



THE COUNTY CHRONICLE

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Members of the boys basketball team pose after winning the regional championship against Loudoun Valley on February 25. The game was close, but the Captains pulled a 61-57 win over Valley to continue their journey to the state championship versus the Varina Blue Devils. Photo by Jim Klimavicz.

Jevonte Herron | Staff Writer

Going into the season the boys basketball team had no expectation of making it to states, only to play their best. “As we started playing, I think we held a high expectation for ourselves to go as far as we can go,” said head coach **Mark Alexander**.

Alexander said the team didn't have the best size, but effort mattered when it came down to rebounds. “One of our best rebounders is our point guard **Jimmy Daughtrey**, but guys stepped up and did an incredible job,” Alexander said.

The team faced challenges on the way to their first-ever state championship game appearance.

“One of our hardest games leading up to the state championship was E.C. Glass. They were incredibly athletic,” Alexander said.

The Captains never gave up hope, even when they were losing. Alexander will always tell his team to stick to the plan and never panic and it will work out. This was especially true when pandemic challenges hindered the basketball season.

Whether it was players being out for an illness or out for the season, senior guard **Brendan Boyers** said, “We just had to step up as a family

and come together.”

According to Alexander, he and some of his players caught COVID during the season. With COVID, Alexander said, it's impossible to know how long, and when, players will have to be out and missing games.

The team even had some close calls with cross-county rival Loudoun Valley. Boyers noted that the semifinal game against Valley was especially challenging. “We were tied two to two with them for season,” Boyers said. “And this was a winner-go-home type of game. And we pulled out the victory.”

Despite some close calls, the team managed to make it all the way to states with a 23-6 record. Alexander and his team say they will always remember their appearance in the state championship game on March 10 in Richmond, where they faced the Varina Blue Devils.

Junior guard **Jack West** recalls the game being among the most notable of the season. “Even though we lost, it was really cool playing at VCU,” West said.

“It was the farthest that any county team has made it in history so that's a really good accomplishment,” junior forward **Nick Alexander** said. •

Season Overview

Matt Starchville | Staff Writer

The boys' basketball team headed to their first-ever state championship with hopes of bringing a title back to Loudoun County. The Captains earned home court advantage through their success during the regular season. The team started their playoff run with a 67-49 win against Kettle Run at home. Then the Captains would host their cross town rivals Loudoun Valley in the Regional Championship. After a back and forth game, the Captains etched out a 61-57 win to advance to the State Quarterfinals.

The Captains faced off against E.C. Glass and pulled out with a win in a close game, 51-47, to advance to the state semifinals where the Captains would once again host Loudoun Valley. This game was back and forth with multiple lead changes and involved both student sections going back and forth at each other.

The Captains punched their ticket to their first ever state championship with a 50-40 win over Valley. •

Postseason Games:

02/22/22 vs Kettle Run
67-49W

Leading scorer: Nick Alexander
(16 points)

02/25/22 vs Loudoun Valley
61-57W

Leading scorer: Jack West (20
points)

03/04/22 vs E.C. Glass
51-47W

Leading scorer: **Brendan Boyers**
and Jack West (14 points)

03/07/22 vs Loudoun Valley
50-40W

Leading scorer: Jack West (11
points)

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digital!**

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Regular Season Games

11/30/21 vs Woodrove 55-44W
12/01/21 vs Briar Woods 66-56W
12/06/21 at Independence 60-62L
12/08/21 at Stone Bridge 46-57L
12/10/21 vs Broad Run 79-54W
12/13/21 at Lightridge 71-56W
12/16/21 vs Tuscarora 55-47W

12/27/21 at Meridian 56-50W
12/28/21 at Hayfield 54-83L
12/29/21 at Mclean 72-60W
01/05/22 at Loudoun Valley 62-67L
01/10/22 at Rock Ridge 65-56W
01/12/22 at Heritage 79-47W
01/13/22 at Park View 77-60W
01/19/22 vs Dominion 59-53W

01/21/22 at Broad Run 60-42W
01/25/22 vs Lightridge 78-42W
01/29/22 at Tuscarora 59-71L
02/01/22 vs Loudoun Valley 53-37W
02/04/22 at Dominion 44-38
02/07/22 vs Rock Ridge 67-44W
02/10/22 vs Heritage 47-45W

EDITORS:

Michaela Scott & Maggie Sheridan
| *Editors-in-Chief*

As the 2019 school year began, the both of us were thrilled to start up another year of The County Chronicle, previously named The Loudoun Raider, especially considering our newest executive roles on the staff. However, we were forced to shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic before we could really get into the groove of delegating, and providing our leadership for the newspaper.

Under consideration of the global emergency, our staff was forced to cut the collection of satire articles for our third quarter's publication: April Fool's edition.

It was extremely difficult being away from the paper, but the sudden delay in publishing traditional articles gave us more time to research and report about more current events in the nation, and locally in Loudoun County.

As the 2020-21 school year kicked off, we managed to do all online editions of the newspaper during virtual learning. Our website shares each quarterly publication. Adding a website to our newspaper was one of the most beneficial implementations for the engagement of the paper among all three years because we

IN-PERSON AND VIRTUAL NEWSPAPER PROVIDED LASTING MEMORIES, EXPERIENCES

gained a much larger audience who could access our writing, contrasting previous years because we were restricted to printing a limited number of copies.

Although going online was quite fascinating, we missed the company of the entire staff to collaborate and be able to communicate face to face. Despite using Google Meet, it was difficult to engage in conversation as well as set up interviews or receive responses during those hard times.

Frequently throughout the year, poor internet connection or disruptive background noise would create challenges for effective communication.

After a chaotic year, we had the pleasure of going back in person. It was incredible to see everyone in person again. We missed being away from the classroom and were eager to get back to it.

As co-editors-in-chief, we immediately began providing our leadership, and former knowledge of in-person newspaper class, in order to create an efficient staff that covers major events in the school in a timely manner. We organized bulletin boards to schedule our staff's articles, and performed in skits for the morning announcements to raise awareness. We had plenty of ideas of exactly what kind of articles we wished to see, many of which

would highlight the struggle of the pandemic and how people made it through.

We quickly published our first quarter articles, and started a positive rhythm going with the staff, working together quite productively.

Now that the two of us are seniors, it is rather bittersweet being on the staff, because we will soon enter a new era at Virginia Tech, majoring in English (Sheridan) and Multimedia-Journalism (Scott). We are grateful for the definitely unique, but ultimately incredible experience that newspaper has provided us with.

Although the staff varied year-to-year, the connections between each student in the elective will be remembered for life. Newspaper became a class where strangers become best friends for an hour and a half, bonding over school issues, current events, or a random, but very hysterical event.

As graduating seniors, our lasting memories of the class are one of the major aspects of high school that made it so endearing and enjoyable. Our final word of advice to the underclassmen is to join this elective if you love to write because you will discover that it strengthens your writing skills, public speaking, and opens doors to a lifetime of friendships. •

SCHOOL BECOMES MORE STRESSFUL WITH OPTIONAL MASKS

Hannah Winegar | *Staff Writer*

Everyday I sit in classrooms with 15 or more students for seven hours. Since Loudoun County Public Schools announced that masks are now optional, I can't help but feel nervous. Nervous that when someone comes to school with COVID-19 and not wearing a mask, that they can spread it easier, especially to other people not wearing masks. Nervous because if I were to get COVID-19 from going to school, I'd take it home to my family.

When it comes to wearing masks to school, schools that have allowed masks to be optional during the pandemic have had a higher chance of being shut down because of COVID-19 outbreaks. Schools with masks required are still at risk of COVID-19 outbreaks, but they're less likely to.

A study in 2021 led by **Megan Jehn** from Arizona State University focused on researching the COVID-19 cases of schools that do and don't use masks. The study showed that the schools that require masks were 3.5 times less likely to have a COVID-19 outbreak rather than schools that don't require masks.

In schools that required masks, 16 in 100,000 kids are tested positive for COVID-19. With schools that don't use masks, 35 in 100,000 kids tested positive for COVID.

There were 191 COVID-19 outbreaks in schools throughout Arizona, where classes started in July. Of those, 113 had no mask requirements. Only 16 of those schools had masks required since the start of classes. The rest of the 62 schools had decided later in the year 2021 to mandate masks.

Researchers in Thailand conducted studies on people who were in close contact with someone who was infected with COVID-19. The researchers found that the people wearing masks were less likely to test positive for COVID-19 over the people who had no masks.

Despite the evidence of the studies, LCPS has implemented new guidelines concerning masks at Loudoun. Masks are now optional in the school building and at athletic events. LCPS has also stated that masks are now optional on buses despite CDC recommendations, but then says that parents should "advise their students on their expectations for mask-wearing on buses," with the

implication that the bus drivers will not be responsible for enforcing parents' preferences.

This isn't the only contradictory statement involving the new guidelines. The CDC says that if a student contracts COVID-19, they can come back to school the sixth day, recommending a mask for days six to 10. LCPS states that although they recommend that student wear a mask on these days, they don't require it. Keep in mind that those with a mild case of COVID-19 usually take one to two weeks to recover and are likely no longer contagious after day 10.

The VDH no longer requires schools to contact trace individuals with COVID-19. This means that if someone sitting next to you has COVID-19, you will not be informed. LCPS will only contact affected families if there is an outbreak in the school or classroom.

It is up to everyone to be responsible and careful when it comes to COVID-19. When people don't take ways to stay safe seriously, that's when COVID-19 is easily spread. Wearing masks helps protect friends and family and those that have a compromised immune system. •

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EDITORIAL POLICY
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.

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TIMES ARE CHANGING

LOUDOUN COUNTY STUDENTS CAN GO UNMASKED

Olivia DeWan | Online Editor

On April 30, 2020, Americans were encouraged by the CDC to wear a mask in order to combat the spread of COVID-19. For the last two years the bottom half of faces were unseen, but on February 16, 2022 the Loudoun County School Board announced that mask requirements will be lifted as well as all social distancing policies.

Circuit Court Judge **James E. Fisher** granted an emergency injunction on February 16 to a family who was suing the School Board in regards to the masking policy. Students had begun to be suspended from school for not wearing a mask. The school division reported over 21 suspensions according to an article in The Loudoun Now called “Youngkin, Miyares, Loudoun Family Win Court Case Over Mask Mandate.”

Glenn Youngkin signed into law a bill that lifted the mask mandate, and included an emergency clause that made this bill effective no later than March 1.

Then, the family who was suing the School Board won, and the date for masks being optional was moved up to February 22. Families received a call from public information officer **Wayde Byard** on February 21, informing them of the late-breaking update on masking.

“Today is a great day for Virginia’s parents and kids,” Youngkin said in a released statement celebrating the signing of the bill. “Not only did we pass a bipartisan bill empowering parents to opt-out of school mask mandates, but also the Loudoun Circuit Court reaffirmed parents’ rights to have a say in their child’s health, education, care, and wellbeing.”

Masking has been an issue of contention from the beginning of the pandemic. The US Surgeon General and the CDC have made rapid and somewhat contradictory changes.

In February of 2020, US Surgeon General Dr. **Jerome Adams** announced that masks did not, in fact, prevent Covid-19.

Again, in March of 2020, the CDC said that healthy people who are not actively working in health centers did not need to wear



Juniors Laysha Ricci and Amber Owens work together in their Study Hall. Photo by Olivia DeWan.

masks.

In April, the CDC changed their ruling, declaring that masks were effective against COVID-19.

On January 20, 2021 President **Joe Biden** signed an executive order requiring masks in federal buildings.

In March of 2021, the CDC declared it was fine for fully vaccinated citizens to shed masks at indoor gatherings.

At LCPS a hybrid option for school was implemented last winter, and masks were required inside the school buildings. Later, when opened for full in-person learning on January 3, 2021, masks were still required.

With the rapidly-changing policies regarding masking, many students and faculty were worried that there would be animosity between the masked and unmasked students.

“I think our school has really taken it well,” junior **Alyna Jasin** said. “No one has been judgemental about people wearing or not wearing masks.”

I took an informal mask count by tallying students in my B-day classes who chose to wear a mask or not. On March 2, in **Nicolas Guglielmo**’s fifth block personal finance class, eight out of 17 students were not wearing masks. Block six in **Paige Illig**’s AP Language class, nine out of 26 students did not wear masks. Seventh block during **Richard Ricci**’s Advanced Functions class, 14 out of 21 students did

not wear masks. Finally, in **Stacie Leonard**’s chemistry class, 13 out of 20 students did not wear masks.

The count does not include students who were wearing masks incorrectly according to the CDC’s guidelines, only students who had completely taken their masks off. Those who were wearing masks incorrectly were counted as mask wearers because of the physical presence of a mask.

“If masks are so good, why is everyone [the CDC] changing what they think about them?” Dunn said. “First they say that one mask is enough, then you have to wear two, and then they don’t want you to wear masks at all unless you’re sick.”

An article provided by Dunn called “CDC Says N95 masks provide the most protection against COVID-19” written by **Lexi Lonas** stated that the only masks that were truly effective against COVID-19 were N95 masks due to their “filtering facepiece respirators.”

The CDC says that cloth masks are the least protective, which appear to be some of the more popular masks present in schools.

This study is also backed by the Harvard School for Public Health where **William Hanage**, an associate professor of epidemiology, told a publication called “The Atlantic” that surgical masks are “like a sturdy, well-made umbrella, while cloth masks are more like a cheap umbrella

that turns inside out.”

However, some students feel more comfortable with a mask.

“I understand why masks are optional and that everyone is very done with masks, myself included,” senior **Gracie Hawkins** said. “Seeing we are in an area with such high vaccination rates it’s fine with me. However, I will continue to wear mine as I have high risk family members.”

Regardless of what students’ personal beliefs are, most seem to be respectful of others’ opinions.

“Your choice is your choice,” Hawkins said. “I have been thanked by another student for wearing a mask, but from my experience no one has said anything to me for wearing a mask and I haven’t said anything to those not wearing one.”

Other students are in agreement.

“I think that students should definitely be able to have a choice,” Junior **Anna Takemoto** said. “I also think that there are people who could be more careful, so I will continue to wear my own mask.”

According to Takemoto there have been some arguments, but the extreme unrest that was expected with the bill did not happen, and that came as a relief to many students.

“I think masks being optional is a huge step in the right direction,” Jasin said. “I am really happy to see that things are going back to normal.” •

BRIGHTON LIEU REVIVES MODEL UNITED NATIONS CLUB



Model UN members Brighton Lieu, Sebastian Buryniuk, Noah Stultz, Owen Prevelige, Sienna Longendyke, and Pierson Lee pose after placing third in the fourth annual Academies of Loudoun Model UN Conference. The club represented a variety of countries including Bangladesh, Argentina, and France. Photo courtesy of Brighton Lieu.

Michaela Scott | Editor-in-Chief

Those interested in international nations and politics have joined the Model United Nations for years at County, but in 2019 this club’s leadership dispersed when the senior class graduated.

Senior **Brighton Lieu** felt the strong desire to recreate this club and reintroduce it to the new classes at the school.

“During my freshman year I knew some friends across the county having a lot of fun in their Model UN clubs, and I knew a lot of people who wanted to participate in Model UN, but the page on the school website was inactive,” Lieu said. “So I decided, hey, there is only one way to fix that.”

Government teacher **Jamee Robinson** mentioned that Lieu reached out during distance learning.

“Since I teach AP Comparative Government I thought it was a nice lead in, and I really liked being there for the kids. A problem about last year was getting kids to be motivated, so when a student came to me asking to be a sponsor, I was just so excited that they were still interested in school, so of course I stepped up,” Robinson said.

Model United Nations is a club centered around international politics and government, where students learn about foreign

nations, and participate in conferences every year.

“At each conference students are assigned a country and they have to represent that nation’s policy internationally,” Lieu said. “Whoever represents their assigned policy the best gets awarded a title, like Best Delegate. It’s a lot of fun and definitely helps with public speaking.”

The team has approximately ten members, and it is still growing each month when the club gathers to prepare for upcoming conferences.

“It’s a good amount for what we do,” Lieu said. “It’s easier to manage, at least.”

According to Lieu, the club holds monthly meetings. “After club members choose if they will attend the conference, we meet with those students separately, four times a month with our club sponsor, Mrs. Robinson, to get them ready.”

Robinson lets Lieu organize the majority of the club’s activities, including meetings, discussions, and conferences.

“Brighton came to me and said he’ll run everything, and he’ll teach the kids how to do everything, so really, I just sit here and help the kids register for events,” Robinson said. “He is so enthusiastic about communicating with the club, and being willing

to educate the others about responding to position papers, it’s great.”

Before each conference, students must prepare a research paper and write an opening speech. Lieu said that the club provides a lot of support during this step.

“We really help each other out, balancing ideas back and forth before the conference,” Lieu said. “This includes writing the paper about the nation’s policies, coming up with new ideas on policies and how we should act at the conference.”

Lieu said that the club’s first conference under his leadership was through Google Meets at the start of the distance learning school year.

The club is attending a conference in late March for a total of three conferences this year. “Hopefully next year we can get the ball rolling a bit sooner and do five or more,” Lieu said.

The club won Honorable Mention for Best Delegate and placed third in the fourth annual Academies of Loudoun Model UN conference.

“We represented Bangladesh and Argentina on the UN Human Rights Council as well as France in a crisis simulation of the UN Security Council,” Lieu said.

“After weeks of preparation, we got to hear a guest speaker who was a foreign policy professional and president of the U.S. Taiwan Business Council.”

Lieu said that joining the Model UN club is perfect for a student who loves global politics and wants to deepen their knowledge on a variety of different conferences and committees.

“It’s great for getting nerdy kids to actually be comfortable public speaking through something they’re interested in,” Lieu said. “People who are interested in the world, global politics and history should join because you can find something you’re interested in at every conference and there are so many committees like health, humanitarian aid, or politics.”

Lieu said that a main goal of this year is to help the future leaders of the club keep the organization thriving because he is graduating in the spring.

“I’m really going to miss the side tangents during our morning meetings because we all discuss current events in world politics and everyone is knowledgeable about those subjects so it’s nice to have good discussions,” Lieu said. “Overall, I want to give the future leaders enough experience and guidance to make sure we don’t dissolve again.” •

HANDPRINTS

SENIORS THEIR LEAVE MARK



A group of senior handprints has already begun to fill a section of the wall. Photo by Maggie Sheridan.

Maggie Sheridan | Editor-in-Chief

As students pass by the stairs in the English hallway, an array of hands of all colors and designs can be seen, continuing to grow.

The tradition of seniors placing their hands on the wall has occurred at our school since 2007. This marks the 15th year.

In 2007, former adviser **Nancy Thomas** collaborated with the Student Council Association president, organizing the activity as a way for students to leave their legacy, according to senior SCA president **Kenly Howerter**.

The process of placing hands this year started on February 23 and will end before spring break.

“One of the things we are looking for in SCA is trying to empower students, so the senior SCA representatives were given the opportunity to choose where the hands would be,” SCA advisor **Jamee Robinson** said.

Seniors have seven colors to choose from. They can choose up to three colors and can do whatever pattern they would like, such as swirls or zig zags. The seniors chose the paint colors and used SCA funds.

The SCA has been in charge of this large operation.

“This is my first year as one of the SCA co-sponsors alongside **Jason Bryant** so we’re coming into this by learning things on the fly,” Robinson said.

The seniors help teach the underclassmen how to work through processes like these. “We’re the ones who picked the color scheme and collaborated with art to do the mural theme,” said Howerter.

The seniors also help the co-sponsors. “I’ve really relied on the seniors who have been in SCA for a long time,” Robinson said. “We also have meetings with everyone to make sure we are being as efficient as possible with carrying out the project.”

Although this process is a very exciting time for seniors, it can also come with some obstacles.

“Sometimes we are a little overwhelmed with the number of students we are getting at a time,” Howerter said. “Our first or second day we had about thirty kids during one lunch shift and we unfortunately could not get them all up.”

Most seniors participate every year, even during the worst of the pandemic.

“During 2020 with it getting cut short and 2021 with everything being online, the max amount of people we’ve missed is like five,” Howerter said. “A lot of times it’s just like people being out of town or not wanting to do it.”

Although seniors may put their hand as well as their name on the wall, they are not allowed to put anything else. “We do discourage any sort of symbols or words alongside their handprints,” Robinson said.

“There was a lawsuit against two students because they thought each other’s symbols were offensive, so they went to court and now no one is allowed to do symbols anymore,” Howerter said.

However, some students were unaware of this rule prior to putting their hand on the wall and had written symbols down.

“We did have to go over some people who did plain things like stars, quotes or hearts,” Howerter said.

It takes everyone in SCA working together and being assigned different jobs to get through this.

“We have people checking off student’s names, people washing hands off, artistic people who can actually draw straight lines to paint hands,” Robinson said. “It’s vital we have the right people in the right positions.”

Despite this being considered a long process, it’s a unique part of the school’s history that many enjoy. “I think it’s a wonderful, fabulous tradition that kids can actually leave their physical mark on the school,” Robinson said. •

CLUBS COLLECT FOR VOTER OUTREACH

Liberty Harrison | Managing Editor

Michaela Scott, a member of the Young Democrats, calls the lunch room to order, and as the rowdy crowd quiets down, she holds up a voter registration form, alerting people who are or are soon to be 18 of their voting rights.

Outside the classroom boxes featuring cartoonish cut outs of **Ronald Reagan** and **Franklin Delano Roosevelt**, representing the Young Republicans and Young Democrats respectively, call attention to where students should put their canned food.

“The canned food drive was a visual element to draw people to the table, being able to say: I’m voting Democrat or Republican... and to have some sort of interactive element,” said **Jamee Robinson** advisor for both the Young Democrats and Young Republicans.

This dual event, a canned food drive and awareness campaign for voters, is the first big event the Young Republicans and Young Democrats have had since club activities decreased after COVID.

“I know this year and last year have been kind of rebuilding years,” said **Chris Horstkamp**, a member of the Young Republicans.

The event has been long in the planning.

“We’ve been meeting about this and we’ve been talking about it since probably November or December, but we really ramped up meeting about once a week for the past month to hammer out the details,” said Robinson.

Horstkamp, one of the participants in these meetings, helped put together several aspects of the event.

Along with helping to pick the theme, Horstkamp also created a slideshow presentation that was shown on the cafeteria screens displaying information about each of the potential Republican candidates.

Due to the overwhelming likelihood **Jennifer Wexton** would be the Democratic candidate an equivalent presentation was not made by the Young Democrats.

Beyond the slideshow, the event was also advertised through the

morning announcements and social media.

Part of the interactive aspect of the canned food drive set up was a competition between who would get more canned food, which FDR won.

As described by Horstkamp, “FDR mopped the floor with us.”

Despite the political climate, there was no animosity between the two groups, who find a common ground in their care for politics.

“We started sort of separate, but there are three of us in Young Republicans and four Young Democrats, so we sort of got merged,” Horstkamp said.

Both sides saw the bottom line of the food drive as more important than any trivial competition.

“I think with politics today a lot of it is what can I do for myself and not what can I do for others, helping people less fortunate than ourselves is something every person should be committed to regardless of their political standing,” Horstkamp said.

The higher purpose of the event was also to promote voting, something both clubs saw as an important mission in today’s society.

“What we’re doing right now is just trying to educate the student body. A lot of the 11th and 12th-graders may be eligible to vote this year in 2022, and a lot of kids just don’t pay attention to elections unless it’s a presidential election year,” Robinson said.

The student participants agreed that the student population needed to be educated on their rights.

“I’m a little worried that people are just a little apathetic towards voting, just because how politically stoked everything seems to be nowadays, but I think hopefully at least a couple dozen picked up forms,” Horstkamp said.

“There are so many people who do want to cause change, but they don’t see voting as a way to do that, but voting is a very important tool,” said Young Democrat **Sebastian Buryniuk**.

“I think everything is too hyperpartisan, and voting is such an important right for Americans, that getting people to vote regardless of how they are going to vote is important,” Horstkamp said. •



Michaela Scott and Charlotte Penberthy sit behind a table outside of the cafeteria, supervising the canned food drive and voter registration signups. Photo courtesy of Michaela Scott.

OLD SCHOOL, NEW SCHOOL

A look into the differences between the county's oldest school and one of its cross-town modern counterparts



Hannah Winegar | Staff Writer

Built in 1954, Loudoun County High School is the oldest in the county. It has been through numerous renovations and rearrangements and is known for its iconic

front with four columns and a cupola.

But with that history come challenges. From leaking ceilings to a lack of charging stations for student Chromebooks, our aging building made us wonder: what's



it like across town?

Heritage High School was built in 2002 and was therefore designed with modern amenities that the builders of County could not possibly have planned for.

Here is our look into some

of the differences between two schools located within minutes of each other.

Photography by Hannah Winegar. You can view the full-color photos at CountyChronicle.org and issuu.com/countychronicle.

Bathrooms: old and crowded vs. new and spacious



Possibly the number one student complaint from the Captains of Loudoun County High School: the bathrooms. Comparing resources, it's a question of equity. One of Loudoun's bathrooms (above, left) barely compares with one side of a bathroom at Heritage High School (above, right), showing the difference in capacity. Heritage features 12 stalls on only one side, with the other side's stalls unable to fit in the picture. Meanwhile, two of Loudoun's bathrooms (stall from a second bathroom pictured middle row, left) provide only eight stalls. The lack of enough stalls at County causes lines in the bath-

rooms between classes.

Heritage bathrooms contain air dryers while in Loudoun, only one girls' and three boys' bathrooms have air dryers.

In one Heritage bathroom there are ample sinks on both sides of the bathroom (above, right) while in Loudoun bathrooms there are only a handful of sinks (below, right).

For the all-gender bathrooms in Heritage, the signs make it clear that anyone can use them (second row, middle), but in Loudoun all of the all gender bathrooms have a "staff only" sign on the door (second row, right), sending mixed signals to the students.



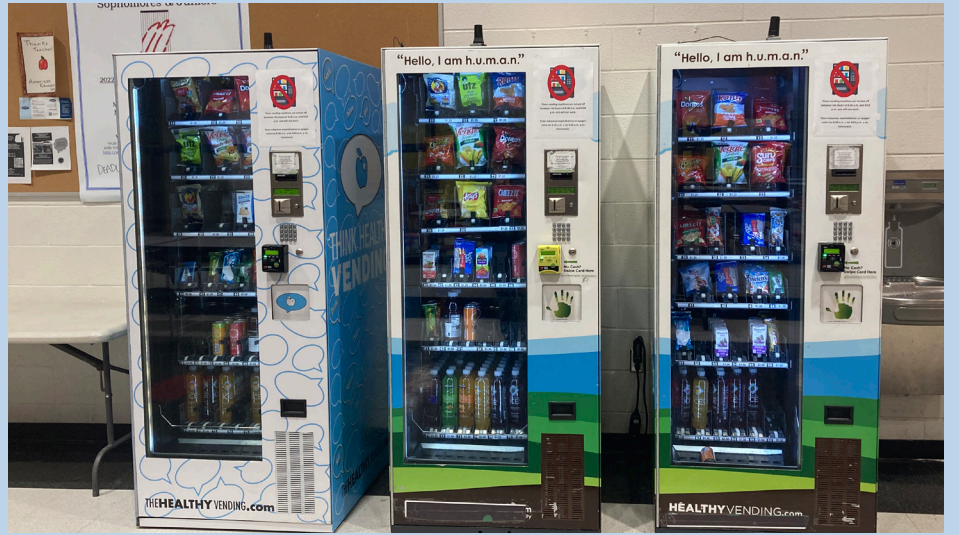
Equal dining seats, limited vending options



With Loudoun's upgraded seating this year (above, left), both cafeterias in Loudoun and Heritage (above, middle) have similar seating



options but that can't be said for the vending machines. Heritage has three vending machines in one spot with multiple options to choose



from (above, right) while Loudoun has one vending machine in one spot that hadn't been refilled at the time of publication (lower right), so there are only a couple of options to choose from.



Hallways: historic and unique vs. smooth and spirited



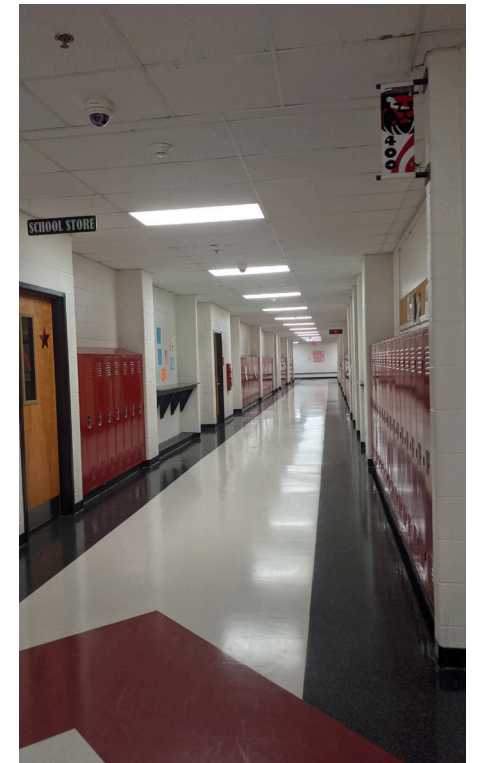
While Heritage's hallways are consistently wide, Loudoun's hallways (above, left) have been through numerous



renovations. For instance, a narrow hallway (above, second) runs past the library, formerly the gym, and barely allows two stu-



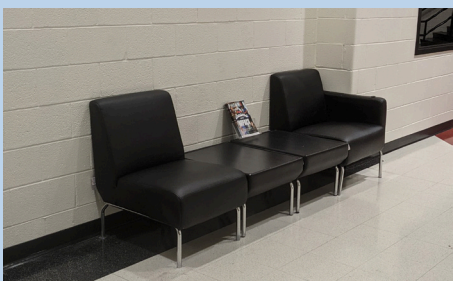
dents to pass by at one time. The hallway had once been part of a locker room but was repurposed when renovations were com-



pleted. Heritage hallways (above, third and fourth) are decorated in school colors and even feature synchronized digital clocks.

Extra features

Heritage features multiple couches in the halls, charging stations for phones, benches with the school name engraved into them, and TVs in the halls (below, left and middle). Not only does Loudoun lack these features, but the lack of charging locations for students'

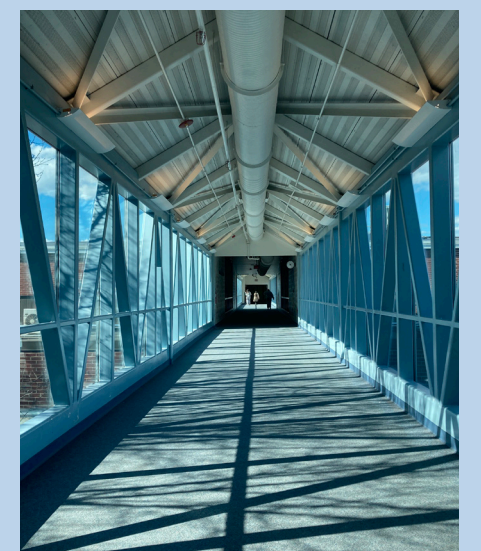


Chromebooks causes overcrowding issues in classrooms.

While inconsistent, Loudoun's unique architectural features give it character that some of the modern schools lack, such as staircases decorated with handprints of graduates (bottom right). Loudoun does have a sky bridge in the



middle of the school and a ROTC Annex building outside in the crowded parking lot. The sky bridge (right) extends from one side of the top floor in the school to the other part of the school.



Audrey Stroupe Wins Scholastic Art Contest's Highest Recognition: The Gold Key

Michaela Scott | Editor-in-Chief

Senior **Audrey Stroupe** has been a four-time volleyball state champion, yet this year she won her first nonathletic recognition in the Scholastic Art and Writing Contest, the Gold Key.

"As this is a juried competition, entering this contest is an excellent addition to any art student's resume. Earning the Gold Key is an additional accomplishment to add," art teacher **Stephanie Woshner** said. "Students earning a Gold Key also have the potential to receive scholarships from Scholastic."

The objective of the contest was to create a piece that is highlighting a social issue, or a controversial concept. Then, artists along the east coast come together and evaluate the work.

"After paying the seven dollar submission fee, I noticed that no one else painted an animal, so I decided to do something different, and enter a portrait of my dog," Stroupe said. "Although it isn't controversial, I named the portrait 'Smarter Than You Look' because my dog is stupid."

Woshner stated that she has taught Stroupe for all four years of her high school career, and



Senior **Audrey Stroupe's** award winning piece, "Smarter Than You Look," was awarded the highest and most difficult level of recognition: the Gold Key. Stroupe used oil painting for her entry into the Scholastic Art and Writing Contest.

she is incredibly talented with painting, yet this piece was her very first oil painting.

"Whenever we have food on our kitchen table my dog presses his nose up against the edge of the countertop, so I decided to paint a picture of him doing that," Stroupe said.

According to the Scholastic Art and Writing Contest, art that is deemed significant in ability or content can earn varying levels of recognition, however the Gold Key award is the highest and hardest to receive. Stroupe mentioned that this contest has impacted her future by helping her choose an art related major in college.

"There are over 50,000 submissions per year, and only about 5,000 students earn a reward, and I happened to get the highest award," Stroupe said. "That is what made it super special."

Stroupe indicated that Woshner encouraged her to enter, along with other art students, yet Stroupe was the only entry from our school to earn a Gold Key.

"When I found out I won I started jumping up and down with my teacher," Stroupe said. "It was a great feeling and definitely a resume-booster!" •

Groundhog Day: The slightly odd yet faithfully celebrated holiday with a fascinating history

Evelyn Kuzminski | Layout Editor

A near-record crowd of thousands - with many more watching the livestream from home - gather in the early dawn hours at Gobbler's Knob, eagerly awaiting a verdict for the next six weeks of 2022: an early spring, or more winter?

Shortly after seven o'clock, America's favorite groundhog stuck with his not-so-trusty prediction yet again, forecasting another six weeks of winter after spotting his shadow. Since the first celebration of Groundhog Day in the late 1800s, **Punxsutawney Phil** has predicted six more weeks of winter 85% of the time with only 40% accuracy.

Although he's probably the most famous, Phil isn't the only weather-prognosticating marmot, and he's certainly not the most reliable. A few hundred miles away, New York's **Staten Island Chuck** has upheld an 85% accuracy rate in his years of predicting. Chuck contradicted Phil again this year, forecasting an early spring for the country.

Milltown Mel reportedly had a near-perfect run during his seven years as a marmot meteorologist. Unfortunately, New Jersey's beloved groundhog died a few days before February 2, leaving his fans without a local replacement for the big day.

Milltown wasn't the only town left hanging by their residential woodchuck this year: Alabama's **Birmingham Bill** slept through the festivities. Groundhogs naturally hibernate through the winter, usually waking up in early February to find a mate, then sleeping for another month. Bill didn't wake up in time this year, and his handlers decided to let him sleep. In previous instances, Bill's duties have been filled by **Bilbo** the owl and **Jill** the opossum.

Despite the various cities and groundhogs across the US that are in the spotlight on February 2, Gobbler's Knob, just outside the borough of Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, is the most popular. It's the original location of American Groundhog Day celebrations, but it's not exactly the origin of the tradition itself.

February 2 is also the date of a Roman Catholic holiday called Candlemas. There are a few religious historical events celebrated on this day, but it's also the day candles are blessed, which is closer to the root of Groundhog Day.

Superstitions held that the weather on Candlemas would be representative of the weather to come. There are several verses expressing this idea, such as the one that follows:

"If Candlemas Day be fair and bright, winter will have another fight. If Candlemas Day brings cloud and rain, winter won't come again."

Germans were one group that subscribed to this superstition, but they actually used hedgehogs as their indicators instead of just that day's weather. When Germans came to the Americas, they started using groundhogs instead of hedgehogs to continue their weather predictions - hedgehogs are not commonly found in Pennsylvania, where they settled, but groundhogs are. The first Groundhog Day was celebrated



AJ Dereume, groundhog handler, holds Punxsutawney Phil at Gobbler's Knob on Groundhog Day. Phil predicted six more weeks of winter again this year. Photo credit Barry Reeger, AP, via The Philadelphia Inquirer.

in 1887 at Gobbler's Knob, which remains the token location for the annual forecasts.

They might not be the most accurate or conventional form of meteorology, but Groundhog Day predictions are certainly a favored and long-established tradition. •

Senior Elisheva Desser appears on American Idol



Desser takes in the scene of American Idol, an experience that she will never forget. Photo credit: Elisheva Desser's Instagram account.

Olivia DeWan | Online Editor

She released her first EP at only 16 years old under the name **Caleny**, then senior **Elisheva Desser** brought her talent to the stage seen all across the country. In October of 2021, the filming for the 20th season of American Idol started, featuring Loudoun County's own music star.

"Going on American Idol was always something I wanted to do since I was a kid," Desser said. "Over the summer an ad for it popped up on my screen and I was like 'why not try out?'"

Desser's musical experience runs long throughout her life, starting with her writing songs at the age of four.

As she got older, family friends like **Beckah Shae**, an American Christian-pop singer/songwriter, and music producer **Jack Shocklee**, helped Desser create her EP "Sixteen" in Nashville.

Desser's most popular song, "Freedom's A Fight," has 12,364 plays on Spotify.

"I was driven to get onto the show because I know it would be good experience and exposure for my music," Desser said. "I signed up that day and waited to hear back on the audition time."

American Idol has been filming since 2002 and many aspiring musicians got their start on the show. Every year American Idol goes to a different state to be

produced, and this year it was stationed in Texas, so Desser had to travel in order to participate.

American Idol organized hotels for the contestants to stay at, but did not cover travel expenses.

"My favorite moment was when a lot of the contestants would gather around the pool area and jam out," Desser said. "Everyone would have guitars and we all really bonded."

Surrounded by people just like her, artists hoping for a chance to break into the industry, Desser felt right at home.

"We would go around one by one and show each other our original songs, and it was so fun," Desser said. "I met so many talented musicians that inspired me."

When the day of her first audition rolled around, Desser was filled with a mix of emotions.

"I got insanely nervous," Desser said. "The only thing I told myself to do was just smile and breathe."

When partaking in an American Idol audition you can sing any song of your choice, either an original or a cover, for the judges. Desser chose a song she wrote at fourteen called "Sunsets."

Regardless of her uneasiness, Desser passed and made it onto the next round.

"It felt exhilarating!" Desser said. "I was so excited and hopeful."

However, American Idol required more than just a song.

Desser had to make profile videos about herself which included topics

like hobbies and daily routines. Desser described it as "vlogging."

Other events that were also included in her daily activities were photoshoots and rehearsals.

This season of American Idol started airing on February 27 on ABC Television Network and Virginia was full of supporters for Desser.

"My family supported me the most," Desser said. "My field hockey team showed a lot of encouragement as well!"

Desser can't reveal what round of American Idol she made it to yet, but she unfortunately didn't pass on to the finals.

The judges said she needed "more experience," but how much more is actually necessary?

Desser already owns an EP on Spotify that is growing in popularity, can play multiple instruments, has hands-on producing encounters, exposure to the harsh realities of the music industry, and plenty of stage time from singing at her church, Cornerstone Chapel.

So what, exactly, is categorized as "more experience" when relating to a seventeen-year-old who already has more than most?

"I never had a vocal lesson, but they told me that proper training would help me when my voice gets worn out," Desser said. "I learned

that I definitely needed more vocal coaching."

As she's always done, Desser channeled her emotions from American Idol into a song that she posted on her Instagram story.

"It was very draining and when my time there was over. It was definitely hard," Desser said. "I really pushed myself to my limits mentally and physically."

Music is Desser's world and being cut left a deep mark, but she bounced back.

"I think I showed myself how strong I really am by how I was able to recover afterwards," Desser said.

Music is destined to be a part of Desser's near future, as she plans to attend Belmont University to study songwriting and minor in music business. Belmont is known for its degrees in the music industry fields and is located in Nashville, Tennessee, the music capital of the United States.

Desser is taking her time on American Idol all in stride and using it to become a stronger musician. She is eager to put out some new music and hopes her time on American Idol will bring more interest to her work already produced.

"Caleny fans should be anticipating a new single," Desser said. "I plan to go record the song in a few months!" •



Elisheva Desser arrives on the set of American Idol. She participated in the 20th season that was hosted in Texas. Photo credit: Elisheva Desser's Instagram account.

“Wait, we do?” After the pandemic, The County Chronicle, “Out of sight, out of mind”

Cat Pizzarello & Crawford Holmes | Staff Writers

Wait, County has a school newspaper?

Contrary to many students' beliefs, Loudoun County does in fact have a school newspaper.

The County Chronicle has been operating since 1954 when Loudoun County High School was first established. It started under its original name of The Loudoun Raider, named after the original mascot of the school, and has survived numerous challenges, the pandemic being the latest.

Years ago, newspaper students would deliver the paper directly to students during class.

When disrupting class became frowned upon by administration, the newspaper staff placed newspapers in hotspots around the school. For over fifty years, the newspaper ran in print, but the paper version could not adapt to the vast challenges that were presented when COVID-19 struck. To reach the students at home the newspaper was put online in blog and PDF format, but with screen fatigue, it seems that the newspaper was almost forgotten.

With the newspaper now online, students seem to find it more difficult to access. “You have to go on too many tabs and it’s so much work,” said freshmen **Taylor Fedor**. It seems a main issue is that many students don’t find it enjoyable or don’t have enough time to explore it.

“It’s just something that isn’t appealing anymore, and I only read it during quarantine,” said sophomore **Farhat Afshari**.

Michaela Scott, senior newspaper editor also expressed that the newspaper prior to COVID-19 was a “More organized system, because everything was thrown up in the air once the pandemic happened.”

Scott also conveyed that the newspaper was more realistic to an actual press newspaper preceding COVID. “We would go to every class and would be like “Extra! Extra! Read all about it!” and it was such a “newspaperly” thing,” Scott said.

It is clear that the school newspaper needs change with freshmen **Rudy Lovo** who “doesn't like reading it.”

The majority consensus of the student population agreed that the best way to make the newspaper more visible is to print a physical paper, although the reasons for favoring this vary. The average answer can be summed up by junior **Connor**



Newspaper staff decide which articles will appear in the April 2022 edition. When schools closed to in-person learning in March 2020, the newspaper, then called The Loudoun Raider, moved to an online-only format. The April 2022 edition will be the first print edition since January 2020. Pictured left to right: Daniel DeLargy, Matt Starchville, Evelyn Kuzminski, Cat Pizzarello, Crawford Holmes, Maggie Sheridan, Hannah Winegar, Lorenzo Salas. Photo by Valerie Egger.

Top Five Book Recommendations for April

Hannah Winegar | Staff Writer

“Sharp Objects” (Gillian Flynn)

A journalist returns to her hometown to write about the murders of two children in the span of one year but finds more than she bargained for. The show is 90% accurate to the book.

“All the Bright Places” (Jenniver Niven)

Two teenagers struggling with personal problems are assigned a class project together in which they have to travel the area together, all while developing their relationship with each other.

“Nothing” (Janne Teller)

A group of kids try to prove to a classmate that everything matters, each contributing something that has meaning, but as people contribute to the pile, the more frightening the items get.

“The Hate U Give” (Angie Thomas)

A teenage girl witnesses her best friend get murdered by a police officer and has to deal with the aftermath and getting justice for her friend while also fighting off racial stereotypes and hate.

“The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy” (Douglas Adams)

A man named Arthur Dent suddenly finds himself exploring space with aliens and robots searching for long lost answers to million old questions and theories about the universe.

Malone, saying, “People are lazy and they are forced to do it because it’s right in front of them.” However some students like Pearson say that they are simply, “sick of looking at the screen.”

The school was even more divided on how these paper copies should be communicated. While Malone says spreading awareness through the announcements would be enough, other students suggested more drastic measures. Placing advertisements in the bathroom was a surprisingly popular prospect. “I would love to hear about the school newspaper while I pee,” said senior **Angeles Vasquez**.

Kennedy Cole elaborated even further on the idea saying that putting the commercial on the back of a bathroom stall with big lettering would be most

efficient. Sophomore **William Zhang** disagreed, saying, “I don't want to be forced to look at some newspaper article, I don't want to see that in the bathroom.”

Students like junior **Brayan Rivera** worry about what he has seen already, noting that he has “seen people take them (other advertisements) down.”

Even though many challenges seem to face our newspaper there are many ways to share the widespread knowledge of the schools newspaper, whether it be through the announcements, bathroom advertisements, paper copies, or even as Cole suggested by passing them out at lunch. Hopefully with our April edition back in print, when students are asked about if they know we have a newspaper say, they will be able to say more than, “Wait, we do?” •

The County Chronicle Crossword

Cat Pizzarello | Staff Writer

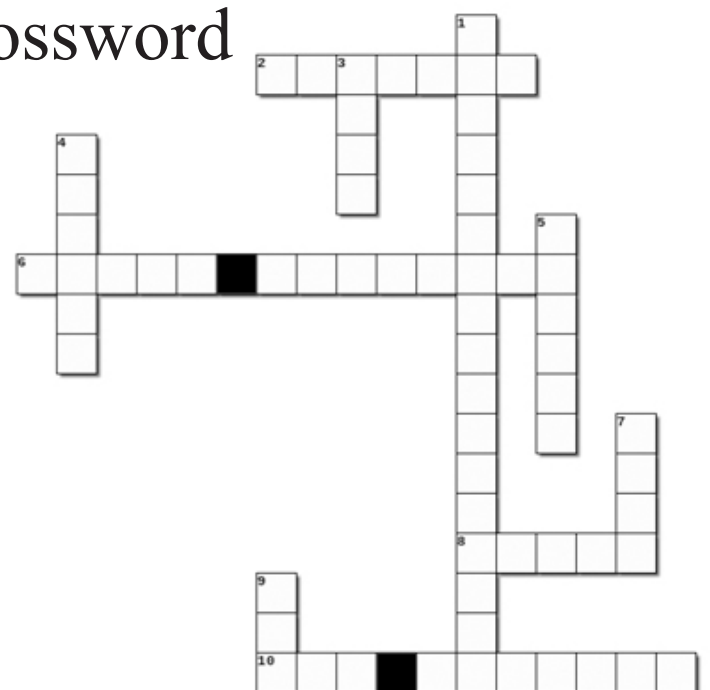
Across:

- 2. County’s Mascot
- 6. Coach whos been at County the longest
- 8. True or False: County doesn’t have tunnels under the school
- 10. Teacher who’s been here the longest

Down:

- 1. Year LCHS was established
- 3. There is a ___ in the basement or on the roof or not ;)
- 4. We have the ___ program in Loudoun County

- 5. County is the ___ school in Loudoun County
- 7. True or False: According to a former custodian, County has a ghost that haunts the building
- 9. The library used to be County’s ___



FRESHMAN WRESTLER BECOMES SECOND FEMALE IN SCHOOL HISTORY TO WIN STATES

Michaela Scott | Editor-in-chief

Growing up in a household of nine siblings who nearly all wrestle, freshman **Grace Roberts** began learning the fundamentals of the sport at the age of nine years old.

“I started wrestling after watching my brothers wrestle, and I loved it,” Roberts said. “It wasn’t too difficult because I became devoted to learning it.”

On January 26, Roberts became the second female wrestler in school history to win at the Girls Wrestling State Tournament.

“We actually have had a freshman girl win states before. **Leila Telvin** won both her freshman and sophomore year before finishing second as a junior and losing her senior year to COVID,” wrestling coach **Kent Nagy** said. Nagy notes that Telvin is now wrestling in college and that doing so would also be an option for Roberts.

Roberts indicated that she has consistently been working toward the goal of winning state championships. She included that her dad and brothers have coached

her along the way.

“Grace has a lot of knowledge of the sport, she has been wrestling with her brothers through middle school and youth leagues,” Nagy said. “She is also very competitive and really hates to lose, which gives her the motivation that she needs to be successful in a very demanding sport.”

Roberts explained that seeing what other people could do at wrestling meets and then seeing that she could do the same made her want to achieve more.

“Whenever I get butterflies in my stomach before I compete, I try to clear my head and stick with my typical routine,” Roberts said. “Usually, I don’t listen to music or anything while warming up, I just try to focus on what I am doing.”

Roberts mentioned that the moral support from her teammates and friends at the state tournament was what made it so special.

“Everybody on the team is really kind,” Roberts said. “At the moment I am the only girl on the team, but I’m cool with it, and I’m glad my team can support me.”



Freshman Grace Roberts wins the girls’ state wrestling tournament on January 26. Roberts became the second female wrestler in school history to win a state championship. Photo courtesy of County Athletics

Roberts states that she hopes to keep wrestling in her daily life in some way after she graduates from the student wrestling program.

“Wrestling in college is something that I could definitely see myself doing in a few years,” Roberts said. “However, right now I am really focused on improving my skills day by day.”

“As someone who has two daughters at home I was extremely proud of Grace,” Nagy said. “She is a great model of what a strong, hard working, young woman can be. My greatest regret this year is that my daughters have not attended matches because COVID and haven’t seen all of Grace’s success.” •

WINTER SPORTS SPOTLIGHT

Matt Starchville | Staff Writer

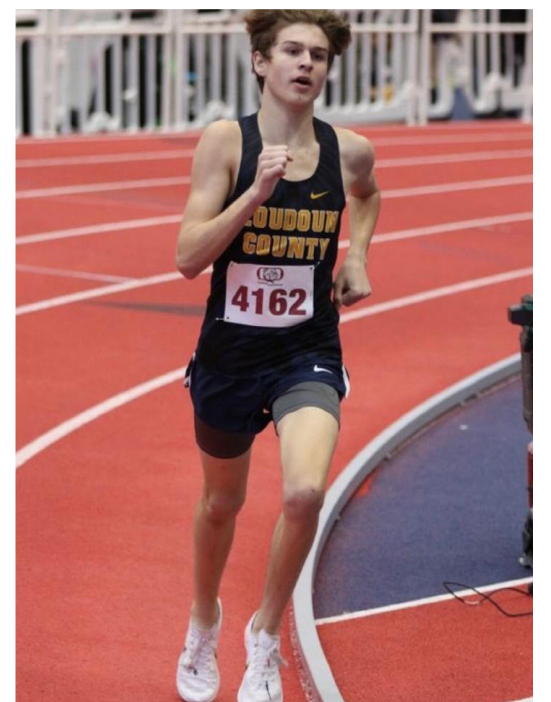
These three winter athletes shined throughout their season bringing hardware back to the school in the form of district and state championships.

JP Vanderloo (below) won a region title in the 500 yard free-style. “My coaches and fellow teammates drove me, and with their support my team and I were able to succeed,” Vanderloo said. Photo courtesy of **Jack Beard**, LoCo Sports.

Bryson Rios (top right) won his second state title for wrestling.

“The proudest moment of the season was battling through an injury and winning another state title,” Rios said. Photo courtesy of **Kate Cassidy**.

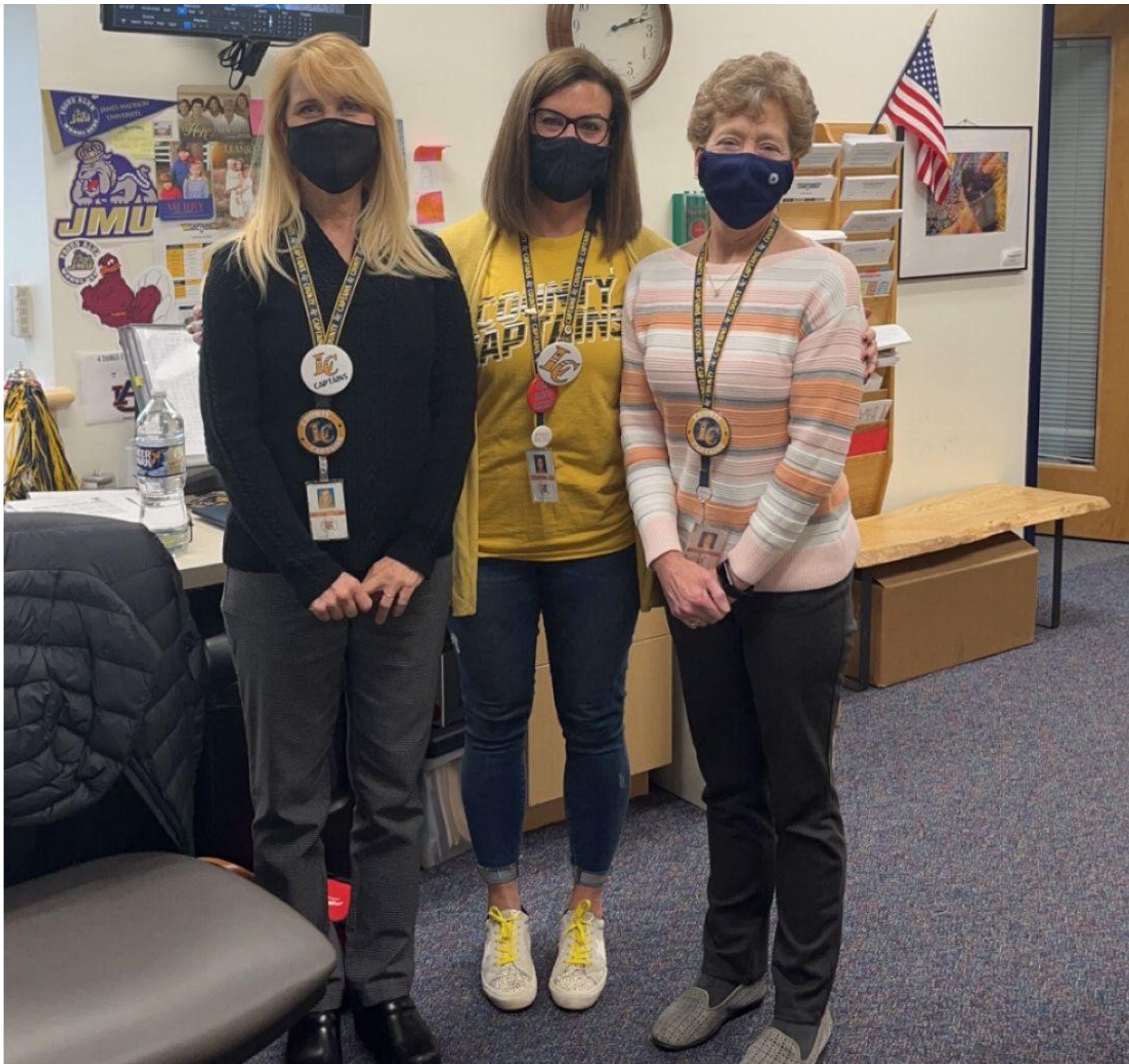
Blake Conner won a collective district title for boys’ track and field. “It was a team effort,” Conner said. “Everyone who ran that day helped us a ton and it wouldn’t have been possible without the field athletes there to help us.” Conner (bottom right) ran the 3200. Photo credit: Official mile split photographer, **Mary Ann Magnant**. •



END ZONE

FRONT OFFICE STAFF

A LOOK AT THE PEOPLE THAT HOLD THE SCHOOL TOGETHER



Amy Perkins, Michelle Gettier, and Kathy Garrison are responsible for running the main office. “I do not think that this school would function without them,” Assistant Principal Kristyn Inman said. Photo by Jevonte Herron.

Jevonte Herron | Staff Writer

Do you ever wonder what it’s like to run the front office?

Buzzing in visitors, answering phones, doing early dismissals, calling people down for admin. There is always someone coming or going. How would you ever get bored with all of this as your job?

“It is chaotic and crazy busy at times, but it’s usually pretty fun,” Secretary **Amy Perkins** said.

Even though the main office isn’t officially open until 8:00, hard-working Secretary **Kathy Garrison** arrives at 6:30 to prepare for substitutes. Then you have Secretary **Michelle Gettier** that stays until 4:30

when the office really closes at 4:00.

The secretaries stay busy the entire time. “You will also be constantly interrupted, so you have to be easy going and flexible about that and just roll with it,” Perkins said. “The worst part about working in the front office is the constant ringing of the doorbell.”

The front office staff is in charge of office security, so each visitor must be checked in.

In addition to their hard work on a daily basis, the front office secretaries took on added challenges this year. Following Loudoun County being on the news this year for several controversial issues, our high school received several phone

calls from people from across the country thinking our school was the administration building.

According to Perkins, when angry people called, she would just hang up the first time, then if they called back again she would transfer them to the admin building.

Another added challenge this year has been finding coverage for teachers who have to be absent, some from COVID-19, or having to stay home with quarantining family members.

“Most challenging part for me is arranging covers for teachers that do not have substitutes and getting materials/information together for substitutes,” said Garrison.

Not only does she work in the front

office. “I was also a student here and graduated in 1982,” said Garrison.

The school was different back in the 1980s when Garrison attended.

“What is now the library was the main gym and the band/music hallway next to the auditorium was the cafeteria,” said Garrison.

Through all the changes, one thing is clear: our front office staff helps the school in ways most of us are probably unaware of. “I do not think that this school would function without them,” assistant principal **Kristyn Inman** said. “I wish they knew how much work goes into it cause always people are complaining about little mistakes and we try our best but it is hard to make everything perfect.” •