bringing in food. The funds the club raises will be used mostly for travel within the region to visit sites including historical Black colleges and universities and museums like the African American History Museum in Washington DC, Davis said.

All are welcome and encouraged to join the BSU, which hosts meetings every other Thursday before school in room 125.

“We expect our members to help spread the word, volunteer, and plan events,” Ruff said. Council members in particular are expected to contribute to brainstorming and event planning. After only a short time, the club has an abundance of plans in the works. “We came up with a ton of ideas for the club for the rest of this year and beyond,” Davis said.

Cummings expressed her hopes for the club’s growth in the coming years. “In the future, we see people feeling more comfortable joining the club, no matter the race, and we’re hoping the BSU will be more known and talked about by others.”

For its leaders, the BSU is already providing the sense of community that they hoped to build. “I’ve met and gotten so close to so many great people,” Ruff said. “The community we have in the club is amazing, everyone is so fun to be around.”

“This club means everything to us, because there is finally a place at County where we feel as if we belong, where we can be our true ideal selves, and we can best feel recognized,” Cummings added. •

Evelyn Kuzminski | Layout Editor

Students have dozens of opportunities for involvement through clubs and organizations, but for the first time in the school’s nearly seventy-year history, students can now also join a Black Student Union (BSU).

The club was founded by juniors **Madison Ruff**, **Cyre Davis**, and **Semira Cummings**, and works with faculty members **Matthew Prince**, **Jarrel Taylor**, **Stephane Longchamp**, and **Jamee Robinson**.

“We were all sitting in history class together and talking to our teacher about Black History Month and how our school could be better about actually celebrating,” Ruff said. “We thought of a couple spirit days and event ideas and wanted to create them. Our teacher told us we should create a BSU and we loved the idea.”

“After we had that idea, the ball just started rolling,” Davis said. After getting a couple of other students on board, finding their teacher sponsors, and filling out a form, the juniors—who already knew each other through their classes — got the BSU up and running.

The BSU aims to build an overall supportive and educa-

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Saying hello to SCA's new presidents and goodbye to the old ones

Sahar Siddiq | Staff Writer

Current juniors **Madison Ruff** and **Kai Tjader** are going to be our new SCA presidents starting in August 2023. Both expressed how excited they were to get the position, celebrating with family and friends when getting the news that they won the SCA school-wide election. "It was also really cool to go around school and people congratulated me," Tjader said.

The rising leadership team has plans to make the SCA a lot more student involved.

"Both of us want to get the student body more involved in SCA," said Ruff. Ruff and Tjader both believe that as an SCA member they are there to represent the student body but feel like they don't have a say. "So we want to get more people's input and help to build a stronger community."

One way they want to include the student body is by sending out Google forms before spirit weeks and events. According to Tjader, students "can request different things we can do on spirit days. Then SCA would look at it to make sure nothing is inappropriate, and then we'll send out another list where people can vote on what spirit day is," Tjader said.

"I'm excited just to extend the student body's voice," Tjader said. He spoke about how coming into high school having a voice wasn't a concern for him, but over time became more important as he gained more of a voice.

"I just want to say most of us [SCA] are a resource if they ever need anyone to talk to, any ideas for SCA we are always open to hearing people," Ruff said.

Current SCA presidents **Alex Ahedo** and **Hadif Shah** have been in SCA for years now and have seen how it has changed and grown over the years.

"I feel like we had a lot more students involved in events than last year," Ahedo said. He expressed how it was more difficult to hold events without having access to the gym during COVID. Compared to COVID years, "We got more student events, powerbuff, we had rowdyruff, and other events for the students," he said.

"I feel like the class in itself became closer, a lot more friendly conversations," Shah said.

Giving advice to the future presidents, Ahedo said, "Stay on your plan, people are gonna criticize, but you know that the decision you make is what you believe in." •



Madison Ruff and Kai Tjader, the winners of 2023 - 2024 school year election, on the campaign poster they posted online. Their campaign was successful, and they will become SCA leaders next year. Photo courtesy of Madison Ruff.



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Senior newspaper staff reflect on high school memories and lessons

Liberty Harrison | Editor in Chief

Finishing out the year, the long term senior staff members of The County Chronicle reminisced about their years at Loudoun County, the lessons they learned, and the highs and lows of high school journalism; and, looking back through their memories, they also have some advice to share.

OLIVIA DEWAN

What is your favorite memory? Winning districts for the first time in school history with my field hockey team was really awesome. That is something I will never forget. That and between putting out the newspaper, having that completed product and passing them out in the mornings.

What is your least favorite memory? The stress from AP testing, it was definitely the most difficult thing. Having to prepare and then go through the entire test all while dealing with your other classes.

What do you do in your free time? I do a lot of working out, so I'm usually at the gym lifting or running, or I spend a lot of time writing or reading as well.

What is your favorite subject? Newspaper.

How have you grown over your high school career? I've learned better study techniques, and what works best for me is a schedule, and how to prioritize my time effectively. I've also learned a

lot about persistence and having to stick with things that are challenging.

Where are you going to college? Bridgewater, with a major in journalism.

What is one piece of advice you'd give to an underclassman? Find a really good consistent group of friends because you do need that support system.

TAE HERRON

What is your favorite memory? Getting through high school, being able to finish up high school normally after the whole COVID thing, being able to get back and see everyone.

What is your least favorite memory? Taking a specific class, I found it very dumb and I do not enjoy the subject. I also did not enjoy taking a test on birds on the last day of school.

What is your favorite subject? Math, my favorite teacher was **Mr. Dearman**, he pushed me very hard. He could tell I wasn't trying and he had a talk with me and made me push harder, so I proved him wrong. It was good to see that I could prove a teacher wrong, that I could set myself to a higher standard.

What do you do in your free time? Outside of school I was running track a lot, and if I wasn't running track I was at work, and if I wasn't at work I was usually hanging out with friends.

How have you grown over

your high school career? As the classes got harder, it made me push harder.

Where are you going to college? Old Dominion University, with a major in journalism.

What is one piece of advice you'd give to an underclassman? Don't wait until the last minute to start trying with your grades because before you know it you'll be trying to catch up at the end. Start your GPA off good and finish it good, so you don't have to worry about catching up once you get to your junior and senior years.

HANNAH WINEGAR

What is your favorite memory? Meeting new people.

What is your least favorite memory? Having to wake up early every day for school.

What is your favorite subject? Study hall, for an academic subject, English.

What do you do in your free time? I read, play guitar, play video games.

How have you grown over your high school career? I became more confident and I've made more friends, but I still suck at math.

Where are you going to college? Northern Virginia Community College.

What is one piece of advice you'd give to an underclassman? Don't care what people think, because you're most likely not going to be seeing them in five years anyway.

ALEXIS SHUGARS

What is your favorite memory? My favorite high school experience was after the PSAT my senior year, when I got to help the theater department prepare for their production of "Alice in Wonderland." When I went to go see the production I was thinking about all the things that I was able to help the production team to do, which was really cool.

What is your least favorite memory? My least favorite memory was being in a few classes with a person I really didn't like, they constantly annoyed me.

What is your favorite subject? Psychology.

What do you do in your free time? I work at Noodles and Company, I like to hangout with my friends, go try new places to eat, I love to eat.

How have you grown over your high school career? I think I have become more outgoing and confident, which is not saying a lot because I'm still not outgoing or confident, but a lot more than I was my freshman year.

Where are you going to college? VCU, majoring in Psychology.

What is one piece of advice you'd give to an underclassman? Don't stress so much about grades, it's never the end of the world to get one bad grade. It is most important to not only focus on school but maintain a healthy work-life balance. •

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Where are our seniors going to college?

Mia Rodgers is committed to Virginia Tech where she will be majoring in animal and poultry science and minoring pre-vet with a focus in equine health. "For my major, tech offered a lot of opportunities," Rodgers said.

Rodgers expressed that she chose Virginia Tech for the convenience of the Virginia-Maryland School of Medicine being on the Virginia Tech campus. "It would be an easy transition for me between schools," Rodgers said. "I also really like the atmosphere of the school."

Rodgers applied to James Madison University, William

& Mary, University of Virginia, Penn State, University of South Carolina, and West Virginia. "I ultimately decided on Tech because of the opportunities," Rodgers said.

"I want to join the intramural cheerleading team so I can meet new people and have fun," Rodgers said. "I also want to join choir at Tech."

"I think college is important for a graduating high school student because it allows more opportunities and experiences to grow," Rodgers said. "I think it's still okay not to go to college, but personally I am going."



"I'm dreading taking college math," Rodgers said. However, she expressed how excited she was to get to meet new people. Photo courtesy of Mia Rodgers.



Herbie Hermann is committed to the University of Arizona with a major in astronomy. "I love everything with space and I want

Hermann plans on joining the marching band and the pep team at the University of Arizona. Photo courtesy of Herbie Hermann.

to be an astrophysicist," Hermann said.

Hermann picked University of Arizona for its specialty in his chosen major and because he wanted to be far away from home. "It took me a very long time to decide. I was considering a few other schools due to price and

level of education," Hermann said.

"I am looking forward to meeting a lot of new people and all the freedoms and free time that comes with college," Hermann said. Hermann expressed that college was important to him so he could pursue a job in his field of expertise.

Kathryn Homa is committed to Duke University to study biology with a minor in Spanish. "My goal is to pursue a career in military medicine, and studying biology will give me the opportunity to follow the pre-med track and do some research," Homa said.

Homa is planning to do ROTC and wants to volunteer as an EMT. "They have a student-run EMS program with a hospital on campus, plus lots of opportunities for research," Homa said.

"My other top choice was the Naval Academy. It was really hard to turn down the opportunity for a fully paid degree," Homa said. Homa ultimately decided that Duke

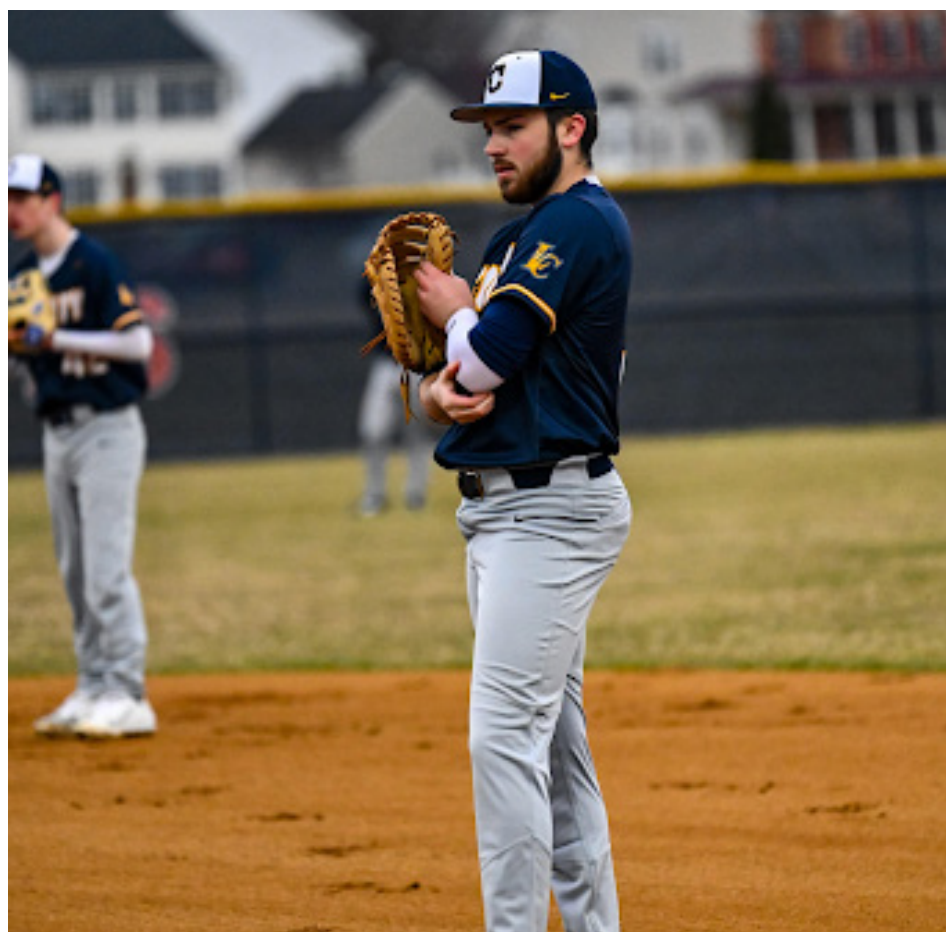
had the right balance for her looking forward. "I decided I wanted a normal college experience with ROTC on the side, instead of the all military, all the time environment at the Academy," Homa said.

"My goal is to pursue a career in military medicine, and studying biology will give me the opportunity to follow the pre-med track and do some research," Homa said. In high school, Homa volunteered as an EL translator/assistant and found the opportunities at Duke for Spanish perfect for her college career.

"I'm looking forward to more freedom and meeting new people," Homa said.



Homa is planning to join the triathlon team at Duke with her success in both cross country and track this past year at County. Photo courtesy of Kathryn Homa.



Corey Costello is committed to play baseball at East Carolina University. "I chose this school because of the outstanding baseball program and the coaching staff and it's just a beautiful school," Costello said.

Costello was also considering James Madison University, Old Dominion, Notre Dame University, Radford University, Clemson University, and Virginia Commonwealth University. "The decision process for me was extremely stressful until I received a baseball

"The thing I'm most looking forward to in college is getting to live out my dream of playing Division I baseball," Costello said. Costello expressed he wasn't excited about leaving home for so long, but was excited for the new opportunities college would bring. Photo courtesy of Corey Costello.

scholarship offer from ECU and I knew instantly that was the place I wanted to play," Costello said.

"The recruitment process for me was honestly very stressful. I was recruited a little bit on the later side for the 2023 class," Costello said. Costello worried that it was too late to get offers and expressed that many of his friends already had commitments.

"Finally something clicked and I performed well in front of a lot of schools and finally got in touch with a couple schools and got my first offers," Costello said.

Costello believes that going to college is important to completing your dreams for your career. "But you will also make some of the best friends you will ever have in your life and you will make the best memories of your life," Costello said.

Alex Ahedo will be attending Virginia Tech University and majoring in business information technology with the opportunity to do honors college. “I was very interested in it and it was a high ranked field at the school with great resources. I love the culture and diversity at Tech,” Ahedo said.

“I applied and was accepted to three schools: James Madison University, Virginia Tech, and University of Virginia,” Ahedo said. Ahedo expressed he may also pursue a minor in computer science.

“Business information technology is specific enough to pursue my interest in technology and analytics but flexible enough for me

to pursue multiple jobs within the business field,” Ahedo said.

Ahedo expressed that he was really looking forward to the freedom in college and being able to figure out what he can do on his own. “I am, however, dreading leaving all my friends from high school,” Ahedo said.

Ahedo believes that it is important for graduating students to go to college in order to figure out what they want to do in life or pursue a specific career path. “If you know that you want to do a trade or real-estate or a job that doesn’t require a degree, a path that isn’t college is probably just as good or better than the college track,” Ahedo said.

Ahedo has participated in track and field and soccer in high school and hopes to continue sports in college. “I am hoping to possibly walk on to the track team or do club track. I also want to play club golf or pursue intramural sports,” Ahedo said. Photo courtesy of Alex Ahedo.



Vanderloo expressed that he wasn’t dreading much about college, but that finding a good roommate may be annoying. “What I am looking forward to in college is meeting new people. WashU has students from all around the world, so it’ll be cool to experience different perspectives and cultures, as well as live in the vibrant city of St. Louis,” Vanderloo said. Photo courtesy of JP Vanderloo.

JP Vanderloo will be attending Washington University with a plan of majoring in economics. “I chose Washington University because it is an elite academic institution that offers me several opportunities I’ve always wanted, such as NCAA swimming and a military commissioning pathway,” Vanderloo said.

Vanderloo has yet to decide on a minor, but is set on economics as a major. “I chose econ because I became very interested in it after taking AP econ my junior year, and it is a great setup major for law school which is something I want to pursue,” Vanderloo said.

Vanderloo expressed that his decision process took longer than most because he didn’t apply early. “Those that I did apply early to included Cornell University and the Naval Academy, which are both schools I am very interested in,” Vanderloo said.

Vanderloo received a transfer option from Cornell University and was waitlisted at the Navy Academy and is still considering both schools. “I also applied to Harvard University Regular Decision and was waitlisted, so I am still considering them as well,” Vanderloo

said.

Vanderloo is committed to swim on Washington University varsity men’s swim team and plans to do army ROTC on a full scholarship.

Vanderloo expressed that his recruitment process for swimming was also complicated and had unfortunate timing for his recent improvements that he had in the fall.

“Once I reached out however, Washington University was extremely supportive of me, and did everything they could to help me gain admission. I have no plans of pursuing professional swimming post-college, but during college, I hope it helps me with time-management, discipline, dedication, and provides a team that I can rely on,” Vanderloo said.

Vanderloo believes that college is a great learning opportunity for adult life and valuable for figuring out what you want to do with your life. “I think college is important because it provides young adults a chance to experience living by themselves, while still having a support system around them in case they have problems,” Vanderloo said. •

Cat Pizzarello | Managing Editor

Congratulations to all of the class of 2023!

Find more stories featuring members of our senior class online at countychronicle.org!



Life after high school: Alumni reminisce on high school experiences and offer advice to current students

Taylor Helfer | Staff Writer

As the campus begins to wake up in the morning, **Michaela Scott**, former County Chronicle editor and Loudoun County High School alumni, also wakes for her early 9:30 class with an exciting, but busy, day ahead of her.

As a major in multimedia journalism and a minor in business, Scott's first year at college has been exhilarating, all due to her passion she explored in high school.

"I was going to be a computer science or mathematics major," Scott said. She later explains with the help of her newspaper teacher, **Valerie Egger**, she was able to pave a way for something she really had an interest in.

Unlike some students, Scott finds that she has more time for extracurricular activities such as Greek life events or meetings for the Virginia Tech newspaper, the Collegiate Times. She learned how to manage her time in high school and now she is glad she has that skill.

"I was honestly shocked when I came to college because my workload was challenging, but manageable," Scott said. She later adds, "You have to have the time management skills and the responsibility to do all of your work. But, it depends one hundred percent on your major and how hard you work."

Scott explains that the skills and experiences she developed and learned from high school in activities such as the SCA translated

over to her college experience.

"The Student Council Association gave me a lot of leadership experience and really great communication skills," Scott said. She also explains that cornerstone basic friendship-making skills and public speaking experiences enhanced her college experience.

Much of Scott's high school experience was impacted due to the pandemic. However, she's happy that she gets to enjoy her college experience to the fullest post pandemic.

"I don't think I would have as much fun in college as I would if it would be a pandemic. In high school, I didn't feel like classes were taken as seriously," Scott said.

In 2020, LCPS put specific parameters in place in order to cater to students' needs during the tough times.

"The teachers were extremely lenient. I remember I was all online my junior year and I was in AB Calculus. I remember we were taking tests with our notes and it made me think that I could really do math" Scott said. She later adds that because her junior year seemed laid-back, her senior year was harder due to all the lost information. She also began to think that math was really her passion, which she soon found out was not.

Scott's biggest key to managing her chaotic college days are to have a plan and write things down in her agenda.

"I like having a physical copy of everything I need and like being able to write down things that



Gracie Hawkins carefully cuts a mannequin's beard to perfect her technique at Paul Mitchell Cosmetology School in Tysons Corner. Hawkins is a Loudoun County alumni and current cosmetology student. Photo courtesy of Gracie Hawkins.

are happening," Scott said. She adds that although agendas aren't for everyone, it helps her manage and remember the easily forgetful events.

After experiencing some of high school during the pandemic, Scott explains that including yourself into activities is the best way to make a better college experience.

"I know at Virginia Tech there is such a huge community and I know we have events, but maybe putting on more events that bring the community and student body together. That really brings all your peers together," Scott said.

In order to miss busy morning traffic in Tysons Corner, County graduate **Gracie Hawkins** must wake up at 6:30 on work mornings. Once she gets into the busy city, the day gets even more hectic.

Hawkins is a practicing cosmetology student who is nearly done with her education after almost a year. So far, it has been anything but easy.

"I feel like cosmetology school is not for the weak. It's a lot, Tuesday through Saturday, eleven months nonstop working and a full time job without pay," Hawkins says. However, she later added, "But, in the long run it is helping you pass a state board and I do feel like I've learned a lot."

In high school, Hawkins was in theater, which allowed her to gain public speaking skills. Theater also taught her that she should do what she wants without others' opinions.

"I do what I want to do and don't worry about the connotations people have with certain careers,"

Hawkins said.

Like Scott, Hawkins was also hit hard by the pandemic in her sophomore year and both feel like their junior years were lost.

"Things all of a sudden stopped. It was so nice to have a break, but I feel like I learned nothing my junior year," Hawkins said.

Although Hawkins didn't choose the college route, she agrees with Scott that having basic friendship making skills and putting yourself out there is the best way to enjoy life after high school. Hawkins also adds that having a positive mindset is the best way to succeed.

"I have been able to meet some of my best friends in cosmetology school. It's amazing because some of them are much older than me, so I feel like I have made such a wide variety of friends," Hawkins said.

Unlike Scott, Hawkins' biggest stress relievers are her coworkers and close friends. For her, her outgoing personality and basic friendship making skills came into play.

"In the cosmetology business, the best thing you can do is rely on your coworkers," Hawkins said.

As the school year comes to a close and seniors head off on their own journeys, learning from others, as well as yourself, is crucial. Whether it be knowing how to make friends or learning to be outgoing, making sure that you have the most positive energy is what makes every day a good one. As Hawkins said, "Not everyone at school has the best energy, so sometimes you just have to keep your space and carry on." •



Virginia Tech freshman Michaela Scott and sophomore Mohamed Awad pose together at a football game. Scott is a Loudoun County High school alumni and current college student. Photo courtesy of Michaela Scott.

Search for the best post-graduation restaurant

Taylor Helfer | Staff Writer

As the school year comes to a close and seniors start to stress about AP exams, Outreach, and other various events, picking where to eat after graduation should be the least of their issues. These local businesses showcase finer dining, while also bringing mouth-watering foods and good vibes right to your table.

Firebirds (Village at Leesburg) - 9/10

Firebirds, located in the Village at Leesburg, features a large bar, delicious foods, and a welcoming staff. For those looking for a place that accommodates large groups of people, Firebirds handles it well.

To start off my meal, I was recommended to get the favored bruschetta and meatballs. My first appetizer, the meatballs, consisted of five delicious, but large, meatballs in total with three pieces of bread on the side. For the bruschetta, the burrata on it was loose and tasty, but there was an oil and vinegar mixture that didn't go well with the dish at all. However, these appetizers were very filling and would be great for a large party.

To drink, I ordered a "Raspberry No-jito" mocktail, which was a mixture of fresh raspberry lemonade, mint, and lime. This drink was sweet, but almost tart. Still, the drink was beautifully concocted. This drink alone was \$5.95, which was very reasonable.

For my main dish, I had ordered a blue cheese filet, which was one of the many steak options on the menu. The blue cheese dressing perfectly complemented the filet, which was cooked perfectly to my liking. The total price of the filet was \$40.75, which was reasonable for the size and amount of steak and side of choice I had received.

The total price of this meal was \$60.20 which was slightly pricey, as some dishes were of low quality. Aside from the awkward vinegar and olive oil taste with the bruschetta, the taste of the filet and mocktail were outstanding. For this, I give this restaurant a 9/10.

Travinia (Village at Leesburg) - 9.5/10

Travinia, also located in the Village at Leesburg, features "contemporary American-Italian cuisine and many specialty wines in their large bar. Their main goal is to create an atmosphere of comfort, style, and offer an extensive menu.

For my first thing to eat, I got the free, unlimited bread. This bread was fluffy and delicious with lots of olive oil and herbs to garnish. I really liked the fluffiness and



The "Blue Cheese Filet," is a dish at Firebirds which features a filet cooked to order, topped with blue cheese dressing and a side of your choice. Firebirds is one of the many local, pricey, spots to dine after the graduation ceremony. Photo by Taylor Helfer.

taste of the rolls, but they were a little too oily for my liking.

I ordered the "Fettuccine Travinia" which consisted of fettuccine pasta, alfredo sauce, and grilled chicken. The food came out quite quickly which was great, and the food was steamy and warm. The pasta was creamy and very saucy, which is what I liked and the chicken was nicely seasoned and very tender. This dish cost \$18 which seemed fair for the quality and quantity of food.

After this, I decided to order a simple plate of tiramisu. It came out soggy, drooping and downright unappetizing. The entire bottom of the plate was covered in a brown sauce which was supposed to add flavor but instead made the tiramisu wet, look sloppy, and taste bad. If it were me, sticking to other desserts such as the "Chocolate Decadence Cake" or the "Lemon Ricotta Cheesecake" may be ideal. This dish was \$10, the most expensive on the dessert menu, which seemed poor for the quality of food.

Although the food came out quickly, the service was otherwise slow as it took several minutes to get more utensils or get a refill.

Overall, Travinia was a nice, somewhat fancy place to visit. The food was delicious aside from dessert and had very nice live music to entertain guests. Travinia prices their dishes nicely and it was on the cheaper side overall at \$43 for two people. With the taste of the pasta and rolls, this place is extremely favorable although the rolls were too oily and the dessert was poor. For this, I give Travinia a 9.5/10.

the mushiness of the beans and tomatoes. For anyone who likes spicy foods, these are definitely for you.

Alongside the eggrolls, I also got their famous bread rolls. These bread rolls are known for being donut texture and perfectly fluffy. In agreement with this popular belief, these were perfectly fluffy, warm, and were delicious. Although I did not have the honey butter, those who dined with me said that it was fluffy and sweet which was perfect for the doughnut-y rolls.

To drink, I had a lemonade which was very sour and bitter. Although I thought it was nice to drink, I would've been better off with a water or another drink of my choice. Aside from the sour lemonade, my glass was dirty, which also made this experience unfavorable.

For my main dish, I ordered the "Penne Primavera" which came with broccolini, mushrooms, asparagus, tomato and basil, parmesan and of course penne pasta. For an additional \$4, you can add chicken or shrimp. This dish sounded delicious, but when I took my first bite, the blend of vegetables, dressing, and unproportionally cooked pasta was unfavorable. For this dish overall, it was \$22 which seemed inadequate given the amount of food as well as the quality.

Overall, Sweetwater Tavern would not be my first pick for after the graduation ceremony. With the costly appetizers, the unevenly heated pasta, dirty dishes, and the sour lemonade, it made my experience unfavorable. Although, the famous rolls, as well as the environment of the restaurant was very pleasing. The total cost of my dinner was \$108.90 for three people, which is around \$36.3 for each person. For this, I give Sweetwater Tavern a 6/10. •

Sweetwater Tavern (Sterling) - 6/10

Sweetwater Tavern is one of the twelve restaurants in the "Great American Restaurants" food chain. This restaurant is set with a bar, delicious steaks, which they are known for, and a subtle southwestern vibe. They accommodate big groups well and have large seating options including a patio.

For my first thing to eat, I got the "Tex Mex Egg Rolls," which were \$11 dollars for four. For someone who has a low spice tolerance, these were pretty spicy. However, the avocado sauce, which was not to my liking due to its odd runny texture and flavor, cooled down the dish significantly. These were really delicious with the nice crunch of the eggrolls and



The "Penne Primavera" which features penne pasta, asparagus, mushrooms and other vegetables is one of the many favored dishes at Sweetwater Tavern. Sweetwater Tavern is one of the many expensive, but worth it, places to dine after graduation. Photo by Taylor Helfer.

Student artist Jocelyn Ortiz perseveres through roadblocks in her art career



An unnamed piece by Jocelyn Ortiz features the maximalist style and experimental additions of layering. Ortiz is a current AP art student and future liberal arts major at The New School. Photo by Stephanie Woshner.

Taylor Helfer | Staff Writer

Through the strokes of a pencil and the dashes of paint, senior **Jocelyn Ortiz** has created a vibrant world of color although filled with many challenges.

Through learning from her teacher **Stephanie Woshner**, who she has had for three years, Ortiz has been able to grow and learn tremendously.

“She’s willing to continue to learn and ask questions,” Woshner said. “She just wants to continue to get better. She’s not afraid to get

something wrong or fail at anything because she knows that failure is going to help her learn.”

Ortiz has been an artist as long as she can remember as it was always her favorite class. This year, Ortiz is finishing four years of high school art courses with AP Art.

“It’s hard to say exactly when I started doing art, because I can remember myself loving to draw from a very young age, but I feel like that’s the same with any little kid,” Ortiz said.

The support of her family always helped Ortiz prompt her art career.

“My interest in art was always there, but I think the support of my family recognizing that I enjoyed it really early on made it easier for me to love it even more as I grew up,” Ortiz said. She later adds that this support has helped her to create a very unique, messy, free drawing style.

Since art has been a huge part of Ortiz’s life, she lets herself be surrounded with creativity and freedom that is so apparent in the fun and supportive art environment.

“I think art is what keeps the world alive,” Ortiz said. “People

don’t realize it’s a part of everything around them, especially with how many different forms of art there technically are.”

In art, as in many other hobbies, there are always mistakes. The way Ortiz overcomes her mistakes are one of the reasons why she is described as such a strong artist.

“There is usually a solution for every medium, but the mental setback you feel by making a mistake, especially on a piece you care about, can be a pain to work through. Sometimes I get so wrapped up in a piece that I do too much to it and it’s no longer what I envisioned,” Ortiz said.

Keeping a clear mind is the best way Ortiz overcomes her hard moments. Whether it be a creative block or another motivational issue, Ortiz has a common practice to sustain a clear mind.

“I think stepping back from a piece from time to time and reevaluating how I would like the final piece to look is the best approach to working around mistakes already made and preventing what I think would be future mistakes,” Ortiz said.

Like many artists, Ortiz has some struggles with managing art with her other classes and extracurriculars.

“I am a very slow worker when it comes to art,” Ortiz said. She adds, “I rarely choose to work on bigger pieces or create a fully fleshed out and rendered piece. So the content I’ve needed to create for my AP portfolio has been a push out of my comfort zone and a pretty big challenge. But I appreciate the challenge of inspiring me to make some of my favorite works of mine.”

Beginning this fall, Ortiz will be attending The New School aiming to earn a degree in Liberal Arts.

Her challenges within her art career have helped her grow and eventually pursue her career further.

“Many of the pieces I made this year are some of what I am most proud of just because of the challenges they’ve presented me and for what they mean,” Ortiz said.

Although she has had many hardships, Ortiz has come to love art for everything it has done for her. In fact, Ortiz states, “Art is something I’ve learned I could never live without. Whether I’m creating it myself or I’m appreciating something beautiful someone else has made, it gives me a different sense of fulfillment than anything else.” •

Staff Infection: Teachers bring their love of music together to form a rock band



Hideko Dudley (left), Matthew Trkula (second left), Matthew Amres (behind), Phillip D'Arcangelis (second right), and Richard Ricci (right) launch energetically through their set list. Staff Infection only practiced four hours before taking the stage on April 19 and Lunch On The Lawn. Photo by Cat Pizzarello.

Olivia DeWan | Editor-in-Chief

Music blasts across the front lawn on a perfect sunny day while students turn their attention to the make-shift stage. Performing covers from Guns N' Roses, Green Day, and Bon Jovi, **Richard Ricci, Phillip D'Arcangelis, Matthew Armes, Hideko Dudley, Mathew Trkula** and **Joshua Brown** took an ordinary school day and transformed it into something far more enjoyable.

D'Arcangelis describes the group as "this thing that randomly happens every couple of years when Mr. Ricci really wants it to happen. My first experience with this group was around 2015."

Staff Infection constantly switches members, and Ricci unites them.

"Legend has it that the band goes back into the 90s," D'Arcangelis said. "I got involved because I was asked by Mr. Ricci, and who can say no to that face?"

The goals of Staff Infection are simple: to have fun and entertain the students.

"Some staff members were looking for a fun activity to do that would contribute to school culture and spirit," Ricci said.

In order to add to that "school spirit," Staff Infection started practicing for a gig for the students on April 19 during the periodic Lunch On The

Lawn.

According to D'Arcangelis, the group practiced in the band room and the auditorium four times in the morning before school leading up to the performance.

It may seem like a short amount of time to prepare, but thanks to the group's individual musical skill, everything started coming together.

"We do have some amazing musicians," Ricci said. "Mr. Trkula can play anything on guitar - he makes me dizzy. Mr. D. is used to playing more technical parts on bass, so whatever we do is easy for him. Mr. Armes did really well getting back into drums for the first time in years. Ms. Dudley and Mr. Brown are just gifted singers."

All musicians took part in some form of music when they were in high school except for Ricci, who didn't start learning rhythm guitar until he was about 40 years old.

Staff Infection takes a lot of their inspiration from 70s and 80s rock. However, they did play a few pop classics.

"I loved "Party In The U.S.A.,"" Dudley said. "It is fun to see all of our students sing along!"

Students were thrilled to hear that Staff Infection would be playing at all lunch shifts. There was hardly anyone eating in the cafeteria that day.

"When I first heard they were

playing I was super excited to see them," freshman Norah Lee said. "Afterwards, I was so impressed, the performance was amazing!"

Staff Infection had to overcome a few challenges, one being sound difficulties during A and B lunch.

"We didn't have the equipment fully set up," D'Arcangelis said. "C lunch got the best performance and D was fine, too. For only practicing as a full band for approximately two hours total before we played the lawn, I think it wasn't too bad. I'm a super perfectionist, so I'm never fully happy with any performance."

Dudley, affectionately known by her students as Ms. Kiko, had a brighter outlook.

"It was fun," Dudley said. "I love to see the students singing along and just having fun in general."

A crowd favorite, based upon

cheers and applause, seemed to be "Sweet Child Of Mine" by Guns N' Roses. During D lunch, senior Donovan Claybrooks jumped in on alto saxophone to accompany the band as well.

"The students and staff seemed to enjoy it, and a lot of folks offered some nice comments after the show ended," Armes said. "Overall, I felt our performance on the lawn went pretty well."

Students have been asking for Staff Infection merch while inquiring about their next performance, which is currently in the works.

"I was surprised they played for us and that all those teachers knew how to play instruments," junior Daniellah Etisi said. "I thought the performance was great and they did an amazing job covering the songs! I know my friends enjoyed it as well." •



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Marching band performs at White House

Berek Harrison | Staff Writer

On Monday April 10, our award winning marching band made school history by performing at the White House after being invited by the White House social secretary.

The students first heard the news during band class on Tuesday March 28. "Immediately I felt a mixture of confusion and excitement," sophomore **Kelsan Giamporcuro**, who plays baritone trumpet, said. The students learned they would be performing for the egg roll celebration at the White House.

They didn't have much time to

celebrate because they needed to learn five new songs within the next three days. "I was planning on getting some sleep that week, and then I knew that I wasn't going to get any," Giamporcuro said.

The band practiced four hours each day and managed to learn the five songs, taking up seven pages of music. Some of their favorites were The Avengers Theme and "Grand Old Flag." "I definitely enjoyed the drumline part," Giamporcuro said about "Grand Old Flag."

On the Monday after spring break they arrived at the White House at around 10 in the morn-

ing. When they arrived they got searched by the Secret Service. "I personally wasn't nervous. But there were a lot of other people who were," Giamporcuro said.

At the event there were a few other marching bands attending, "There were a few other university marching bands there, but we were the only high school marching band," sophomore **Michael Hogye** said.

They were playing outside the entrance into the lawn of the White House to people who were waiting in line. "I expected we were going to be performing on the front lawn

or something near the front lawn, but we weren't, unfortunately," Hogye, who plays the trumpet, said.

Overall the experience wasn't as exciting as the band members had hoped, though. The weather was warm, and "a lot of it was very tiring," Giamporcuro said. "We played the same stuff over and over again and I was kind of underwhelmed."

Still, it is an experience that they will remember for years. "Maybe we weren't playing on the front lawn. But we were at the White House. That's pretty darn cool, if you ask me," Hogye said. •



(Left) The marching band lines up, ready to play their instruments. Photo courtesy of Matt Giamporcuro. (Right) The marching band standing in front of the White House. Photo courtesy of Kelsan Giamporcuro.

Guitar and orchestra rule the stage during spring concert

William Kluttz | Staff Writer

On the evening of May 10, the guitar and orchestra programs held their spring concerts. However, instead of two full size concerts, the first half was made up of solos, duos, trios, and quartets of students from both programs to create a "coffee shop" concert. Students chose the pieces they performed, and many stayed after school or came during their study halls to get the music right. Both programs were directed by **Mathew Trkula**. "Normally all the other concerts are a little more formal and we play as a large group. This is kind of like an open mic style and we do it as a reception afterwards, so this is probably the most casual one of the year and kind of like an end of the year party for us," Trkula said.

The night began with a duet

from Trkula on guitar and teacher **Kiko Dudley** singing "Fast car" by **Tracy Chapman**. That was followed by a performance of Oasis' "Wonderwall" done by **Grant McMillian** on electric guitar, **Wayne Griffin** on bass guitar, and **Carlos Escobar** on vocals. Other highlights of the first half were solos by **Ryan Oats** on guitar, **Nate Casarrubias** on guitar, **James Nanna** on guitar, **Nilson Zelaya** on violin, **Luke Stewart** on violin, **Joey Walker** on double bass, **Kiya Banks** on guitar and vocals, and **Edgar Romero-Ayala** on guitar. The first half ended with a duet from Trkula on guitar and McMillian on electric guitar.

"The freshmen and the people who have never played before are the ones I'm kind of most proud of because it takes so much guts to do it, especially their first time," Trkula said.

After a brief intermission,

larger groups took over from both the guitar and orchestra. They all performed pieces they chose for a competition at Busch Gardens on May 20.

A few days earlier, on May 5, guitar put in a solid show at the Aguado competition. They finished second in the Ensemble 11-12 grade, Oats won the freshman solo competition, and **Emmanuel Nacional** won second in the senior solo competition.

"It's a lot more stressful because, you know, in middle school, there's not many people playing, and you know, the songs are easier. This one was kind of like my first, like, actual big concert, but it was fun," Nanna said.

Trkula agreed that there is relief in this being the last concert of the year. "I love the concerts, but the logistics are stressful, but the actual performances are a lot of fun," Trkula said. •



Grant McMillian and **Mathew Trkula** perform in a duet to close out the first half of the concert. **McMillian** soloed through most of the duet on electric guitar, with **Trkula** on classical guitar. Photo by **William Kluttz**.