

THE COUNTY CHRONICLE

LOUDOUN COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL'S NEWSPAPER



THE LIFE OF WADE BYARD

Behind the scenes on Loudoun County Public Schools' information officer's career, rise to fame, and contributions to charity.

WHAT'S INSIDE...



Mixed Reactions to Cafeteria Tables

The cafeteria got new dining tables in late November, but not all students are in support of the new arrangement. *page 8*



Volleyball Wins 14th State Title

Varsity volleyball establishes a "decade of dominance," winning their tenth straight state championship. *page 24*



Seniors' "Downplayed" Lunch Privilege

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THE COUNTY CHRONICLE

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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@lcps.org.

OUTDOOR SEATING

THE SENIOR PRIVILEGE UNDERCLASSMEN LOVE

Maggie Sheridan | Co-Editor-in-Chief

Walking outside I feel exhilarated and free as the sun hits my face and I settle down to enjoy my meal surrounded by my friends.

As students make the transition from junior to senior year, one special privilege many seniors look forward to is getting to sit outside during their lunch blocks. However, there are several significant problems with this desired and eagerly anticipated privilege.

The first being that there is extremely limited space available to sit outside. There are only four tables outside which each sit a maximum of six people, so seating is first come first serve.

“I feel like our privilege is being downplayed by the administrators and wish we had more options to sit for sure,” senior **Daniel Delargy** said.

Students could easily expand into the courtyard because there are many picnic tables which just sit unused.

“One of the things on my short list is to see if I can get facility services to expand the patio and if possible add two more rows of seating,” said principal **Michelle Luttrell**.

The County has a system in place called a Capital Improve-

ments Project, which puts all schools’ requests together and then takes a look at what priorities there are and puts them on a bid list.

“I can probably argue that because we are overcrowded and our enrollment continues to go up, for security and safety we need to expand and get more seating options in order to give students the space they need,” Luttrell said.

Compared to other schools we also have a lot less room outside to engage and eat. “Every other high school that I know has some sort of raised or elevated expansive patio,” said Luttrell. “The layout of our school restricts us in so many ways.”

Although there is limited room directly outside the cafeteria, there is plenty of room in the courtyard which is not being taken advantage of. There are even several picnic tables out there, which no one uses.

“Years ago that was a privilege we extended to seniors, but it requires adult supervision and we don’t ask our teachers to do lunch duty, so I would have to take Admin and safety and security to work that out,” Luttrell said.

Some of the underclassmen sit outside too, though they are not allowed to. It is extremely frustrating for us seniors when this happens

because we feel disrespected and as though our privilege is not being upheld.

“A lot of the time, the underclassmen get outside before us and take our seats, so a majority of the time my friends will be forced to stand around a table because we have no seats,” senior **Kylie Rowand** said.

Although students have voiced their opinions and frustrations about this, nothing has been done to remedy the situation.

“We haven’t seen students on campus in a while, so it’s hard for us to know offhand whether or not they’re seniors, especially with masks on,” Luttrell said. “When underclassmen do go out there, we’ve asked the seniors to try and help in a respectful way and redirect and regulate that, but sometimes that doesn’t always happen.”

It appears as though there are many issues with the outdoor seating concept, and not a whole lot of solutions for the senior class.

“It really sucks because even if all of the problems do get fixed, it wouldn’t be until after we all graduate and are gone,” senior **Rachel Meyers** said.

Will these problems be solved, or will they simply be swept under the table? •

Excessive trash dumped during lunch LEAVES CAFETERIA DISASTROUS

students' lack of empathy creates hardships for staff

Michaela Scott | Editor-in-Chief

According to an informal poll conducted during advisory, over 65% of students do not see an issue regarding an excessive amount of trash being left behind in the cafeteria this year.

Contrary to the student body's belief, the school administration and the custodial staff have expressed several concerns regarding the increase in excessive trash being left behind during the lunch periods. The lack of empathy students have when leaving the cafeteria has made the aftermath of lunch periods disastrous.

Head custodian **Maria I. Benitez** explained her concerns about the dramatic increase in litter throughout the cafeteria this past year. "Every year is different, especially when the year starts because freshmen are still adjusting," Benitez said. "However, this year is so much worse. Even today, my custodial staff pointed out how much trash was under the tables in every lunch."

Each day the administration and school security, including Principal **Michelle Luttrell**, share lunch shifts in the cafeteria to provide supervision for students and ensure that it is a safe area to eat. Luttrell expressed that she has observed an

increase in trash this school year accumulated in the cafeteria as opposed to the past seven years she has been principal.

"It is really concerning, but we are attributing that to the students being away from structured expectations for a year plus," Luttrell said. "Although this is my eighth year, there has been more trash than there has ever been, I don't think it's ever been this bad."

Benitez encouraged students to practice what they are taught at home, so it isn't as bad in the school building. She also mentioned how unnecessary it is to make such a mess when eating. "I know the students are teenagers, but they are already grown, and when I compare high school to elementary schools I've worked at, high school is so much worse," Benitez said.

Luttrell explained how administrators have implemented spot checks at the end of each lunch shift to determine if tables are cleaned off sufficiently.

"We check the cameras after every lunch shift because sometimes students run away from their messes," Luttrell said. "We call parents, give lunch detention, and we have had to pull students to tell them their behavior is unacceptable and disrespectful. You shouldn't

expect someone to pick up your trash because everyone is capable of throwing it away themselves."

The custodial staff wipes down the tables, changes trash cans between each shift, and after the lunch period they typically spend over an hour sanitizing the cafeteria. However, this year, Benitez indicated that they are spending nearly two hours cleaning after lunch.

Luttrell mentioned that she is aware of the frustration from our custodial staff due to students actions, the short amount of time and the amount of sanitizing required because of COVID-19 protocols. "With the cafeteria's new tables it is even harder to clean around," Benitez said. "There's more trash underneath the tables, and not in the trash can."

Benitez explained the importance of knowing how much extra work the custodial staff puts in daily. She emphasized how she understands there will always be a little mess under tables, but for students to play, and throw their food is unacceptable.

Change can't happen in a day, it takes time, but every student can make a difference by taking their trash to the can. "I know we are here to clean, but it's not fair to us," Benitez said. •

MY LIFE WITH AUTISM

a guest post by Victoria Christina Ramos

My name is **Victoria Christina Ramos**. I'm 19 years old and I'm a New York City native and returning graduate at Loudoun County High School. I do ordinary kid stuff. I read and write novels. I enjoy the Diary of A Wimpy Kid books. I watch Austin & Ally. I love PAW Patrol, The Loud House, Monster High, and **Laura Marano**. I also love Beetlejuice the Musical, and the fifth generation of My Little Pony. And I love Miraculous Ladybug. But there's something else that's so special about me, I have Autism.

Autism is a pervasive developmental disorder that commonly manifests in early childhood, characterized by impaired communication, excessive rigidity, and emotional detachment.

I was born with Autism and it has been with me ever since. I first realized I had it since I was two years old. I couldn't talk yet. It made me frustrated and it made me cry a lot.

Growing up with Autism was hard and came with some complications for me. There were always meltdowns when I didn't get my way. I would disobey my parents and cry or scream. But Autism made me super smart, too. I was learning to read at a college level when I was in fourth or fifth grade. My mom was shocked. How could her baby girl learn to do that at

such a young age? The answer? I don't know.

It's not easy living with Autism in school. I always had tantrums in kindergarten and still have them in high school. I have trouble making friends and even more trouble focusing on what I need to focus on. When my teachers told me celebrities and the PAW Patrol were plainly just a fantasy, it broke me. I hated going to school and pretended to be sick just to get away from mean teachers. Outside of school life was even tougher. I hated going places where my mom wanted me to go or hated doing my homework when I first lived up North. I had therapists there who were not nice with me and that led to one of my horrific, bad episodes. But I've been getting better.

There are good and bad things about my Autism. One of the bad things is having meltdowns. The main reason why I have meltdowns is that my mind is so intensely focused on something I want or need that it cannot tolerate either delay, denial, or refusal. Meltdowns are really painful and embarrassing. They make me feel like a weakling.

The good part is I am really smart. For example, I taught everyone in my other high school the Hand Jive from Grease LIVE! just by watching **Vanessa Hudgens**, **Keke Palmer**, and **Julianne**

Hough on YouTube. That's how smart I was. Another good thing is I get to take breaks whenever I'm stressed or upset. Chocolate treats, like Hershey's and Lindt, help me too. And best of all, I'm going to get a service pup, Zara.

Zara is a Goldendoodle pup who is the youngest daughter of Jolene and Renegade and the younger sister of Una, Vega, Wally, Xena, and Yaeger, and she is going to help me with my meltdowns and tantrums. Her job is to accompany me to decrease anxiety during medical or dental visits, school activities, shopping and travel. Some autism service pups like Zara are trained to recognize and gently interrupt self-harming behaviors or help de-escalate an emotional meltdown. For instance, she might respond to signs of anxiety or agitation with a calming action such as leaning against me or gently laying across my lap. She is going to help me become the best me I can be.

I continue to struggle with my problems, but with support, reading, writing, friendship, and a bit of love, I'm getting a whole lot better. There are many ways besides Autism that students feel they don't fit in. Maybe you have experience with them. But don't let anyone tell you who you are. You already know who you are. You are amazing, kind, and brilliant. •

The Christmas Creep

HOW EARLY IS TOO EARLY?

Disclaimer: When I use the term “holiday,” and any derivatives thereof, I mean it in regards to the generic, secular, and often heavily commercialized winter holiday season. Hanukkah, Advent, and other religious holidays should by all means be celebrated according to their respective religious calendars. On the other hand, this piece is by no means intended to direct, offend, or otherwise infringe on your right to celebrate (or not) any winter holidays whenever and however you see fit.

Evelyn Kuzminski | Layout Editor

It happens every year: at some point, still in the middle of fall, holiday decorations and advertisements start popping up everywhere you look. “It’s the Most Wonderful Time of the Year” plays as you walk down the grocery aisle. Reindeer, snowmen, and holly decorations adorn displays. It’s almost as though the pumpkins, acorns, and other autumnal decor have become an afterthought.

There’s a name for this phenomenon - my new favorite holiday term, in fact: the Christmas creep. Merriam-Webster defines it as “the gradual lengthening of the Christmas season with earlier displays of Christmas decorations and music, along with earlier holiday sales, advertising, and other displays of consumerism.”

There are tangible reasons why many retailers contribute to the Christmas creep. Holiday sales can account for as much as 30% of a business’ annual sales, according to an article from the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School. So it makes sense that stores would want to extend the opportunity for those sales for as long as they can. Whether or not their efforts convert to pur-

chases may be another story, but their reasoning is understandable.

However, how early is too early to start celebrating the holidays? Some retailers have pushed the calendar up a little too far. Hobby Lobby’s first holiday post on Instagram this year was on August 16, telling us to buy ornaments to make our decorating a little easier. We weren’t even back in school yet, and they were already trying to plant the holiday seed in our brains.

Hobby Lobby was by far the earliest mention of the holiday season this year that I’ve found, but that doesn’t mean a few other stores weren’t sneaking snowflakes and golden baubles into October as well.

Macy’s posted animations of toys and gifts under a tree a week before Halloween, announcing their stock of the “most wished-for toys.” Walmart advertised their matching winter family outfits “for all your merriest moments” a few days later, with a picture of a family decked out in red and black plaid standing around a mantel decorated with a small tree and gifts.

Other retailers and grocers were a bit more timely with their holiday introductions. Target and JOANN both announced their new holiday inventories and gift guides promptly on

November 1. Holiday drinks arrived on the Starbucks menu on November 4. Michael’s holiday stock came in a couple weeks into November.

Giant didn’t mention the holidays until November 21, but when they did, they declared it “officially peppermint season,” a much more disputable claim. Days before Thanksgiving, and they were already telling pumpkin spice to “move over.” I can tolerate welcoming peppermint a little early, but pumpkin gets to stick around through November, no contest.

Panera was actually relatively delayed in their holiday product debut this year, with the first mention of the holidays on their Instagram feed on December 2, five days later than it was last year.

So there’s more than a few stores that push the envelope in terms of when they break out the reindeer. But I was pleasantly surprised by other stores’ abilities to not overshadow Thanksgiving and the end of pumpkin season.

But that’s all about retailers’ holiday celebrations. What about the decorations that go up at home? I’ve sort of drawn a line between the retail and personal celebrations: I can’t control when Target starts playing “Rockin’ Around the Christmas Tree,” but I can choose when

I do. So while I'm willing to let the retail scene start in early November, personally I like to see the fall celebrations through a bit more before we get to the winter holidays. However, I have revised my opinion on the accepted holiday start date in the past few years.

Until a few years ago, the rule in my house was "no Christmas until December" - Frosty, Rudolph, and Santa had to wait at the door until November was a thing of the past. (This rule complements the other rule in my house - no pumpkin until October.)

But then came 2020: the year that changed everything, this ideal included. With everything that was going on, with not being able to spend time with family and friends, we decked out for the holidays earlier than usual. We needed the holiday joy before December.

Again this year, some decorations went up on Black Friday and in the few days between Thanksgiving and the new month - outdoor lights, candles, countdowns, etc. But I wasn't ready to break out some of the more blatantly holiday-themed decorations until December 1 - the holiday music, Santa hats, and candy canes.

Overall, I've let Christmas creep a tiny bit - but my "creep" was others' "normal." I think that until Thanksgiving, all the attention should be on fall. Get the most out of your pumpkin spice lattes! On Black Friday, I'll start pulling out the winter decorations, but they won't all go up until December. They definitely won't be up in August (looking at you, Hobby Lobby).

The Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade does a pretty nice job of transitioning from the fall to winter celebrations: starting the parade with the gobbling Tom Turkey and ending it with everyone's favorite jolly old elf. •

'UNACCEPTABLE'

Hot takes on when Christmas should be celebrated

Cat Pizzarello & Crawford Holmes | Staff Writers

Most of those we surveyed agree the Christmas season should generally start right after Thanksgiving, with junior **Henry Quinta** thinking that Christmas should be celebrated a couple weeks before and after Christmas. On the fact that most people stop celebrating Christmas on or shortly after December 25, Quinta said, "It's their thing, and I'm not going to barge into their business."

Many, like Quinta, believe that Christmas should be celebrated when the family chooses to. "You can start it whenever you feel like celebrating," said freshman **Micah Desser**.

"It is the American right to celebrate Christmas only the day before Christmas Eve," sophomore **Chase Johnson** said. Johnson's family put decorations up only a week before Christmas and chose to save the celebration for the big day.

Some, like junior **Callie Keys**, believe there isn't enough Christmas being celebrated. "Way too late is UNACCEPTABLE," said Keys, stating that Christmas is better celebrated a little on the early side.

While many believe that more celebrating is better, there is

also a stigma against intruding on other holidays, "October is Halloween time," Johnson said, a sentiment shared among many people. Steckler says celebrating early "ruins the fall," and that people who enjoy the Christmas season get a whole month after Thanksgiving to celebrate.

Others like sophomore **Samuel Fantu** think that seeing Christmas decorations too early causes Christmas to become "boring."

Celebrating right after Thanksgiving has its fair share of allegations against it as well. Fantu thinks that people should enjoy the atmosphere of Thanksgiving while it lasts, saying, "If you put up the Christmas tree right after Thanksgiving, Thanksgiving doesn't have the same feeling anymore."

A side of the argument no students mentioned, however, was the qualities of Christmas that go year round. Principal **Michelle Lutrell** says that doing things like listening to Christmas music, "makes me feel good," and remarks that she listens to Christmas music all year round, despite packing up decorations in time for the new year. "Why are we just listening to **Mariah Carey** in December?" said Lutrell. •

Cafeteria table change causes mixed reaction amongst students

Maggie Sheridan | Co-Editor-in-Chief

On Tuesday, November 30, when students walked into the cafeteria for lunch, they were all surprised to find the usual long tables were no longer there. Instead, they were greeted with an assortment of different tables to eat at, such as high pub tables, the bar tables, and the round tables.

According to principal **Michelle Luttrell**, the school has been asking for new furniture in the cafeteria and put in a request a while ago. The tables are simply a delayed response to earlier requests.

“It’s important that while we have the oldest building, we’re still taking every opportunity to get some upgraded equipment and furniture whenever possible because you guys should have access to new stuff,” Luttrell said.

Luttrell asked the county specifically to give us flexible seating with different types of tables and options for students.

“The long tables piled everyone together and that wasn’t good for current circumstances involving COVID mitigations,” Luttrell said.

“The flexible seating has helped because now everyone has their own little seat as well as giving us administrators the flexibility to move around and get around every table when supervising so that if something were to happen, we could get to students more quickly.”

Besides adhering to COVID

guidelines, the new seating also helps due to the school’s issue with overcrowding.

“The new tables have given us an increased seat count, which is great because our enrollment is so large, and we still have an additional set coming soon,” Luttrell said.

When communicating with the county about the new tables, she told them exactly how she wanted it to be done.

“I told them I don’t want new furniture if it’s going to result in a reduction of seating because we can’t afford to have that happen,” Luttrell said.

Although LCPS gave the school new tables, there are still other aspects of the school Luttrell hopes they will improve on and replace.

“Student bathrooms have been on the list for years and years, but we have not yet received word on when that change may occur, so we are still trying to upgrade everything else as well,” Luttrell said.

The new furniture has produced varied opinions from students across the school. “I thought I wouldn’t like it at first, but I’ve changed my mind. I like how the round tables make it feel more homey, and I can speak to my friends without having to shout down the table,” junior **Kathryn Homa** said.

Although students such as Homa have positive feedback about the tables, there are many that disagree

with this. They argue that the new tables create a lack of seating and create an exclusive environment.

“There is no room for empty seats, so it forces you to sit next to people that you may not want to sit next to, and splits people up from their friends,” sophomore **Luca Jungkeit** said.

It is also a struggle in general to get to the cafeteria in time to get a good seat, according to some students.

“It is way too hard to find a secure seat, the whole lunch hierarchy was destroyed, I feel like I am stranded since the high seats are never open,” sophomore **Devon Micheal Tremeau** said.

“The tables being too small means that friend groups that would normally be kind of connected like chains are now disjointed, the problem of people stealing seats used to be nonexistent but some days I will literally steal a high chair to sit at the small table.”

Some students also struggle with the new seating because they believe the money could have gone elsewhere. “I think it’s a good change in scenery, but the money could have been used for better purposes,” freshman **Carrie Fuchs** said.

Overall, there are many mixed emotions about this change and it will take some getting used to for everyone. •

The bar tables and high tables are located on the left side of the cafeteria, giving students various options of where to sit.
Photo by Maggie Sheridan.



New round tables are folded up to begin cleaning at the end of the day. These tables make it much easier for the custodians to get around and mop as well as clean surfaces.
Photo by Maggie Sheridan.



Academic Team competes on popular show "It's Academic"



Seniors Quinn Griffin, Brighton Lieu, and Max Linville (left to right), score 460 points as they achieve second place on the show "It's Academic!"

Alexis Shugars | Staff Writer

On December 11, 2021, the Academic Team appeared on NBC4 to compete on the show "It's Academic!" against two other High School teams from the DC/Maryland/Virginia area.

"It's Academic" is a trivia-style competition show featuring questions about a plethora of topics such as history, literature, and math. The teams compete during the months of December and January leading up to district, region, and state competitions in January and February.

Coach of the Academic Team, teacher **Mel Hefty**, has been a key part of the teams success. "When

I started coaching the team, they had been on the waiting list for "It's Academic!" for a few years," Hefty said, "We finally got off the waitlist a couple years into me coaching the team and have been competing on the show yearly ever since."

Practice for the long anticipated event started in October, around the beginning of the school year, and has continued to take place twice every week in order to prepare for It's Academic as well as their regular VHSL competitions.

In preparation for these events, the team uses past questions when meeting together and are strongly encouraged to practice on their

own time by studying commonly asked topics.

Senior **Quinn Griffin** has been on the Academic Team since his freshman year. "I joined the team because I had some friends who were joining, and it seemed like a fun club to join," he said., "I quickly knew I wanted to stay and learn to be a better player."

Although they faced an unfortunate loss by just 80 points, Griffin still had a great time competing and didn't find himself too stressed about winning. "The club has taught me how to play with a team, study, and I got to have a great time with my friends," he said. •

New snack bins ensure leftover food doesn't go to waste

Maggie Sheridan | Co-Editor-in-Chief

As PEER advisor and Culinary Arts teacher **Dorene Kuebler** was collecting trash during Lunch on the Lawn, she noticed many students taking their unopened snack bags, and instead of eating any or saving it for later, throwing them straight in the garbage can.

“I felt like not only a mom, but a citizen of the earth and was extremely confused as to why students were doing this, I knew something had to be done to fix this,” Kuebler said.

During all lunch shifts, students are automatically given a snack bag along with their main course if they eat school lunch.

“I think the issue is that students don’t want these snacks when it’s first given to them,” Kuebler said. “Later in the day they may be hungry and want this food, but they don’t want to carry it around with them.”

Kuebler decided to start putting collection bins in the cafeteria, asking students to put any uneaten and unopened food in them. Some of the special education students, such as **Thomas Payne** and **Xavier Dickey**, help Kuebler with food collection.

“We sort the food into different categories, such as fruit and refrigerated items,” Payne said. “After that, we bring the bins of food back to Mrs. Kuebler,” Dickey said. They just recently began helping Kuebler and do this process during



their last block or after school.

“It’s very sad because most people used to just throw this food away, but now they have the option to put it in the bin,” Payne said.

After the food is sorted and brought back to Kuebler, it is put in bins to be sent to Loudoun Hunger Relief. Students in the National Honor Society will volunteer to help bring this food over every Tuesday and Thursday. There are roughly a hundred snacks donated per day.

“This has been important to me for two reasons,” Kuebler said. “First, because I’m a taxpayer and we are paying for the free lunches this year. With these free lunches the kids have to take the snacks, but if they throw the snacks away, that means we are paying millions of dollars for this food to be thrown away.”

“Secondly, knowing that there

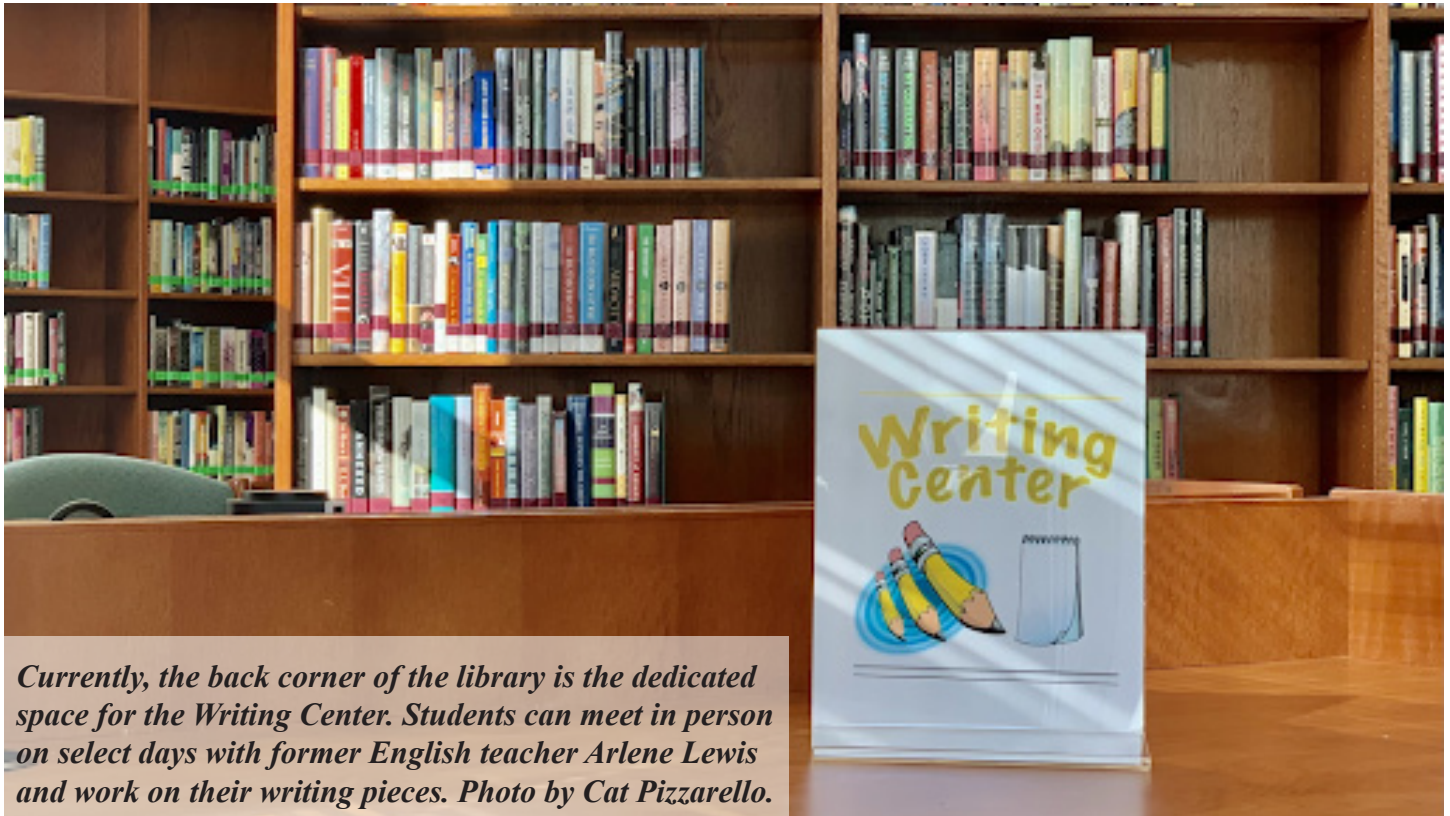
Senior Molly Seventko puts her extra snack bag in the snack bin at the end of her lunch block. After C lunch, the bin is nearly full.

are so many people who are out there who are hungry and really want or need this food, it’s heartbreaking to know that it’s being wasted.”

Many of these people have a hard time obtaining fresh fruit in particular. “I really like bringing the fruit and vegetables to them because I know how important it is to them,” Kuebler said.

“I want students to know food is always available to them in my room as well as school counseling if they are ever hungry, because I want them to take advantage of having these snacks,” Kuebler said. •

New writing center program offers help to students



Currently, the back corner of the library is the dedicated space for the Writing Center. Students can meet in person on select days with former English teacher Arlene Lewis and work on their writing pieces. Photo by Cat Pizzarello.

Cat Pizzarello | Staff Writer

Having trouble getting that hook perfect on a college essay that will completely determine your future? Or your thesis for an AP class that will decide your final grade? After five years of logistics and a whole COVID year away, County is introducing their new Writing Center.

“Now more than ever I feel students need individual help and what an essay means,” said **Arlene Lewis**, retired AP Language and honors English teacher. Lewis recently took on the job as a volunteer to attempt at getting a writing center ready for students after a year away.

The writing center is a place where students can get help on

any writing assignment, such as college and scholarship essays and preparation for writing SOLs. The long-term goal is to have the writing center be a class that students can take as an elective, but at the moment Lewis is helping to get the center started.

Prior to volunteering at the writing center, Lewis worked at County for 23 years before retiring last year and 45 years in total.

As for more teachers instructing the class, according to Lewis, the plan in the future is to have the writing center be student taught and student led. Students will be able to take a training course to learn how to teach the class and help our Captains with their writing work.

Lewis, who has been working with students for several weeks on college essays, is now meeting with all students to work on their writing pieces.

If you are interested in participating in the writing center, you can email Ms. Lewis at lahlewis1@gmail.com and get more information. Students can find a signup sheet in the library where to schedule a meeting for Ms. Lewis or other teachers to revise your papers.

For Lewis, volunteering to help students is a pleasure more than a chore. “In a way it’s a very selfish reason. I do miss working with students, so this is my opportunity for ease in retirement, but still have the joy of working with students.” •

NJROTC achieve a second place finish in CyberPatriot competition



Juniors Tyler Luszczek and E.J. Faal work hard to help Captains place in their highest position ever. Photo by Ethan Weiss.

Ethan Weiss | Staff Writer

The Captains NJROTC Cyberpatriot teams competed in the National youth cyber defense competition last November and December. The NJROTC began competing in this event during the 2017-2018 school year. “At that time, none of us had any idea what we were doing and our first competition was an absolute disaster,” Master Chief **Deanna**

Foust said.

The team and staff have improved since then to the point that one of their teams was able to finish second in the state of Virginia. “This is our first year having a team do this,” said Foust. The team will receive a plaque for their efforts in the tournament in the upcoming weeks.

The competition consists of teams having to fix vulnerabilities within the simulating operating

system they’re given, called an “image.” Teams are rewarded points for solving these vulnerabilities. Depending on how many points your teams earn compared to other teams, you’ll be placed in either the silver, gold, or platinum bracket. The County teams almost all of the teams made the platinum bracket.

“The Cyberpatriot teams had an impressive competition and continue to improve,” said Foust. •

The “lucky and somewhat dull life” of **WAYDE BYARD**

The story of an average census bureau’s rapid rise to fame

Crawford Holmes | Staff Writer

People young and old rush to his school canceling calls, while people in need hold out their hands to him. Whether it be the fire department or the Freedom of Information Act, they ask for his help. With the click of a button, a stranger accidentally made him the most famous census bureau in the country. But when public information officer for Loudoun County **Wayde Byard** looks at himself, all he sees is a man with a “lucky and somewhat dull life.”

Although both Byard and the casual onlooker may agree that Byard is only a public information officer, Byard does far more than just giving government information to the public. In this he is a double edged sword; as he makes PSA’s for the fire department, but also speaks against accusations against the school by the fire department for being against fire safety regulation, as his duty as Loudoun County’s spokesman.

And while Byard gives information to the public on urgent matters, Byard explains how he receives information himself with his role in the Virginia Freedom of Information Act. The act gives the average Virginia citizen the right to request unreleased public documents to be

released, and Byard handles these requests. According to Byard, he has gotten over 400 requests just this year.

This job is not a Byard exclusive, however, as Byard belongs to a national education group called the National School Public Relations Association, that makes their goal to support schools with resources and spokespeople to represent said schools.

This career path was clear for Byard, as his dad was a superintendent, his mom was a teacher, and his wife was a college dean. Since all work in education, Byard thinks his job is a, “natural fit” and “truly enjoys his job.”

Byard did not always have this fairytale reality, as his distress in his prior job as an assistant management editorial and crime/government/sports reporter factored into his current employment. Even though his job was relatively high paying amongst the other standard journalists, Byard realized that “newspaper (as a whole) was dying,” and decided to switch careers.

This career switch was not so easy, however, as he still keeps baseball cards of players that he interviewed throughout the years of his career, enjoying the “sentimental value” even if these cards are “not particularly valuable.”

Even though the transition was hard, Byard found even more success in being a public information officer than he did in his other job; as part of his job was sending a voice recording to every house in Loudoun County and telling if school was closed due to weather conditions, although he got particularly famous for calling in for snow days. Byard comments on this phenomenon, saying, “Few people (in his workplace) share this kind of visibility.”

Visibility both metaphorically and physically, with entire school systems like Briar Woods and Stone Bridge making, as teacher and major contributor to Byard merchandise at Stone Bridge **Faith Iberra** reports, merchandise like t-shirts with Byard memes and Byard cookies to match that “sold like crazy.”

The profits for these merchandises usually go to giving their respective schools more supplies. Iberra says that the money gained from the Wayde merchandise is used to buy new supplies for their art department.

This taste of fame was heightened when in 2014 a single meme rapidly spread across the internet with Byard’s semi-famous call for school closure as the punchline. This quickly made a ‘cult-like

following' of fans for Byard's that support and follow Byard on whichever social media outlet he goes - whether it be Twitter pages like 'Friends of Byard' (13k+ followers) or '@waydebyardfans' (10k+ followers) on Instagram. Byard is surprisingly okay with this, however, "Seeing how knowledgeable and caring students are."

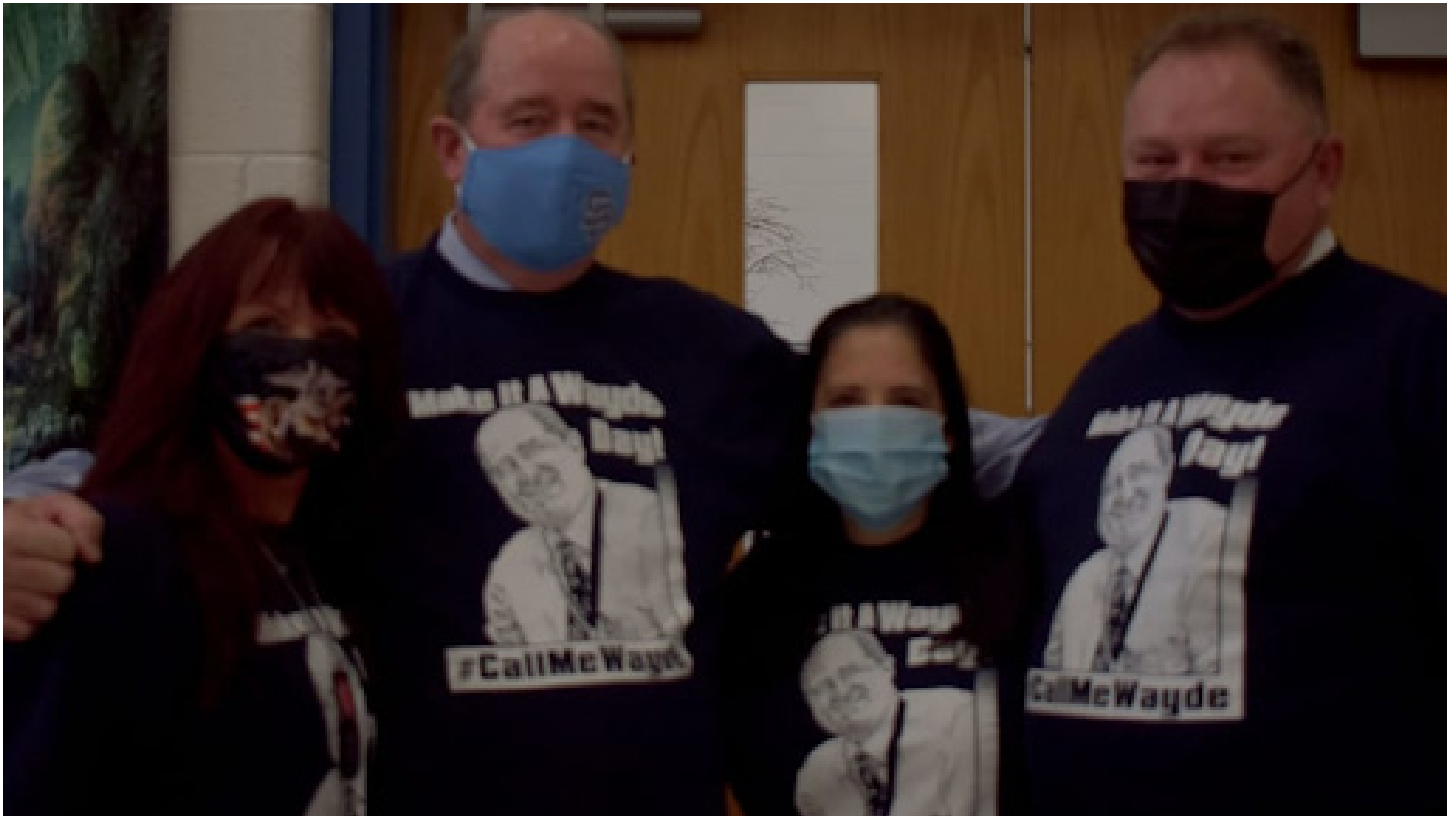
Even though he enjoys the attention, even to this day Byard does not quite understand the amount

of obsession that his fans show towards him, saying that his fans "need to raise their standards."

So Byard raised their standards for them, as ironically the very same theme of an internet image that changed Byard's life into being a local celebrity, also changed his point of view. A picture of a mother and child sitting out in the cold compelled Byard to join the cause of a general health charity named Our Health. Saying that the image

he saw was, "simply wrong."

With Byard being on the general council of Our Health, the charity has made over 70,000 square feet of buildings for general client cases that have served over 100,000 people. Over 25 years of guiding Our Health to help 82 other non-profit organizations, Byard doesn't regret any of it, saying "I've met the best people that I've come into contact with through this organization" and "it's been an amazing journey." •



Wayde Byard poses with the Stone Bridge High school staff dressed in Byard merchandise. Teacher Faith Ibarra asked Byard for permission to put his face on the merchandise, and Byard made the counter proposal of having a photoshoot in it. Photo courtesy of Faith Ibarra.

SNOW DAY COUNT ❄️ ❄️ ❄️ ❄️ ❄️ ❄️

We all know Wayde Byard as the one who calls when school gets cancelled. So how many times has that happened this year? In the first semester, LCPS cancelled school 6 times, 2 of which were modifications from an initial two-hour delay.

Spirit Week

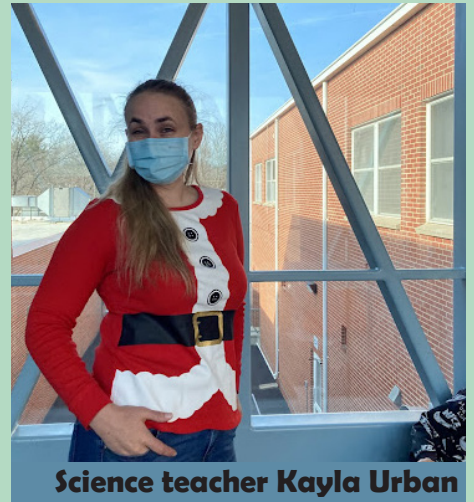
Hibernation • Winter Olympics • Santa's Workshop
Ring in the New Year • Ugly Sweater



Kaya Vukmanic (11)



Sofia Shingledecker (11)



Science teacher Kayla Urban



Joscelyn Ortiz (11) Photo courtesy of Charlotte Penberthy



Kayla Boland (10)



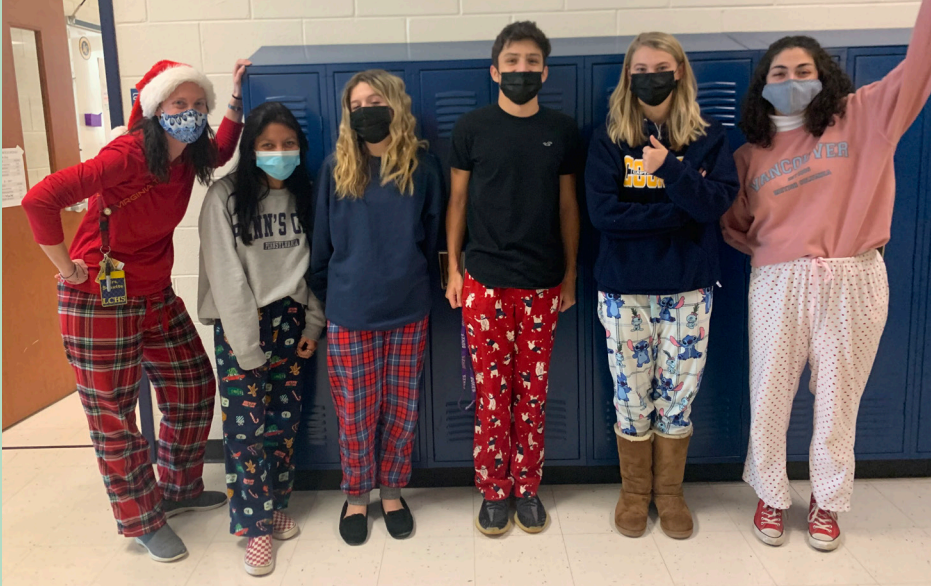
Jada Venson (11)



Master Chief Deanna Foust, Captain Bill Johns,
Gunnery Sergeant Dennis Gaitens
Photo courtesy of Master Chief Deanna Foust



Math teacher Abby Schutte, Rebeca Sanchez (12), Ella Bruce (12), Vincent Cioni (12), Morgan Kitchen (12), Olivia Azzouz (12)



In the week leading up to winter break, students and staff were encouraged to dress up for holiday-themed spirit days, a challenge that was met with enthusiastic and creative participation.

*Spread by Evelyn Kuzminski | Layout Editor
Photos by Evelyn Kuzminski, Crawford Holmes,
and Cat Pizzarello, unless otherwise noted.*

PEER PRESENTS

Paws Up for positivity



Michaela Scott | Editor-in-Chief

During the month of November, PEER made it their initiative to host a school-wide event to promote World Kindness Day. They called it Paws Up For Positivity, which was the slogan for lunch on the lawn with therapy dogs.

“We wanted to get more students participating in our weekly lunch on the lawn event, and we thought having therapy dogs would really increase the participation,” senior PEER executive **Ava Wother- spoon** said. “PEER saw that Briar Woods High School conducted a therapy dog event and we saw how successful it was.”

According to PEER sponsor **Dorene Kuebler**, the approval process was the quickest aspect of the organization process. “It was super easy, we just emailed Dr. Luttrell and Mr. Prince to get approval,” Kuebler said. “Then, we messaged Healing Hounds, the therapy dog program, and they were really quick to gather volunteers, so the operation was definitely not stressful at all.”

The event was promoted throughout the month, along with PEERs other monthly initiatives for

Freshman students pet Eddie, the therapy dog, during their lunch period. On November 19, PEER hosted lunch on the lawn during World Kindness Day and incorporated an area where students can playfully interact with the therapy dogs brought by the volunteer organization, Healing Hounds. Photos courtesy of Maggie Sheridan.

The therapy dogs present at PEER's Paws Up For Positivity event, posed with empowering and positive messages created by PEER students.

World Kindness Day. "All week I heard the excitement and talk from students around the school," Wotherspoon said. "It made me really happy knowing the positive effect that dogs have on kids."

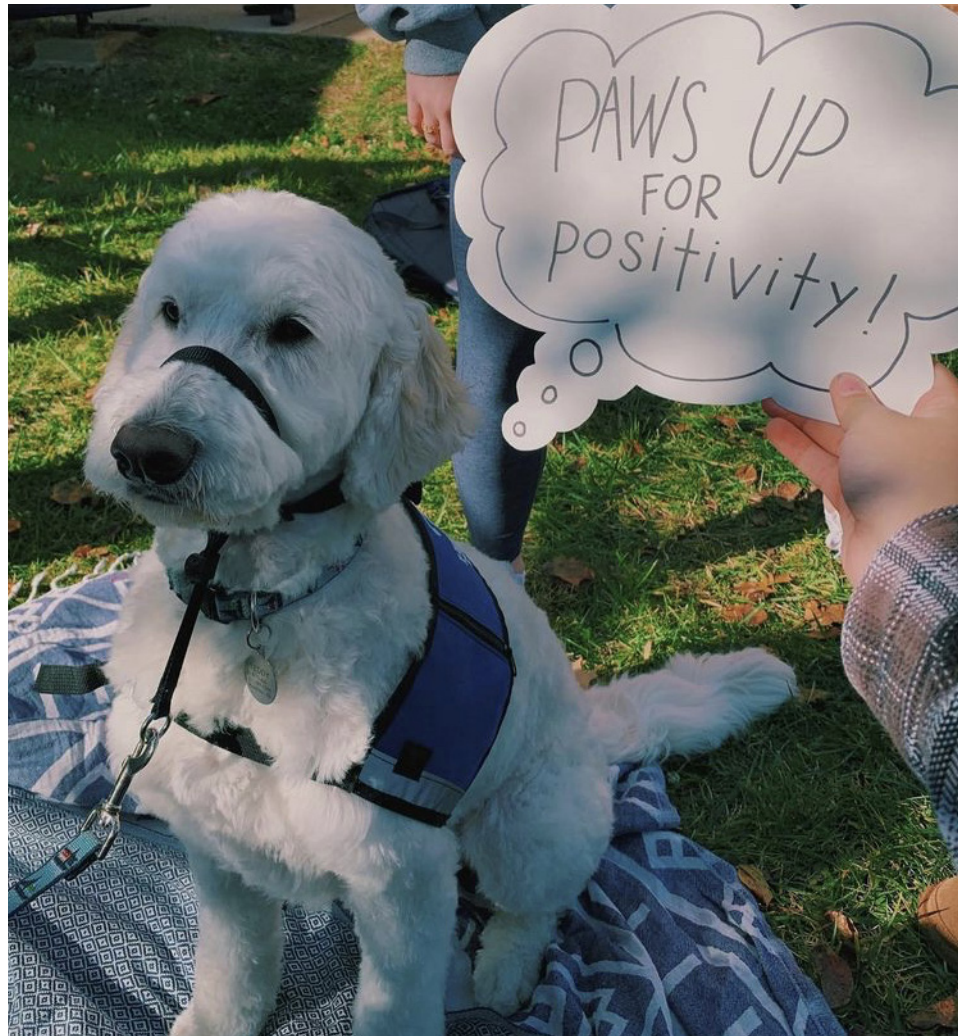
Kuebler also mentioned the benefits of bringing dogs into school to help support students' mental health. "Some people can't have dogs, or pets, so they don't really get a chance to love on them and see how awesome pets can be," Kuebler said.

The therapy dogs from Healing Hounds have a certain temperament, in order to allow crowds of people petting them. "We had a lot of people leave positive notes on our PEER board after petting the animals," Wotherspoon said. "If you saw a student petting the dog they looked so happy."

According to Wotherspoon, the Paws Up For Positivity event had the most student participation compared to every other weekly lunch on the lawn. "This event was a great moment for our PEER class," Wotherspoon said.

Kuebler indicated a potential time in the Spring for the dogs to return to school before SOL testing. "We are looking at bringing the Healing Hounds back in the Springtime," Kuebler said.

"I loved seeing how much joy those dogs brought everybody, while they gathered around the dogs, and had that moment," Kuebler said. "We're excited to do a 'Destress Before Your Test' therapy dog event next semester." •



SCA showcases club holiday trees

Michaela Scott | Co-Editor-in-Chief

In honor of the holiday season, the Student Council Association has put together an arrangement of Evergreen trees outside the cafeteria. The clubs that took charge of decorating the five trees are the Art club, Aviation club, DECA, Educators Rising, and Latin club.

In order to play a role in the holiday tree decorations, each club was given fifty dollars from the Student Council Association and had the opportunity to accessorize their tree for the purpose of promoting their club.

The main initiative of the Aviation Club is to introduce aviation opportunities to students interested in learning about aviation and potential career opportunities. Senior club leader **James Leathers** mentioned that some members have never experienced flight, while others have access to private aircraft.

“When Mr. Post, the Aviation Club sponsor, informed us about the opportunity to decorate, our club members quickly got to work spending their mornings decorating the tree,” Leathers said. “We really want to promote our club to potential members, and share the holiday spirit.”

Educators Rising is a club which is directly connected to the field of Education and provides tutoring opportunities at LCHS feeder schools. The primary purpose of this organization is to encourage students to explore careers in education.

Teacher sponsor **Kathleen Evangelisto** indicated that students can make a difference in the community through tutoring, fundraising, and participating in events such as Trunk or Treat and assembling SMILE kits with other LCHS co-curricular clubs.

“We were interested in participating in the holiday trees because future teachers have spirit,” Evangelisto said. “It was a great opportunity for our dozens of Educators Rising members to decorate ornaments and make new friends.”

The Latin club promotes all things classical, and its initiative is to make the study of Latin relevant. The club focuses on embracing the immortal words of ancient writers and appreciating the wisdom of the ages. Teacher sponsor **Lynn Krepich** included that the Latin students were thrilled to take part in this event.

“We have spent about three days adorning our tree,” Krepich said. “The students are so grateful for this unique experience to promote the value of studying the classics in 2021.”

The art club’s purpose is to allow students who are enrolled, or not in art classes to have an abundance of enjoyment to let their creativity flow. Senior club leader **Ceci Stewart** mentioned she has been looking forward to decorating the holiday trees for years.

“Every year I have seen them decorated and was always interested in helping out but never



knew how,” Stewart said. “When I learned that clubs were decorating the trees, I immediately reached out to Mr. Prince to get our club involved.”

The fifth club that participated in the holiday trees activity was DECA. DECA is a co-curricular club for marketing classes where members compete at competitions throughout the year and get to travel to conferences to compete in role-plays in front of judges.

“We loved the idea of our members getting the chance to design their own ornaments and get involved with school spirit,” teacher sponsor **Jessica Rossie** said. “It was super fun to get the entire club involved with decorating.”

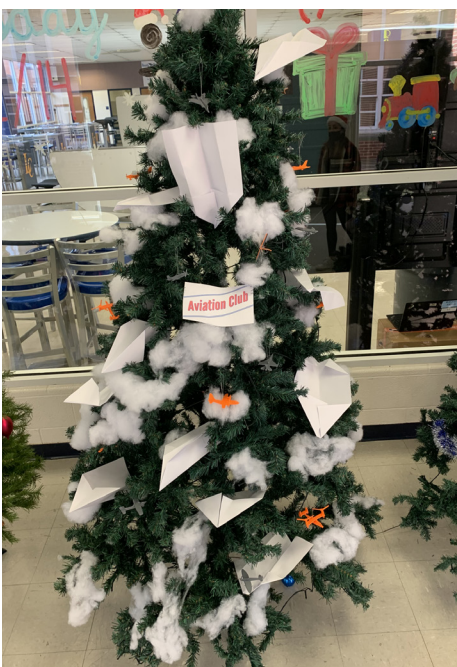
Each club assembled their tree to fit their personal club initiatives; some groups ordered specific ornaments, and some clubs made them from scratch during the monthly club day.

“My students are crafting their ornaments to depict aspects of Roman culture,” Krepich said. “We spent our club day this past month decorating plastic ornaments and crafting snowflakes with Latin

phrases and cultural aspects of the Greco Roman time period.”

Evangelisto said that senior club leader **Brenna McManus** came up with the main decor for the Educators Rising team. “Her excellent repurposing idea was based on using plastic and wooden ornaments that were decorated with paint, ribbon, and shredded choral music that was going to be thrown out.” Evangelisto said.

DECA used their fifty dollars from SCA to order lights, tinsel, and DECA-colored ornaments. “Our members designed and colored



paper diamond ornaments during club day,” Rossie said. “Our officers also came in early in the mornings to assemble the ornaments.”

The Art club members used their club day to come up with ideas for the tree decorations, which were all handmade in the art room or donated to the tree. “The process of decorating the tree was strung across a couple of days for me,” Stewart said. “As paint brushes, and art tools were donated, I would use my study hall and art blocks to add them to the tree.”

The Aviation club purchased supplies, including cotton to replicate clouds in the sky, 3D-printed airplane ornaments, and spent their mornings decorating their tree. “Our club members who have access to 3D printers have played a large role in gathering our ornaments, and creating paper planes,” Leathers said.

The groups involved in the holiday tree showcase each shared how this event was a special experience for their club members to connect and celebrate the holiday season within their club.

“Our tree celebrates Saturnalia, a Roman festival held from December seventeenth through the twenty-fourth, in which gifts of candles and silver were exchanged,” Krepich said. “Our club is so grateful for the Student Council Association’s pecuniary contribution to ensure this arboreal

Club officers and teacher sponsors were given a tree to participate in the SCA holiday tree decorating event. Each club used their contribution from the Student Council to represent their club’s purpose and to encourage students to join an organization. Photo by Michaela Scott.

creation for our students.”

Leathers mentioned how his club really wanted to encourage new members into the Aviation club through the event. “This is the first event that we have been invited to, and we look forward to being included in future school events,” Leathers said. “Our club is open to new members anytime, we meet after school in room 162 every Monday.”

The Art club dealt with some mishaps during the process of obtaining their tree, but Stewart mentioned how the club adjusted to their smaller tree, and made it to represent students’ art. “Other than the slight challenges, our tree was still beautifully decorated to represent the Art Club,” Stewart said. “Our members made my dream come true by helping with the tree decorating!”

DECA’s officers played a major role in participating in the club event. Rossie indicated how the operation took about thirty minutes with a total of five officers helping. “You do need to be in a marketing class to join DECA, but we would love to use this opportunity as a way to encourage students to take a marketing class next year,” Rossie said.

Evangelisto indicated that the tree decorating was completely student-run, and time is running out for new members to join. “Educators Rising officers handled the entire operation which was super fun to watch,” Evangelisto said.

Overall, the SCA sponsored holiday tree decorating display was a successful way for the clubs to wrap up 2021. “These Captains love connecting with peers and being creative,” Evangelisto said. “I am so proud of how inclusive, welcoming and spirited they are!” •

CLICK, CLICK!

Powers' love of photography comes to life

Daniel Delargy | Staff Writer

Olivia Powers is a junior in highschool at Loudoun County highschool. She owns and operates her own photography business and takes pictures for many students at LCHS and in the Leesburg community.

"I've always wanted to be creative, I've loved art and working and seeing culture and capturing that," said Powers. "I got my first camera in 2020, in the beginning of quarantine because we couldn't do much, so I would go outside and take pictures."

Quarantine allowed for many of us to take up a new hobby because of all the extra time spent away from work and school. "This is a pretty new hobby for me, but it happened quickly," says Powers.

Powers took her passion, and turned it into a business. "I didn't have a job at the time, and I started taking pictures for friends and baby showers, a few weddings and people started to pay me," Powers said. "I created two websites and started to get things going. I created an instagram to promote it more."

"When I went to prom I didn't really expect people to pay me, I was just sort of learning, and people started to pay me. I realized that I could charge people. I would never ask for money but people started to tip," Powers said. "Then I started to really be making good



*Powers captures senior Kylie Rowand for her senior pictures.
Photo courtesy of Olivia Powers.*

money."

"Social media has been a huge help in getting my business out there," says Powers. "A lot of people my age are on Instagram and it's a good platform to help promote it, especially with posting pictures on Instagram, everyone sees them and you'll see who took them and you see my watermark or if I'm tagged in it," Powers said.

Photography is Olivia's passion, "I love taking pictures, every picture I want to be the best for the people I'm taking. I want them to frame it and have it for years and years, I want it to be that picture for them," Powers said.

"A majority of my pictures are

definitely senior pictures this past year," Powers said. "The spring is going to be busy for me because most people have senior pictures and weddings in the better weather."

"A lot of my customers come from friends and mutual classmates, so many people reach out to me on social media," Powers said.

"People tagging and reposting my pictures after prom was really helpful because right after your prom I did another prom because they saw your pictures," Powers said.

Olivia gets her inspiration from helping others achieve the perfect photo. •

SENIOR BRENDEN BOYERS

looks to capture states

BEFORE GRADUATING



In the home game against Broad Run, senior Brenden Boyers catches and shoots the ball behind the arch. The Captains were successful with this win. Photo courtesy of John Klimavicz.

Jevonte Herron | Staff Writer

As one of the few seniors on the team, guard **Brenden Boyers** has the earned leadership experience being one of the captains on the team.

“It’s a big responsibility as a senior to make sure practice runs smoothly, keep my guys in check, and make sure we play as a family all the time,” said Boyers.

Boyers thinks he still can improve on his averaging since he likes to aim high, but it’s at a good number, which is 16 or 17. “But at the same time I always have bigger goals for myself and I want to keep up in that average every game,” said Boyers.

Boyers believes he and the team started off rough, but are beginning to pick it up. “We’re starting to figure it out, playing as a family now, and

getting pretty big wins,” said Boyers.

Boyers still believes he has some individual work to do to help him and his team finish the season off strong.

Boyers has goals for the future of the County basketball team, saying he hopes to “get my teammates involved a little bit more while still being that scorer that I kind of always have been.” •

GIRLS VARSITY VOLLEYBALL WINS 10th CONSECUTIVE STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

At the home game vs Tusky, Captain Sarah Jordan is setting Delaney Brosan for a powerful hit. The Captains later won this game. Photo courtesy of Debbie Senchak.

Jevonte Herron | Staff Writer

The varsity volleyball team won their 10th consecutive state championship on November 19 at Virginia Commonwealth University. Senior co-captain **Delaney Brosan** was happy to finish her senior year so strong.

“I feel like it’s an honor to be captain of such a successful team, and to lead those girls felt really special,” Brosan said.

The obstacles that the girls volleyball team faced during their regular season helped them prepare for the state tournament.

According to the head coach **John Senchak**, he and his girls faced Stone Bridge and Flint Hill which both have good volleyball programs, and facing them helped them get ready. They lost against both, but those were the only two losses of the season, and it helped them for states. The team also faced Millbrook twice, which helped them



develop their skills. The girls won both times for tough matchups.

When first selecting his team this year, Senchak had no thoughts about making it to the state championship, let alone winning like did the last three years coaching at County.

According to Senchak, every year there is a new group of girls after seniors leave so his goal as always is just make the best team he can. “Every year it’s a different group of girls, a different group of athletes, and they have to start over building their own team,” Senchak said.

This year’s roster was the smallest that County has had with six seniors leaving last year and that’s where a lot of their height went. “And height matters in this game, especially at the net,” said Senchak.

Senchak also noted the additional challenge of having players that never started before starting.

Since their height wasn't there they had to play the game way faster than they usually do.

Eight seniors will be graduating from the team this year, including captain **Sarah Jordan**, who has committed to Towson College.

According to Jordan, she will be finishing her last travel volleyball season, which ends in March or June, then playing in college at Towson College.

But Senchak is not worried because of the depth of players. “It’s going to hurt to lose our seniors. That always does. But there are always more girls to come in that are ready to take over from them,” Senchak said. •

Jordan ends high school career with another state championship



Jordan concentrates as she prepares to send a hard, driven spike ball to the other team at one of our many home games during the season.

Photo courtesy of Debbie Senchak.

Maggie Sheridan | Co-Editor-in-Chief

During the COVID-19 pandemic, playing sports has been a highlight for many students and a way to take a break from everyday stress. They look forward to competing and being in their own world.

“Every time I touch the ball, I instantly become happier, more confident, and just myself. I love what comes along with playing like competing and traveling all over the country and forming relationships with my teammates,” senior **Sarah Jordan** said.

Although Jordan has been playing volleyball since the 5th grade, these last two years have been the most unique and challenging out of all seven years.

“The most challenging aspect of my career has for sure been this COVID season because everything was messed up,” Jordan said.

Jordan and the rest of the team had an usual season last year due to all of the COVID protocols such as limited fans, spacing out, and wearing masks. This year, rules are not as strict, but there is still the constant threat of the virus.

“I played club volleyball season and my highschool season at the same exact time, which was really hard and taxing on my body.”

This year has been super important for Jordan because it was her final season with the high school team. Jordan has been on the Varsity team since her freshman year.

“The team was absolutely amazing because we were so close and treated each other as sisters,” Jordan said.

“Our chemistry was beyond anything I can explain. We love and care about each other so much, which made fighting for the wins that much

easier.”

Jordan played as a setter and right side for the team and was an honorary team captain. The team had a record of 27-2 and won every home game of the season.

This record ultimately set them up for states and later, another state championship. States was on November 19, 2021 at VCU Siegel Center, where the team went to four sets overall.

“This game was super important because we were going for the tenth straight title and we wanted to achieve a ‘Decade of Dominance’,” Jordan said.

“We were having a little trouble getting our groove and finding our rhythm, but eventually we figured it out and played one of our best sets of the season,” Jordan said. “The fight was worth it though when we got the trophy and won the last point.”

Although the season has come to an end, Jordan is still grateful for the time spent with the team and the strong finish they had.

“Obviously I am sad, but very grateful for the time I had with my teammates and this program and I would not change my experiences as a LCHS volleyball player for anything,” Jordan said.

Jordan will be furthering her volleyball and academic career at Towson University on a full-ride scholarship next year.

“I am super excited for this next chapter and getting to play in a big arena with girls from all over the world, forming friendships, and making memories that will last forever,” Jordan said. •

Senior field hockey athletes reflect on making program history

Michaela Scott | Co-Editor-in-Chief

Field hockey became an official sport in Loudoun County Public Schools during 2016, and within five years the varsity squad at LCHS made school history by taking their team all the way to the state quarterfinals during the playoff season. The seniors on varsity shared how this team has resonated with them during their high school years, and how the sport will benefit them for the rest of their lives.

“For me, being a player on the varsity team has meant a lot,” senior **Alyssa Markell** said. “It has given me a family, and provided me with an environment to grow my field hockey and leadership skills.”

The varsity squad was made up of almost entirely seniors this year with a total amount of eight athletes. According to senior **Charlotte Penberthy**, the group of girls were all very inviting, encouraging, and patient in supporting each of their team members, despite their skill level.

“Being on the team has been so much fun because it was so new to me, and I was used to sports that I have played all my life,” Penberthy said. “My teammates had to teach me all the rules of the game during my sophomore year, so having them be there to support me has been super great.”

The seniors specifically mentioned that early morning practices took a major chunk out of each athletes’ morning, which was difficult at first, but ended up being an exciting

experience to look back on.

“One thing that really challenged me was having morning practices almost every single morning,” Markell said. “Our practices were always fun, and we played music, but getting up at six every morning was really hard sometimes.”

The seniors also stated how they would bond after practice hours with various team activities, which helped solidify athletes’ relationships with each other.

“My team was very supportive of each other, for example, we’d always have dinners every Sunday night,” Penberthy said. “We’d come together and have various meals, like Mexican, Greek, or pancakes, and it would be a great way to start the week and get ready for the games ahead of us.”

The seniors included how their main source of motivation rooted from the team itself, which helped drive the athletes throughout the season and playoffs. “Knowing my team’s potential to do well made me show up and work hard every practice,” Penberthy said.

“I would say my biggest motivation was honestly just staying consistent while we won,” Markell said. “And not letting my teammates down was always on my mind.”

Making it to the state quarterfinals in the VHSL field hockey playoffs was expressed as the team’s most valuable accomplishment, according to the senior athletes. The players indicated how this moment was a special moment specifically for the

school itself.

“Going to the state quarterfinals felt really good, mainly because we worked toward it during our entire season,” Penberthy said. “It was something that no one else ever had achieved in the history of our school program, so it really felt like we were paving the way for the rest of the girls after us to follow in our footsteps.”

According to the athletes, Penberthy and Markell are planning on keeping the sport in their lives whether it is on an adult club team, or a college athletic scholarship. Penberthy stated that she plans on refereeing or coaching a team in college, and finding an opportunity to maintain field hockey in her daily life.

“I am committed to attend and play field hockey at Ohio Wesleyan University,” Markell said. “For the next four years, I will hopefully reach my ultimate goal of making the NCAA tournament every year.”

The girls indicated that the bonds and friendships are what will stick with them forever. “Field hockey is so important to me because it represents something in my life that was a challenge turned into success because I stopped playing soccer, and I wanted to find something else to keep me competitive,” Penberthy said. “So joining this team allowed me to meet new people I never would have met, and have such great experiences and memories that I wouldn’t have encountered if I never stepped out of my comfort zone.” •



“Senior midfielder Alyssa Markell dribbling the ball and looking to pass it upfield. This photo was taken during the playoff season; the girls varsity field hockey team made program history by taking their team all the way to the state quarterfinals in playoffs.” Photo courtesy of Caroline Jenn carolinejennphotos.wixsite.com/carolinejennsports.

Ayla Browning continues to improve her golf game



Ayla Browning practices on April 6, 2021 at Evergreen Country Club. Photo courtesy of Ayla Browning.

Jevonte Herron | Staff Writer

Sophomore **Ayla Browning** tied for first place in the qualifying tournament for the state golf championship out of 40 girls. After qualifying, Browning placed 14 out of 60 girls in the VHSL Girls State Open on October 25.

According to Browning, she looked to win this year after coming fourth last year in the girls state championship.

Browning has been playing golf for quite some time but has only been competitive for two years. “I really

have been enjoying it. I used to play when I was little,” Browning said.

Browning had an improving year as far as her golf scores. “I was shooting 80s a lot, and this year I brought all my scores to the 70s consistently,” said Browning.

Browning says she enjoyed playing in the tournament and thought it was fun, but she felt like other people played better than her. “When it actually came to the moment I was kind of scared but I was honestly surprised I placed first,” Browning said.

Browning met the goal she set

before heading into her state golf tournament. Her expectations were top 20 out of 70 girls, and she tied for 14, meeting her goal.

Browning is overall proud of her season and the more she practices will continue to lower her score.

According to Browning, golf is a really good sport to practice for when it comes down to COVID rules because you can easily distance yourself physically from others, so if she continues to practice like she has been her scores will continue to improve just like this season. •

NEW NAME, NEW QB

Washington battles through 2021



Taylor Heinicke celebrates after a four game win streak. Photo credit Washington Football Team Twitter @WashingtonNFL.

Daniel Delargy | Staff Writer

“The Washington Football team” doesn't really come off the tongue, and the owners and fans agree. Coming up on February 2, the Washington Football team is finally getting a new name and mascot after temporarily adopting its current name from the controversial Redskins mascot.

The Washington Football team has had a shaky season, finishing 7-10 and missing the playoffs in the weakest division in the NFL. The road was very bumpy this season. In the first game, starting quarterback **Ryan Fitzpatrick** was injured, while last year's playoff sensation **Taylor Heinicke** took the helm as the starter for the remainder of the season.

Heinicke's first full year in the league with a lack of experience had his hardships in throwing touchdowns. He came tied 17th for QB

TD's and 19th in passing yards. The highnote of his game was his decision making and overall offense IQ with a tied 3rd in interception, a strong suit of his game. He finished the season with a QB rating of 59.4 and ranked 21st out of 32 QB's in the league.

Although the stats would not suggest this, Heinicke performed a little better than expected. Heinicke had strong moments this season, most notable the four game win streak in the later half of the season as they tried to clinch the NFC East.

Heinicke had multiple three TD games and had to battle COVID and inquiries that affected the whole team.

His best game this season was against the **Tom Brady**-led Buccaneers which he faced against last year in the wild card game where he exceeded all expectations as a “no name” pickup.

Against the Bucs this season, he

threw for 304 yards and two touchdowns and a rushing TD, a flashback to his diving pylon TD last year.

Heinicke's future as a starting QB is unknown, the offseason will tell and it's up to the coaching staff what direction they will move for the position of Washington's quarterback.

Defensive problems for Washington continued after numerous players tested positive for COVID during the season. Star defensive end contributor **Chase Young** tore his ACL in the big win against the Bucs; many of the Washingtons secondary had a host of players on the COVID/IR list as well.

But, there is hope for fans after this lackluster season. The former Redskins have been nameless and mascot-less for the last two years. Washington made this decision as a result of decades of backlash due to the racial insensitivity of the “Redskins.” The WFT is about to finally have a name! Washington released the possible names, Commanders, Redhogs, Defenders, Armada, and Admirals.

The Admirals is the favorite according to the sportline sportsbook (gambing parlor). although there have been descriptions and a leaked photo of the Commanders logo on a sheet of paper. Whether this is a sleight of hand by Washington to throw off their fans, or it's a blunder by Washington, is unclear. Washington fans are eagerly waiting for February 2 to find out what logo is going to be on their team's jersey in the 2022-2023 season. •

THUNDERMOTHER

enters into the world of women in rock

Olivia DeWan | Online Editor

It's no secret that the world is in desperate need of more women in the rock industry. Of course, we have the original female rock stars who will never go out of style like **Joan Jet** and **Patti Smith**. However, there has not been a dramatic increase of women in rock.

"Thundermother," the relatively new Rock 'n' Roll band from Sweden, is surging to the surface of fame in the UK.

"Thundermother" was created by **Flippa Nässil** when she moved to Stockholm from her original home in Tomelilla, Sweden with the dream of starting a classic rock band. Along the way she teamed up with guitarist **Giorgia Carteri**, drummer **Tilda Stenqvist**, bassist **Linda Ström**, and vocalist **Clare Cunningham** in 2013.

"I've been writing songs since the age of 13 in Tomelilla, Skåne. I



Lead guitarist and creator of Thundermother Flippa Nässil (left) rocks out with bassist Mona Lindgren (right). This performance was in Friedrichskoog, Germany on November 14, 2021. Photo credit Thundermother.

went to music school when I was 11 and then continued to the age of 15. When I was 16, I moved from home and studied the electric guitar in Rytmus (The Music Conservatory of Stockholm)," Nässil told Guitar Girl Magazine in the article "All Swedish Girl-Band Thundermother and the New Album Road Fever" written by **Tara Low**. "In university, I became a music producer where I studied music production. Now I own my own record label, I write songs on a regular basis and play more guitar than ever. I always try to develop my skills and I've been to Africa and learned the instruments of Senegal for example. I will play 'til the day I die, probably on stage."

This group of talented women embarked on several national tours featuring their album "Rock 'n' Roll Disaster". A year later they followed up with "Road Fever" in 2015, which shot them into the European rock industry. As they started to record their third album, Carteri, Stenqvist, Cunningham, and Ström split off.

Filled with persistence, Nässil quickly sought out new members for her band. She ended up recruiting drummer **Emlee Johansson** and bassist **Sara Pettersson**. Lead vocalist **Guernica Mancini** joined the crew as well in mid 2017.

Some of the band's biggest influences are rockstars known across the world.

"AC/DC since the age of 13. Also, "Ozzy" and "Rage Against The Machine" were huge influences for me in these early years," Nässil said in the same Guitar Girl Magazine inter-



The Thundermother lady rockers featuring Nässil (left), Mancini (middle), Lindgren (second middle), and Johansson (right). The girls performed in Stuttgart, Germany. Photo credit Tom Treuten.

view. "Before I played guitar, I was a professional nyckelharpa player. It is a Swedish folk instrument."

On February 23, 2018 Thundermother released their third album, "Thundermother".

The self-titled album consists of thirteen songs, "Revival," "Whatever," "Survival Song," "Racing on Mainstreet," "Fire in the Rain," "Hanging at My Door," "Rip Your Heart Out," "The Original Sin," "Quitter," "We Fight For Rock N Roll," "Follow Your Heart," "Children on the Rampage," and "Won't Back Down."

"Racing on Mainstreet" is the perfect song to sing when flying the highway with the windows rolled down. A catchy, screaming guitar riff paired with pulsing drums and heated lyrics make it something that any rock fan can enjoy.

Thundermother brought back the riff-heavy classic rock sound,

and changed the game with their all female band.

They even adapted their own slogan, “we fight for rock ‘n’ roll”, which they featured as one of their songs.

Pettersson left the group and was replaced by bassist **Majsan Lindberg** shortly after the production of “Thundermother.”

Their older music got their foot into the door of rock in the UK, but where “Thundermother’s” potential lies is in their most successful and recent album “Heat Wave”, which was released on July 31, 2020.

“Heat Wave” also consists of thirteen songs: “Loud and Alive,” “Dog From Hell,” “Back In ‘76,” “Into The Mud,” “Heat Wave,” “Sleep,” “Driving In Style,” “Free Ourselves,” “Mexico,” “Purple Sky,” “Somebody Love Me,” and “Bad Habits”.

“Heat Wave” is a perfect collection of hard rock songs which not only feature a few punk aspects, but blues as well.

“Loud and Alive” starts off with pounding drums, and you can hear that Johansson puts her whole heart into her music. Next, a catchy lead guitar riff played by Nässil is backed nicely by Lindberg’s bass, and when added with Mancini’s impassioned vocals, the song leads to a strong, confident sound.

Another great addition to the album is “Free Ourselves,” which displays the ladies’ talent for the rock genre. “Free Ourselves” enters with a bang; a heavy guitar riff that is seamlessly joined by upbeat drums, and classic rock power chords. Mancini takes on blues vocals, and paints a call to action when singing “we need to trust one another again”.

When “Somebody Love Me” hits the scene, Mancini flawlessly tackles heartfelt and brash lyrics by singing “I’m a giver not a taker/ I’m

a rock’n’roll star/ I’m the queen of the bar/ And I’d like to see you later/ I’m the one with the mic/ In the flash of the light/ You might see me as a goddess/ But when the sun goes down/ And I take off the crown/ I’m just the neighbors daughter”.

With Johansson pounding the drums and a rocky guitar riff, Thundermother rolls right into the catchy chorus that will stick in your mind even after the song is over. Nässil shows off her skill with a guitar build-up that crashes into a wicked solo of lightning fast notes played in rapid succession.

“Heat Wave” carries on the sound presented in the self-titled album “Thundermother” and was produced by **Soren Andersen**, guitar master and music producer extraordinaire who worked with legends like **Glenn Hughes** and **Mike Tramp**.

Out of Andersen’s studio in Copenhagen, Denmark, Thundermother



Swedish rock band Thundermother performs at Royal Rock Fest in 2012. The Royal Rock Fest was presented in Stockholm, Sweden. Photo by Gabrielle Holmberg.

crafted their greatest success yet under a new label, AFM Records.

Andersen even said the band was “a match made in heaven.”

While success might be sweet, Lindberg put out a statement on her Facebook page saying she was tem-

porarily leaving the band in order to focus on her education.

“What I’ve done is that I entered education last year and this is something that I really need to finish. This is due to financial reasons,” Lindberg wrote. “This unfortunately means that I can’t be going on tour with the girls for a while, which really sucks, but it will be for the better in the end. So what I want to do now is wish the girls and everyone involved the best of luck with this tour and that they have so much fun and enjoy it.”

For a short while the band dreamed of coming back together, but Thundermother announced that Lindberg had officially parted ways two months later.

Going on their fourth bassist, Thundermother scooped up Mona “The Demon” Lindgren, who often goes by **DeMona**.

“Thundermother is bigger than the band itself,” Lindgren wrote as she took over “Thundermother’s” Facebook and Instagram pages for a day. “It’s about bringing Rock ‘n’ Roll back to where it should be- blasting from the world’s biggest stages/ With that being said, they deserve the most passionate and committed people to work for them on this path and I can not wait to amp up the hard work.”

Mancini, Lindgren, Johansson, and Nässil toured throughout Europe during the pandemic. This included several rock festivals like Wild Motors & Beach Party and Rock AM Strand.

They have a number of tours scheduled for “Heat Wave” in the 2022 year as well, but do not seem to be coming to the United States.

Regardless, Thundermother is a step forward in women joining the rock industry. They are a band to keep your eyes on and hopefully new groups of lady rockers will use them as future inspiration. •

Happy 30th anniversary, Nevermind!

Olivia DeWan | *Online Editor*

You can't walk down the street without seeing that iconic squiggly smiley face printed on a T-shirt.

You can't go to a football game without hearing that song.

You can't think of 'rock music' without mentioning this band.

"Nirvana," while they had a short run, made the biggest impact on the rock industry to date, and today they celebrate the 30th anniversary of their most beloved album, "Nevermind".

"Nevermind" consists of thirteen songs, "Smells Like Teen Spirit," "In Bloom," "Come As You Are," "Breed," "Lithium," "Polly," "Territorial Pissings," "Drain You," "Lounge Act," "Stay Away," "On A Plain," "Something In The Way," and "Endless, Nameless".

Famously made up of only three members, **Kurt Cobain**, **Dave Grohl**, and **Krist Novoselic**, "Nirvana" was added to the ranks of great rock musicians in almost no time at all.

According to Louder Sound Cobain said they "wanted a name that was kind of beautiful or nice and pretty instead of a mean, raunchy pun name like the Angry Samoans."

The band was founded by Cobain and Novoselic in 1987 in Seattle, Washington. With Chad Channing on drums, the band produced their first album "Bleach" on April 17, 1987.

"Bleach" included a set of dark songs with heavy distortion. Cobain, on lead vocals and guitar, used a Boss DS-1 Distortion pedal, which allowed

him to achieve a simple rock tone.

However, "Bleach" wasn't a huge success for the new band, and Channing left shortly after the production. Not to be deterred from their path, Cobain and Novoselic found a replacement who was none other than Grohl.

With Grohl as a new formidable addition to their team, they started crafting an album the world of rock had never seen before.

Cobain decided to invoke the help of **Butch Vig** after meeting with several other producers and discarding them. At this time, Vig was an up-and-coming music producer.

Vig, after playing the drums for local bands, set up his own recording studio called "Sound City Studios" in Los Angeles, California.

In an article called Butch Vig: "I looked at bands like The Beatles and Led Zeppelin as these untouchable rock gods... But when punk came out, I thought, 'I could do that'" written by Paul Brannigan and published on "Kerrang" on November 12, 2020, Vig recalled how Cobain sent him a tape recording in the mail.

Cobain started off saying "'Hey Butch, it's Kurt, we're excited to come and rock out with you. We're going to play a couple of new songs, and we've got Dave Grohl, and he's the greatest drummer in the world'", and Vig was blown away.

"Then I hear the guitar intro to ... Teen Spirit, and when Dave hit the drums, it just completely destroyed everything. They were recording on a

boom box, and so there was unbelievable distortion, but I could sorta hear the song underneath the white noise static, like the 'Hello hello hello' part in ... Teen Spirit," Vig said. "And then they played a bunch of other songs that ended up being on Nevermind, and I thought, 'Wow, these songs are great,' even though the recording quality on that cassette was horrible."

Before Vig heard the tracks from Cobain, he was hesitant to collaborate. "Bleach" was the only music "Nirvana" had out at the time and Vig wasn't particularly fond of the sound they had created.

He said "Nirvana" were "three scraggly-looking, greasy, dirty kids".

But the underdogs quickly rose to the top.

"Nevermind" was recorded in May and June of 1991, and they completed the entire album in just sixteen days.

"It wasn't really until the time we finished [recording the album] that I started playing some rough mixes for people and they would stop what they were doing and say, 'Play that again,'" Vig said in Nirvana Producer Butch Vig Remembers Nevermind written by **Miitchel Peters**. "And then I started getting a few calls from people who'd say, 'I heard about the Nirvana record -- could I hear something?'" It started getting this buzz building up, mostly from people I know or people in the industry."

"Nirvana" performed "Nevermind" for the first time ever on April 17, 1991 in Seattle.

Their album caught like wildfire.

Two weeks after its release date “Nevermind” climbed to number 144 on the Billboard chart. The next week it reached 109, and the following at 65. “Smells Like Teen Spirit” went into rotation on MTV, which is a cable network for trending songs and music videos.

“Nevermind” was most popular with Generation X, who seemed to have a taste for darker songs.

While some of Cobain’s music had a lighter pop-like sound, the majority had a new, classic tone now recognized as alternative rock.

“Smells Like Teen Spirit” is about teenage freedom and revolution. The heavy bass, unmistakable guitar riff, and Cobain’s electric vocals make it the ultimate pre-game hype song.

With 1,118,287,268 plays on “Spotify”, it is easily their top hit.

Their second most popular song at 682,606,434 plays, and my personal favorite, is “Come As You Are”.

The lyrics are startingly catchy with a deep meaning that each person can take a different way. In an interview Nevermind: It’s An Interview Cobain said, “The lines in the song are really contradictory. One after another they are kind of a rebuttal to each line. It’s kind of confusing, I guess. It’s just about people, and what they are expected to act like.”

Cobain sings “Come as you are/ as you were/ as I want you to be”, highlighting the thousands of expectations placed upon us. Could this have been Cobain projecting some of his own insecurities and his battle with depression into his music?

I think so, but I also believe that the song resonated with his audience in a way he didn’t expect.

“Come As You Are” features a light distorted tone that rapidly changes to hard rock during the chorus. The sharp bending of the guitar and pulsing drum beat can make anyone

want to stand up and scream the lyrics at the top of their lungs.

Another addition to the album, “In Bloom”, shows Cobain’s dark sense of humor, as the song was made to poke fun at the people outside of the underground music scenes who began attending “Nirvana” concerts after their first studio album.

“Nevermind” was also the nail in the coffin to the end of the glam rock era.

Glam rock, or hair metal, was a style of rock developed in the 1970s by stars who wore outrageous glittery costumes, pounds of cosmetics, and platform shoes.

Bands such as “Guns And Roses” and “Def Leppard” who produced a heavy punk-rock and metal sound died off, paving the way for alternative and grunge bands.

The term “alternative” refers to the genre’s distinction from common rock or pop music, a sound that “Nirvana” mastered with the “Nevermind” album.

There is no doubt that if given more time “Nirvana” would’ve made more record-breaking music, but their run was cut short with the devastating suicide of Cobain.

He’d been struggling with a strong drug addiction for several years in addition to fighting off intense depression, and finally lost the battle on April 5, 1994 at only 27 years old.

But even in death Cobain commanded attention by joining the 27 Club.

The 27 Club is a group of artists and rock stars who all died at the age of twenty seven, containing influential legends such as **Amy Winehouse** and **Jimmy Hendrix**.

The wild claim is that they all sold their soul to the Devil, who promised they could live out their fame until the age of twenty seven. Rock folklore? Or just a phenomenon?

Regardless of what fans and haters claim, they can’t deny that “Nevermind” and “Nirvana” was one of the most noteworthy bands in history.

“30 Seconds To Mars” would not have started without inspiration from Cobain and his friends.

“They were a great band with a genius songwriter, who had an unstoppable voice. They made a really unusual sound together,” **Jared Leto**, “30 Seconds To Mars” frontman, explained in an interview with Q Magazine. “But I think there was something else that Nirvana gave: it was permission for all of us to have the right to pick up an instrument and create, regardless of your skillset or talent. And that’s a powerful lesson. I don’t think I would be here if it wasn’t for that insight.”

Similarly, **Rivers Cuomo** from “Weezer” called The Rolling Stone to gush about how “Nirvana” influenced him and his work.

“It felt so close to what I wanted to do. I thought, ‘I can write chord progressions like that. I can write melodies like that. This is something I can do.’ This was right around when Weezer started,” Cuomo said. “I probably wrote The Sweater Song and The World Has Turned and Left Me Here and My Name is Jonas that month – all those early Weezer songs – and then we had our first rehearsal in February of ’92. It’s impossible to avoid the conclusion that Nevermind really inspired us to go for it.”

Other bands and artists such as the “Foo Fighters” and Machine Gun Kelly” confirmed that “Nevermind” was a driving force in most of their work.

Selling over 75 million records, there is no question that “Nirvana’s” “Nevermind” album was one of the greatest ever created, and while the band is no longer together, their legacy lives on. •

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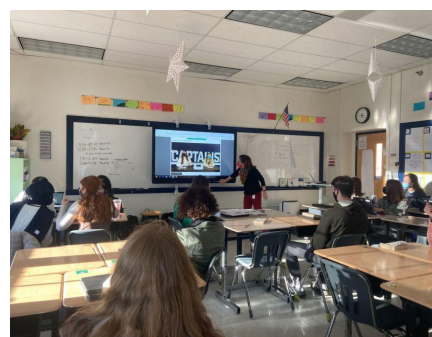
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