

Loudoun County High School's
Quarterly Newspaper

Vol. 66, Issue 3 - April 2021
415 Dry Mill Road, Leesburg, VA

blogs.lcps.org/countychronicle/



provides hope for the community

Liberty Harrison | staff writer

The coronavirus vaccine has brought with it many emotions, including relief and hope but also highlights the tribulations caused by the pandemic. The experiences of both nurses and those who have been vaccinated are shaping the history of the coronavirus pandemic.

Almost all people throughout the process have had the same reaction to receiving their shots.

Kathie Miller is usually Harmony Middle School's nurse, but she also works as a vaccinators at the Brambleton POD. Miller said, "Most people are very excited to be there. There've been a few people who've been a little anxious just because you're getting a shot, but for the most part people are just so excited and they just roll up their sleeves, they just can't wait to get it, because everybody wants to get back to some sense of normal."

"The reason I haven't specifically [seen anyone not wanting to get the

vaccine] I think is because everyone who is coming in is very excited about it," said **Jamie Klucken**, a clinical pharmacist who volunteers with the Loudoun Medical Reserve Corps, run by the Loudoun County Health Department. Dr. Klucken works as a Safety Evaluator for the FDA, but any views expressed are her own. "I think people that are more concerned about the vaccine have not signed up for it. But the people that are coming in for the vaccine are just very excited about the possibility of some semblance of normalcy after they've got their second shot. However, we still advise everyone to still mask up and socially distance, especially with others around them that aren't vaccinated, until we have herd immunity. Most people are just very grateful that we are there and are just excited to get it."

However there are still many people who have shown suspicion in the vaccine, and have expressed an anxiousness or even outright refusal

The front of Brambleton Middle School, where the Loudoun County School System vaccination POD was set up for the county's school staff. Photo by Liberty Harrison.

towards getting the vaccine.

"I have run into a lot of friends and family on Facebook that have reached out to me and expressed concern about the vaccine, given the rapid development," Klucken said. "So it's been very helpful knowing, because of my job, how the drug approval process works and knowing that steps regarding the evaluation of safety and efficacy were not skipped. The one thing that really sped up the process was manufacturing the vaccine prior to approval, which is not normally done. The government paid for the vaccines in advance, in case it worked, so companies could have vaccines ready to go upon approval. We've lucked out that so far all these

continued on VACCINE, page 4

TABLE OF CONTENTS

news

- 1 | LIBERTY HARRISON | vaccines provide hope
- 3 | OLIVIA ZAVADIL | SCA creates virtual announcements
- 6 | MAGGIE SHERIDAN | thermal scanners check students
- 8 | LIBERTY HARRISON | vaccine protocols in loudoun county
- 9 | EMILY BANNER | 'gifts and munch, munch more' returns
- 10 | OLIVIA ZAVADIL | news brief: english honor society inductions
- 10 | EMILY BANNER | news brief: PSATs occur in person
- 11 | EMILY BANNER | library remains open during COVID
- 12 | DANIEL DELARGY | digital struggles
- 14 | CHRIS MEJIA | hybrid learning: expectation vs reality
- 16 | MICHAELA SCOTT | mid-year bell schedule adjustment
- 17 | KAREN CORTES | teachers on the bell change
- 18 | CHLOE BEAL | PEER supports students during pandemic
- 20 | JEVONTE HERRON | meet our new school resource officer
- 22 | LIBERTY HARRISON | downtown restaurants' resiliency
- 24 | ALEXIS CUATLACUATL | tuscarora mill
- 26 | OLIVIA ZAVADIL | ROTC cadets practice during COVID

athletics

- 28 | MATT STARCHVILLE | basketball district championships
- 30 | MAGGIE SHERIDAN & MICHAELA SCOTT | preseason practice
- 32 | MATT STARCHVILLE | football's preseason prep
- 34 | CHARLOTTE EDMONDS | field hockey
- 36 | OLIVIA DEWAN | field hockey's triple overtime
- 38 | CASEY HUGHES | track's region 4C championship
- 39 | MATT STARCHVILLE | gavin pitts' commitment to Tech
- 40 | OLIVIA DEWAN & LIBERTY HARRISON | cheer team
- 42 | CASEY HUGHES | vanderloo's regional performance
- 44 | JEVONTE HERRON | basketball's season end

arts and entertainment

- 46 | MAGGIE SHERIDAN | isabella sierra at micro gallery
- 47 | BRAYDON KELMAN | sydney martin at micro gallery
- 48 | ALEXIS SHUGARS | sachi kataria's positivity blog
- 49 | ALEXIS SHUGARS | washer featured at shenandoah valley
- 50 | MAGGIE SHERIDAN | teacher feature: jaqua moon

end zone

- 44 | KAREN CORTES | chris colston on becoming an author

Disclaimer: In compliance with governor's orders, all school-sponsored activities followed physical distancing and mask requirements, but due to the nature of COVID-19 limiting school activities, the community was invited to submit pictures for the newspaper. Many of these photos occurred on private residential property and therefore may not conform to the regulations binding school-sponsored activities.

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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.

SCA FINDS VIRTUAL SOLUTION TO MORNING ANNOUNCEMENTS



Olivia Zavadil | Managing Editor

School bells buzz as the PA system clicks on overhead. The familiar sound of SCA's morning announcements fills the hallways as students prepare for the day ahead. While this would be a normal scene for any other school year, it has been discarded by one factor: distance learning. Instead of kids filling the classroom, the rooms are now close to empty, with only teachers and a few students filling the chairs. So how do you provide morning announcements for a virtual student body? The answer is simple: pre-recorded video announcements.

"The videos started with Mr. Prince, and then we all took it on and started brainstorming ideas," senior communication director **Jackson Chinn** said. Chinn, who works alongside fellow communication director Safa Saad, supervises the process of putting together and editing the morning announcements.

The managing assistants collect information and put it into a Google form based on a specific day; afterward, they work to outline and organize the information. Once outlined,

the SCA anchors divide the topics amongst themselves, and begin filming each portion of the announcements. "We pre-determine what day will cover each topic, usually each day has its own specialized thing, like the word of the day is Tuesday, and the lame joke of the week is on Friday," Chinn said.

Once each section is complete, Chinn and Saad work to edit and put the announcements together the night before they air. "Mr. Prince, Safa, and I, the communication team, we just go over jobs and who's doing what. If something is missing or we need something, we then try and organize that to get the videos in on time," Chinn said.

Each announcement video has a process of about a week or so to put together, and the virtual aspect of the process has added a new level of difficulties to deal with. "Technology has definitely been an issue," SCA advisor **Matthew Prince** said.

"The hardest part of the announcements is definitely putting it all together," Chinn said. "The editing is definitely the most time-consum-

County News Network is the newest addition to our school's morning announcements. The network, created by SCA, provides daily video announcements to students.

ing part that wouldn't be there if we were in person,". Besides the editing process, basic communication has also proved to be an issue at times. "Communication issues have come up, mostly with people being occupied or times where videos haven't been sent through, it's just all a part of the process," he said.

"Although I'm not that in tune with filling out the information, I know that emailing teachers and garnering information, that's definitely time-consuming as well, especially getting stuff approved," Chinn said.

Despite the challenges, SCA has found ways to come together and tackle obstacles as a team. "Everyone's input has made the process a little easier as we've gone through it," said Prince.

"**Sean Rombach** gave us the idea to do the weather, and **Stella Celentano** came up with the word of the day," he said.

"It's been a great team effort, and Jackson has done an amazing job of taking over a good lead of it. He and Safa have really created something together that's pretty special, and I think students enjoy it much more than the normal announcements," Prince said.

As for the announcements, Prince indicated that they hope to continue doing the videos for the foreseeable future. "Hopefully this is the beginning of a new tradition," he said. •

continued from VACCINE, page 1
vaccines presented to the FDA have actually worked. So they already had it manufactured and have been able to push it out more rapidly than normal. So there's some hesitancy out there because people are concerned about that."

Loudoun County High School nurse **Shannon Nerantzis** has worked as both a vaccinator, a floating nurse (those positioned around the POD to transport materials and information to the vaccinating nurses), and as a nurse monitoring those waiting to be cleared after their injection. She said regarding those who have doubts about the safety and viability of the vaccine, "Basically the science behind this for a mRNA vaccine has been around for over 10 years. It was developed around the time of the H1N1 flu vaccine so, when they were able to get the genetic code for this virus, literally back in January, they were able to have the components to start producing vaccines even last January. It took time to figure out what solutions and that type of thing would be needed but, honestly science is pretty amazing these days."

Inside the vaccination PODS, however, there are still some problems.

"It's been a very positive environment, I think for pretty much everybody as far as vaccinators, as far as people receiving vaccines. It's a little overwhelming sometimes for people to see the first time, because it is a gym, it's loud and it's not the private area that they're used to when they get vaccines, even a flu vaccine. For that usually they take you to your private room," Nerantzis said. "But now that we're pretty much only doing second vaccines people just kind of take the energy that's in the room and are really positive."

Instead of being apprehensive about getting the vaccine some peo-

ple appear to be overzealous.

"I think what I've seen more [than people not showing up] is people trying to show up with maybe their spouse or their partner who doesn't qualify and see if they can get a dose. Of course we can't do that because we have it set up for so many per day and we only have so much supply," Klucken said.

There have also been some problems at the various vaccination PODs, but these have been resolved as time has gone on.

"As far as timing, I know I was there at the very beginning when we first started doing this. It was a little bit more difficult for us to get people through just because we were all new at this, trying to vaccinate so many people in a short period of time," Klucken said. "But right now... it's a very smooth process, people get in and get out."

Booking for the Brambleton POD in particular, teachers experienced some technical difficulties that were later resolved.

"Initially the County rolled out an email that was in essence, a free for all, for all teachers or staff to try and load the page up and get in and book an appointment as quickly as possible," said **Caitlin McAteer**, an English and Advisory teacher at Loudoun County High School. "I, as a teacher, received an email midway through January that said, 'this is your personalized link to create an appointment for your COVID vaccine' and I clicked on that. The first time I clicked on it, I opened it up and there was nothing there...it didn't even have the dates listed that I could have picked an appointment."

After a few days however, the system was fixed and McAteer was able to book her appointment.

"Then the second or third time that I refreshed and went back, I think



A bright sign alerts drivers to the vaccination site on the road near the Brambleton Middle School vaccination POD. Photo by Valerie Egger.

a day or two later, the appointment times had filled in and at that point I was able to get a slot that worked for me," McAteer said.

Dealing with these bumps in the road are the many nurses working in the PODs, many of whom have felt a great impact from their work.

"I can tell you the first day, besides being completely exhausted," Miller said. "I literally, I cried. I called my brothers and I said, 'Mom and Dad would have been so proud of me because of it.' You know, this is part of history. ... So it was a very emotional and exhausting experience."

Nerantzis said what she took away from her experience working in the POD was, "Just that people really appreciate all the efforts that we've gone to to make sure that they're

vaccinated, that the system has gone smoothly, that they don't have to wait a long time." She added, "I think one of the lessons is that if you take time to orchestrate something thoughtfully and make sure that everyone's taken care of it really shows."

Not only have nurses been affected by working at the POD but by getting the vaccine themselves.

"It's kind of funny because the student health services staff knew prior to going on Christmas Break that we would potentially get [the coronavirus vaccine] over break so we were told to make sure you're checking your emails and so I was checking my email every day over break," Miller said. "New Year's Eve I looked at the email in the morning there was nothing there, so I went out and walked my dog and came home." After checking her email again, she filled out the form and "literally I got my shot like an hour later, it all happened really, really fast. And when I got mine it was at the initial vaccine clinic."

She describes the site, a warehouse in Sterling, as big, empty, and freezing. "Everybody's just standing in line, following the dots on the floor that are six feet apart."

Miller admits to sneaking a picture to send to her husband.

"The girl behind me goes, 'I just did the same thing, do you feel like you're in a weird sci-fi movie?' and I said, 'I do.'"

Miller's second dose happened in the Loudoun County School POD, where all the nurses were working. The nurses who have stepped into the front line of vaccine distribution want to share the knowledge and insights that they have gained from their profession and their experiences.

"I would feel like whether you're talking about COVID or you're talking about, like, a tornado that happens or anything," Miller said, "I think until it

affects you personally or your family or your friends, I don't think people really take things seriously.

Miller explained that she had a close family friend who lost his leg because of blood clotting issues related to COVID-19.

Miller describes her friend as "one of those people who basically had every possible bad thing related to COVID happen, and he survived it but his life will never be the same." She cautions that, "maybe it hasn't affected you or your family, or maybe it did and it was very mild, but this is

serious. This is not a fake virus. I think we all need to do our part to move past this whether it's wearing your mask, or doing your social distancing or getting your vaccine. We all have a social responsibility, because not everybody is lucky enough either not to be affected or to get by with minimal symptoms."

Nerantzis has a similar message to Loudoun County High School: "Just continue to be careful with [your] social distancing. I know it's hard and I applaud all of you who've done such a great job, but just keep carrying on and hopefully we'll get back together soon."

Multiple teachers from LCHS who have also gone through the experience of getting the vaccine agree that it was an easy decision to get it done.

McAteer noted that the county allowed teachers to create asynchronous lesson plans during the morning or afternoon of the scheduled vaccine. "I was able to choose that in order to drive to Brambelton, and then stand in line," she said. "So knowing that I had been given the permission, that we had permission...

without feeling like taking care of myself, came at the cost of doing my job. It was much better that way, and knowing that with the vaccine, if I'm vaccinated, I'm going to be that much more prepared to get back into the classroom. It was always easy enough to just say yes, I'm going to go get it."

"The school system allowed us

to take the time during the school day, if we needed to, to get our vaccination," said **Eleanor McKenzie**, an APWH teacher at Loudoun County High School. She explained that in fact the day she

scheduled it for was a snow day and said, "So I didn't have to miss school, but if I had to, they made the process easy for us. I could find someone to cover for me or I could do an asynchronous class."

After making the decision to get the vaccine the process for teachers was fairly easy.

McAteer made her appointment on the January 18 and got the vaccine ten days later, on the January 28.

"I was concerned because I was prepared for it to be booked out solid, but it worked out pretty well," McAteer said.

Arriving for her 3:30 appointment at 3:45 McAteer stood in line for 20 to 30 minutes, got her vaccine, and waited for 15 minutes to make sure she did not have an adverse reaction.

About an hour, all told. "So it was, it was really not bad," said McAteer, who received the Pfizer vaccine.

"It didn't hurt," McAteer said. "I have a lot of experience getting blood drawn and that's always where my head goes when I think of needles.

"You know that George Michael song, 'Freedom'? That was going through my head."

continued on VACCINE, page 7

THERMAL SCANNERS ENSURE SAFETY OF STUDENTS, STAFF

Maggie Sheridan | Editor in Chief

LCPS has installed thermal scanners at every school in order to increase the safety of students and staff as they transition to the Hybrid learning model. They are used to rapidly monitor student's temperatures and ensure no one has a fever. There is one per school located at specific main entrances.

"Our school's thermal scanner is pointed towards the athletic entrance and it's capability allows it to come in contact with around forty scans per second," School Security Officer **Jessica Harden** said, "If someone has a fever, the other camera will take a picture and that information is emailed to a designated group of people who will track down that individual, bring them to the care room, and reassess their temperature."

Every school had the option to decide where to place their particular scanner. Some schools put it in the front office or some at different entrance points. "Since our school's layout is different from all the others, it was very helpful to be able to decide exactly where to put it and pick a place most convenient," Principal **Michelle Luttrell** said.

Because the scanner is located at B7, it is mostly used for those students who ride the bus to school. Students that drive are required to use the other entrances in order to avoid overcrowding and will have their temperature checked with the hand-held scanners. "It just makes the most sense to put the scanner where we have the highest volume of traffic," Lut-



Counselor Dan Croyle watches as students pass by the new thermal scanner at the beginning of the day as they enter the gym, where they wait before being dismissed to class. The scanner, pictured above, accurately records their temperature as students pass by. Photos by Valerie Egger.

trell said.

In order for the scanner to efficiently scan each person's temperature, they cannot be wearing certain articles of clothing near it such as hats, hoods, and even glasses. According to Luttrell, if there is any kind of obstruction, it cannot get any kind of accurate read, so she must ask students to adhere to these rules.

The Department for Digital In-

novation is in charge of the scanners and is the group responsible for their installation within the country. The administrators, school nurses, and safety and security officers are responsible for overseeing the specific scanners within each school.

"The efficiency with which we can get students into the building will greatly improve due to the scanner," Luttrell said, "Right now

we are using hand-held scanners in order to read temperatures, and those would slow as down tremendously due to the number of students we have. It is also incredibly accurate compared to the hand-held ones, which can differ based on location.”

Now that students are coming back to school for Hybrid learning, the scanners will be very useful in ensuring the safety of students and staff. When the system detects a temperature of 100.4 or over, it alerts schools administrators via email.

According to Harden, so far the scanners have taken over a couple thousand reads at schools where students are already back and only about one or two students have had a temperature of 100.4 or over.

Teachers are not required to use the entrance with a scanner; instead they will be required to do the COVID scanner and check themselves before they come to school if they feel like they are sick or have a fever, staying home if needed.

The scanners are a significant change for schools, but students and staff are slowly getting used to it and recognize its importance in helping students. “It’s a nice mitigation device to help us get you guys in schools quicker so that we can get the school day started on time,” Luttrell said.

The school is hoping to possibly incorporate the scanner as much as possible and use it during athletic events in the future as well as before- and after-school activities. “We are very limited to the number of people that can come to these events, so maybe they can explore using it in the future,” Luttrell said. •

continued from VACCINE, page 5

So this was actually a lot easier than getting blood drawn and it was just right into the muscle of my left arm. The vaccine itself didn’t hurt, I would say for probably two or three days afterward, my arm was sore. So I tried to be more careful about not jostling it, but, that was really the only adverse experience. Maybe my health dipped a little bit. I might’ve got the sniffles, but I don’t think ... anything major happened.”

She might not have had much of a physical reaction, but McAteer admits she was emotionally affected.

“I will say that I felt kind of emotional,” McAteer said. “I have been feeling a pretty great sense of relief over having gotten the vaccination process started. I am aware that there are, you know, questions about whether they’re effective against the newer variants of COVID and that does make me a little bit uneasy. But I spoke to the nurses who were in charge of all the stations and they expressed a sense of being part of history and I felt the same way. I feel an extreme relief, the kind of thing where something really intense has been hanging over you and then all of a sudden it’s taken care of. It’s over. It’s done. And you’re just like, whew, you feel kind of giddy almost...it’s still just a big sense of, of happiness and of release.”

McAteer was scheduled for her second shot on the 28th of February, meaning she is now fully vaccinated.

Now that she had been through the process, like the nurses, McAteer also wants to share her experiences with the community.

“I know there’s a lot of fear and that different people think different things about the vaccine,” McA-

teer said. “I’ve put a lot of faith in history, looking at the history of vaccinations in the United States and looking too at the people...on the ground. Like, do I trust the nurse at school? Do I trust Shannon Nerantzis? Yes, I do. Do I trust nurses in general? Yes I do. So if these are people who have worked quote unquote on the front lines of health-care, their entire life, and they are excited and they are feeling positive about it, then I think that that gives me more confidence to trust them and to believe what they see over any conspiracy theories or fears that other people have. That’s what I would share most and foremost is yes, remain informed, but I mean really remain informed by talking to people who actually know, who have had the real experience.”

McKenzie also described the ease of the vaccination process and how it affected her personally.

Referring to the interim period between booking and getting a shot McKenzie said, “It was only a couple of days because I opened up the link randomly on a Saturday morning and I got the appointment on Monday, but that was the Monday that school was closed, so they moved it to a different day.”

She got the Pfizer shot as well, spending about 20 minutes going through the process. Afterwards she reported having a sore arm for around 3 days and fatigue, but no other symptoms. She was scheduled to get her second shot on March 1st, meaning she as well is now fully vaccinated.

After getting the shot she too felt a sense of relief.

“You know that George Michael song, ‘Freedom’? That was going through my head,” McKenzie said. •

VACCINE PROTOCOLS

how it works in loudoun county

Liberty Harrison | Staff Writer

As several coronavirus vaccines were approved by the FDA for emergency use authorization at the end of December of last year they began being distributed throughout the country. In Loudoun County to help with this process, special systems were set up, both for the general public and for Loudoun County School staff in particular.

With pressure to reopen schools and teachers desiring vaccines before returning to the classroom, a main goal for the county was to quickly and effectively distribute vaccines to Loudoun's teachers. To meet that goal, a building staffed with medical professionals and equipment was set up to administer vaccines to LCPS staff members. Located at Brambleton Middle School, this building is referred to as the POD and was created as a collaboration between the Loudoun County Health Department and Loudoun County schools. There have been several other locations around Loudoun set up to administer shots to other priority populations as well, such as in Dulles Town Center, which as of March was also serving the LCPS population.

Jamie Klucken, a clinical pharmacist who volunteers with the Loudoun Medical Reserve Corps, run by the Loudoun County Health Department, recounts her experiences administering shots. Dr. Klucken works as a Safety Evaluator for the FDA. Any views expressed are her own and do not necessarily represent the views of the FDA.

Klucken has worked both prepar-

ing and administering the Moderna and Pfizer coronavirus vaccines, first in a warehouse in Sterling, and now out of what used to be a Nordstroms store at the Dulles Town Center, since January.

According to Klucken, the first step to administering a vaccine is to take it out of storage, and then reconstitute it, if necessary (the Pfizer vaccine requires reconstitution, the Moderna vaccine does not). Reconstituting a vaccine refers to the process of adding a diluent to the vaccine to create the proper mixture needed for it to work properly.

"There are different types or requirements with the storage," says Klucken. She described the Pfizer vaccine, which must be stored in extremely low temperatures and is unable to be used directly out of the freezer: "We have to set out the Pfizer vaccine and let it thaw. Then we have to reconstitute it, meaning we have to add saline to it. We draw up the saline, add it to the Pfizer vaccine, and then we mix it up carefully."

After it is prepared individual doses are drawn up from the vial, up to six doses per vial of the Pfizer vaccine and ten doses of the Moderna vaccine, then it is taken to the vaccinators themselves.

Unlike many more traditional the coronavirus vaccines need certain preparation times and have certain expiration times once removed from cold storage and/or reconstituted, so the medical staff also have to plan ahead to have the proper amount of vaccines ready.

"We have a number of people

coming in," Klucken said. "We are currently vaccinating 4,000 eligible people per day at our location [Dulles Town Center], and so when we are planning we have to determine how many people are coming through and whether this is their first dose or second dose. We have to make sure we have sufficient vaccines on hand for the second dose, whether they received Pfizer or Moderna. This, and our current supply, will determine whether people scheduled for an appointment that day will receive one vaccine over another."

After the vaccines are prepared and proper numbers are provided to each vaccination station, a screening process is done with all patients.

Patients are also confirmed to meet the requirements for the priority groups, 1a, 1b, and 1c advised by the CDC, that they were put in when scheduling their shot. The 1a grouping includes health care personnel and residents of long term care facilities. Group 1b includes people 65 or older, frontline essential workers, which includes teachers, people 16 - 64 with underlying medical conditions, and people living in correctional facilities, homeless, shelters, and migrant labor camps; group 1c includes all other essential workers.

Then the required dosage is drawn into the syringe: for the Moderna, 0.5 mL are needed, and for the Pfizer 0.3 mL are needed. Then the arm is cleaned and the vaccine is injected into the deltoid muscle.

"As we are preparing to administer the vaccine, we are sharing infor-

mation about what to expect after the injection and when to follow up,” Klucken said. “We are also screening for risk factors for allergic reactions.”

Common side effects of the vaccine, especially with the second dose, which often elicits a stronger response from the body, includes fatigue, headache, fever and body aches.

“Usually people who have reactions, other than an allergic reaction, will have mild flu-like symptoms. This is pretty common after a vaccine because your immune system is reacting to the vaccine: your body is starting to respond to the antigen (the spike protein) and make antibodies,” Klucken said. “That’s pretty normal for some people to have symptoms after any sort of vaccine. I always say that means it’s probably working and doing its thing.”

For the Moderna vaccine patients are asked to come back in 28 days and for the Pfizer they are asked to come back in 21 days.

After the injections, their lot number is written down on their card and put into a log system, so that if anything goes wrong with a certain batch of the vaccine the patient is able to have a record of the vaccine they got.

After the injection the patients are directed to wait at least 15 minutes in the POD to monitor for signs of allergic reaction, as the vaccine has been known sometimes to cause severe allergic reactions in a small number of those receiving it - 2.10 % according to a study conducted by scientists from Massachusetts General Hospital and Brigham and Women’s Hospital.

“Luckily we have not seen that [allergic reactions] be a big problem with these vaccines but just to err on the side of caution we have everyone wait,” Klucken said. •

‘GIFTS AND MUNCH MUNCH MORE’ student business returns during hybrid learning

Emily Banner | Staff Writer

The student-run business Gifts and Munch Munch More was started last year to sell snacks and drinks, as well as student made items such as candle holders and bookmarks to school staff. It is run by students in Workspace Skills and CII (Community Independence Instruction).

“The students would analyze the orders, stock the cart, and deliver the items each week within the school,” said **Alyssa Casanova**, one of the two teachers helping to run the business. “Unfortunately, doing the initial shut down and full distant learning environment, we really couldn’t do much so the business was placed on hold.”

When students began returning to campus in October, the business began selling Captains buttons and beaded lanyards for masks.

“The students who were in-person were able to make the items and the online students helped with advertising and managing the orders online,” Casanova said. “We changed the selling process so now anyone (staff, students, or community members) can now order a button or lanyard.”

Now that staff are back in the building, Casanova and her fellow teacher Chelsea Eddy have introduced a new delivery system for snacks.

“Staff members pre-ordered a snack and/or drink for 10 weeks,” Casanova said. “The students will pre-bag their items



A design of beaded lanyards. These and other items are now available via the online store. Photo courtesy of Chelsea Eddy.

and quarantine them ahead of time. We are going to deliver the items each Friday afternoon, but unlike before, staff cannot change their order each week. It’s like a magazine subscription where the same thing arrives each week. The beauty of this setup is that staff could order almost anything they wanted since we purchased items based off their orders instead of the other way around, so we’ve actually had more buy in. Our first snack delivery is set for the week after spring break.”

Students, staff, and community can order from Gifts and Munch Munch More via the school website. •

NATIONAL ENGLISH HONOR SOCIETY INDUCTS 20 NEW MEMBERS

Olivia Zavadil | Managing Editor

National English Honors Society, led by English teacher **Lara Alt**, is welcoming twenty new members to its program this year. Seven students were accepted initially in the fall, and thirteen more underclassmen were accepted. With sixteen returning members, this makes a total of thirty-six student members.

In a normal year, NEHS would come together to work on group service projects, such as making posters to promote literature in schools, filling up the library boxes around school, and donating reading supplies to families.

However, due to the new hybrid and distance learning models this year, the club has had to find new ways to come together and contribute to the community. “We meet online instead of in person,” said Alt. “We have focused more on writing contests and reading opportunities offered through the LCHS library.”

One of those opportunities comes from the national office for NEHS, at Northern Illinois University, which has published more online writing contests this year that are open to NEHS members. “I am hoping NEHS members will contribute their creative writing to the online LCHS literary magazine this year,” Alt said.

This year, the induction ceremony will be held online and will be led by the NEHS student officers. Parents and families of the inductees are encouraged to attend the meeting. •

Above: A screenshot from the planned induction ceremony, to be held online at a later date. Photo courtesy of Lara Alt.

Fall 2020
Melat Aboye
Avery Abramson
Isabelle Bruce
Jordyn Chambers
Lauren Keys
Callie Keys
Victoria Snodgrass

Spring 2021
Sara Hickman
Emory Huffman
Ashley Kurowski
Coen Leonard
Tyler Lusczek
Brenna McManus
Landon Rahim
Natalia Sangiuliano
Isabella Sangiuliano
Michaela Scott
Matthew Starchville
Austin Trinh
Hunter Whitt

STUDENTS TAKE PSAT IN PERSON

Emily Banner | Staff Writer

While many elements of student life have moved to distance learning during the current school year, the PSAT must be administered in person, per College Board rules, so no online alternative was possible. The PSAT and SAT were administered this year like every other, with new precautions taken in order to protect students.

The PSAT was administered in the school’s auxiliary gym, where desks were separated by eight feet. Juniors were able to take the PSAT on October 14 and 29. About 100 students attended each day. About 140 sophomores attended on January 26, where two large classrooms were also opened up for testing. Desks were separated by a minimum of six feet.

“All recommended COVID mitigation guidelines were followed,” said testing coordinator **Kristina Taylor**. “Students and staff were required to wear a face covering (cloth or disposable) at all times.” •

LIBRARY REMAINS OPEN TO STUDENTS DURING HYBRID AND DISTANCE LEARNING



Freshman Alex Eurek checks out a book from the library. Photo by Valerie Egger.

Emily Banner | Staff Writer

Before March 2020, the library was often overflowing with students in the mornings, and students visited regularly during lunch and study hall. This year however, the library is a much quieter place. The main visitors now are teachers, seated at socially-distanced desks during their planning periods. But through distance and hybrid learning, the school library remains open for students to check out books. Safety precautions are being taken to ensure that this

remains safe for all involved.

Students are able to request books through a book request form. Books are delivered to English or study hall for hybrid students, and the librarians are still delivering books to virtual students as needed, or students can pick them up in the front office. Students can view the catalog to see what books are available and submit a book request form from the library Schoology page (access code FT6Q-SRDD-J9N54).

Currently, hybrid students are

allowed to come to the library to browse books in 15-minute increments. Students are asked to touch as few books as possible and use hand sanitizer when entering the library.

When books are returned, they are quarantined for three days in keeping with the American Library Association's protocol.

"We want kids reading paper books and taking screen breaks," Librarian **Christina Burge** said. "We will do whatever we can to get books in students' hands." •

Digital

struggles

virtual learning challenges students and teachers

English teacher Shawn Simms teaches to both her in person and online third block class. Photo by Valerie Egger.

Daniel Delargy | Guest Writer

During an informal poll, we asked students to rate their online learning experience 1-10. The average of the poll was 4.6.

Many teachers agree that distance learning is not ideal. English teacher **Shawn Simms** has a similar view to the student body. "Overall, I'd rate it two or three, because really being with the kids is my dream job," Simms said. Like many, Simms became a teacher because she enjoys the face-to-face interaction with students. "I really miss reading the room and helping students hands on."

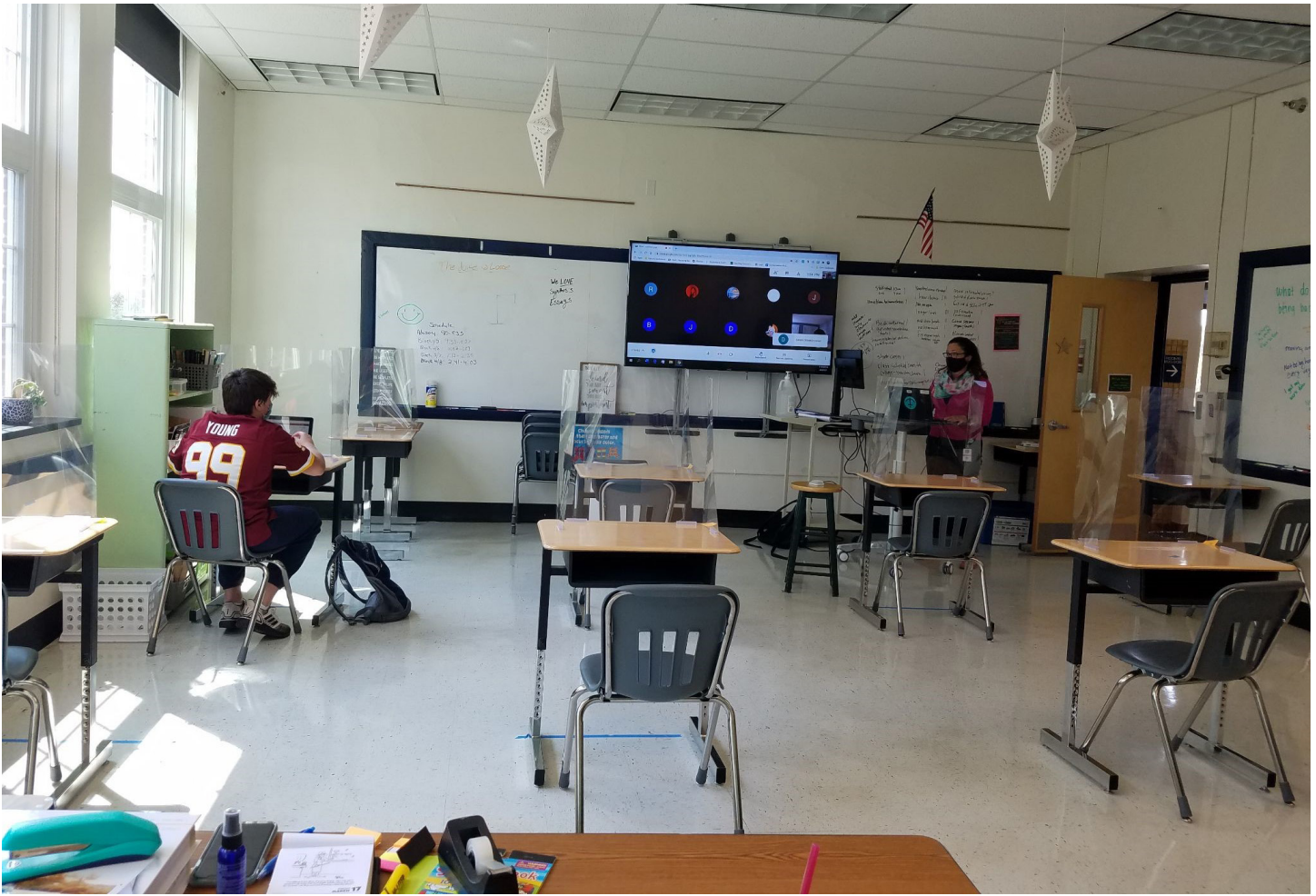
Students also expressed frustration with online learning.

A distance learning student who voted online school a 4 said, "Don't ignore us. Ever since

hybrid started I feel like the teachers kind of forget we are there," referring to the fact that teachers now teach students in person at the same time as they teach their remote learnings, a model known as concurrent teaching.

An online student who ranked online learning as a 6 said, "I don't think that there is anything you can change to make it better, but it just doesn't work for me. I haven't been able to focus, and I don't think I have actually learned anything all year."

Lucia Kennedy, hybrid student, attends inperson class two days a week, attending through the computer on the other days. Like many students, she prefers in-person learning. "I honestly find it so much easier to feel mo-



tivated and pay attention when I am actually there in class looking at my teacher and feeling included in the conversation,” she said.

A student who voted hybrid a 7 said, “I was surprised that so few people decided to come back in hybrid; I enjoy seeing and being able to interact with my teachers and the other students.”

Many are expressing a growing concern on what the lack of in person instruction will mean for students. “Kids of all ages that are struggling learners or linguistically challenged or have special needs, those kids are separating so the kids that have are going to be fine will rise up but there will be a gap to the kids who struggle,” Simms said.

This paired with the fact that 28% of U.S students are in per-

son, according to Eduactionnext.org and evidence to suggest that number is larger in other countries. Some teachers and parents are concerned about the education that students are receiving during this COVID era.

“American kids are not in a place of being job competitive, international job competitive,” Simms said. “As we become a more global culture, local society, and multi linguistics we need to prepare you guys for the world’s market, not just the American market.”

Part of this struggle to pay attention and interaction during online classes is due to the lack of cameras being on during classes, says Simms. “I find a very strong correlation between kids who keep their screens on

and their engagement and their submission of work,” Simms said. “One day we’re going to look back on this and think, and say it was a big mistake to let kids choose whether to put their screens on or not.”

The idea of having students be required to have their cameras on during class has been proposed. Although this begs the question on if this is an invasion of students’ privacy given that they would have to show their home.

Junior **Matthew Siltra** said, “I don’t want to show my face. It makes me uncomfortable because of my surroundings.”

Junior **Coen Leonard** said, “The main reason I dont have my camera on is because I don’t want to forget I have it on.” •

EXPECTATION

VERSUS

reality

students weigh in on the hybrid learning model

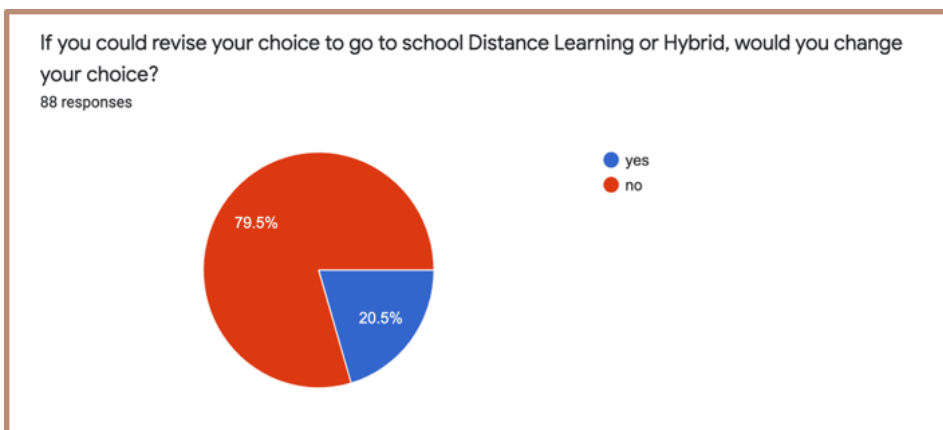
“I’d rather stay home than feel like an experiment.”

-Keilly Hernandez

Chris Mejia | Guest Writer

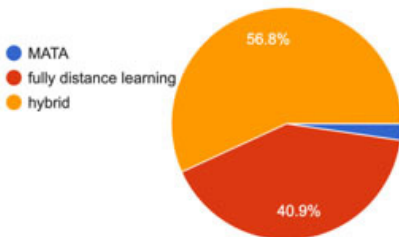
Ever since COVID came into existence a lot of things have changed. From sanitizing everything to wearing masks, our lives have changed dramatically. One of those changes has been online school. This new way of learning took a toll on a lot of students, while others thrived in this new learning environment.

Madi Robb decided she wanted to do hybrid learning. She said online learning wasn’t working for her as she is a very extroverted person. “I like the socialization aspect of hybrid,” she said, of her favorite part of hybrid learning was, “It’s more engaging.” Robb’s expectations for hybrid learning were met, as she prepared herself for an empty and quiet classroom.

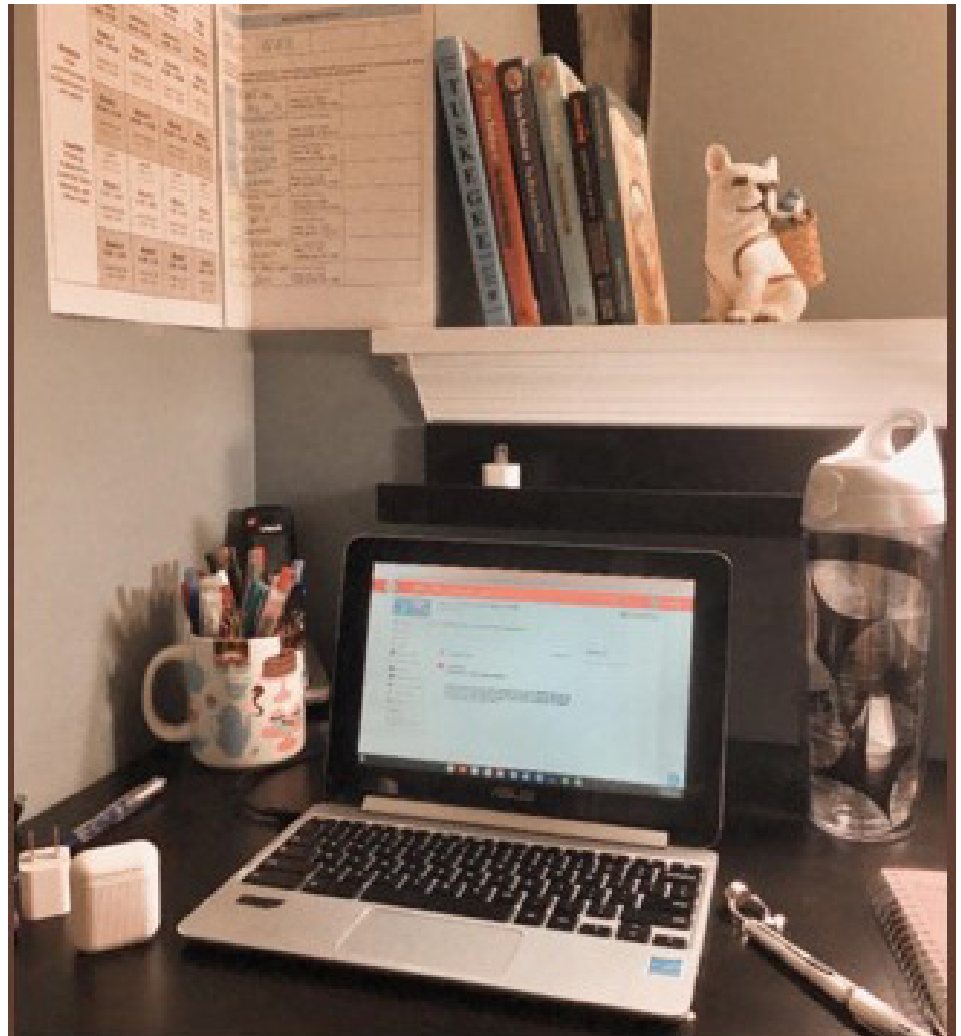


Despite discontent with some of the elements of hybrid or distance learning this year, most students would not opt to change their original choice.

Are you:
88 responses



Above: the responses of the students to a survey with an underwhelming response to hybrid distance learning. Right: Eman Mazhar shares his online learning set up. With much of the school year taking place via distance learning, students had time to set up their own personalized learning spaces.



Students have had the option to revise their choice of online or hybrid learning. “Being able to actually be physically in class is really good for me,” Robb said, “So I would definitely not switch back to online.” In a survey of 88 students, 79.5% agreed with Robb; they would not change their choice of hybrid or online learning.

Keilly Hernandez is an online student. Regarding her reason for remaining in distance learning, she said, “everything is still fuzzy on how things are gonna work out.” She said that she wouldn’t be able to forgive herself if the people she loved contracted COVID because she would be exposed to it. “The idea of covid hurting me or the people I love is so painful.” This is

something a lot of people can relate to, as COVID can be very scary and dangerous, depending on other factors like previous health problems and age. Students must weigh physical safety with learning. Many have had trouble with online school because they are visual learners who need one-on-one explanation and help. “Online school has really pulled back the opportunity to do so,” Hernandez said.

Kim Truong is a student at the Academies of Loudoun. School has been different for students there because they have been exercising the hybrid method for the entire school year. Truong is a prime example that not everyone had such a rough experience with this different school year. “Hybrid learning at the

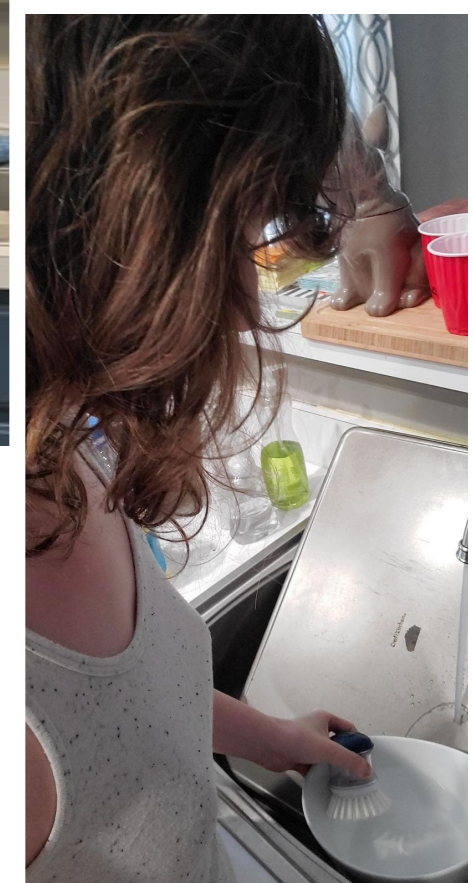
Academies of Loudoun has been fun so far,” she said. “It’s a nice balance between school and real life.”

Even though hybrid learning has been a lot of fun, Truong wishes things could go back to normal, pre-COVID normal. Hybrid learning has not met Truong’s expectations, as she had high standards for it.

Teachers instruct the same material for students online and in-person, so Truong believes there’s no difference between staying home and doing in-person, other than putting yourself at risk. “School lunch really isn’t that safe,” Truong said. “Students can sit less than six feet apart, without masks on and mingle.” For Truong, stricter regulations would make hybrid school more enjoyable. •

MID-YEAR BELL SCHEDULE ADJUSTMENT

agitates students who are still adapting to the distance/hybrid learning



Michaela Scott | Editor in Chief

Over the course of the distance learning school year, students have been constantly adjusting to many sorts of changes, such as working from home, preparing each lunch on their own, and balancing their screen time. As of January 21, Principal Michelle Luttrell announced that the second semester of school will follow a brand new bell schedule.

The new bell schedule was established to give distance/hybrid students the flexibility to quickly pivot back and forth between stages without having to change schedules or transportation; additionally, this eliminated the learning lab time. Prior to this decision, learning lab time was held for the last twenty minutes of class as a time where students could seek needed help or work asynchronously. Teachers were not allowed to assign extra work during the learning lab, however, teachers

now have the option of teaching throughout the end of class. Not all students appreciate the change, and many teens expressed their concerns.

“I understand where administrators are coming from, but I will never understand why the school board let us get used to the schedule in the fall, if they knew they would have to change it mid-year for hybrid,” sophomore **Genesis Chhour** said. “There should have been one definite schedule that would benefit students regardless of distance or hybrid; yet the school seems to wonder why kids don’t have the motivation to do school anymore.”

Out of an informal survey of seventy LCHS students, 98% had negative opinions about why they strongly oppose the changes brought about by the mid-year bell change. The vast majority of students’ responses in the survey believe that

the asynchronous learning lab for each class was essential for a variety of reasons.

“The schools board’s decision to take away the learning lab was terrible,” junior **Mairenn Blest** said. “To have students stare at a computer screen for an hour straight was already bad enough and strained our eyes; now the new schedule makes it even harder to pay attention.”

Additionally, senior **Bess Fields** is apprehensive about the normality of learning through a black mirror,

and the effects of having zero breaks throughout the day. “Administrators cannot expect us to be glued to a computer for seven hours with a thirty minute lunch break and pretend like that is appropriate for this adjusted school year,” Fields said. “Mainly, I am really concerned about the younger students in elementary school, they are going to be so messed up from this.”

According to the survey, many students have a dislike for the immediate block changes between each class. “The alteration does not give students the proper breaks and time to complete in class assignments,” junior **Charlotte Penberthy** said. “I hate it.”

The other main concern many students became vocal about was the dramatic change in lunch schedules. Junior Sophie Hylton stressed how inconvenient the bell switch has been for managing to eat during the online school day. “I have to cook all my food, eat my lunch, all while cleaning up after myself in less than thirty minutes,” Hylton said. “I seriously prefer having the longer lunch time.”

Despite the unamused student responses, the Captains are slowly adjusting to the unwanted change brought by LCHS administration. “Teachers lecturing for a whole hour and thirty minutes through a screen just gives me a headache,” junior **Chris Mejia** said. “We seriously needed those mental breaks in between classes.” •

Junior Sophie Hylton quickly cleans the dishes after her rushed lunch break. The shortened lunch periods are preventing students from having the time to clean up after themselves, or even give them time to finish eating their whole meal.

NEW BELL SCHEDULE EASIER FOR TEACHERS

Karen Cortes | Managing Editor

When the new bell schedule was imposed during the second quarter, learning lab was no more and both students and teacher lunches were shortened to 30 minutes, happening at assigned intervals with the goal of preparing students for the return to in-person learning. Some students disliked the idea and even created a petition, but how did teachers feel?

Kathryn Ives, an AP teacher who teaches at LCHS said, “The reality is that this year, screen time is the status quo. No matter they schedule, all of the assignments and assessments are on the computer, so getting away from the screen is impossible.”

Nicole Daniel, AP psychology teacher, said, “Personally, I am ambivalent about the change in the bell schedule. I understand why administration made the choice to do it: it’s important that the transition to in-person learning be as seamless as possible when it happens, it mirrors our traditional school day, and it makes sense to set a major change like this at the start of a new semester rather than in the middle of a marking period.”

During the first half of the school year. Classes ran shorter, and the last twenty minutes being “learning lab” where teachers could use this time to provide extra help, answer questions for students who needed it. Most teachers dismissed students at this time, this time was meant for students to complete missing work or take a screen break. But some teachers, especially AP teachers preparing for an end-

of-year exam, experienced challenges with the shortened contact time.

“I am happy that Learning Lab is going away,” Daniel said. “Teachers need the flexibility to decide when to plan asynchronous work, rather than being forced to always put it at the end of the block. Learning Lab was a nightmare from a lesson planning perspective, and I (as well as many of my colleagues) felt that its existence was an overreach into what should always have been a decision made by professionals in the classroom,” said Daniel.

Ives said that once students came back to school it made perfect sense, “It is the normal rhythm of the day and teachers can certainly let students have non-screen time at their discretion.”

Daniel also understood why students might have been upset, “Students resent the change to their established routines, the shortening of lunch, and what they perceive as an increase in class time. Learning Lab was always meant to be part of the class block, but I know that many students would log off of class and go do something else during that time, so they see the change in schedule as an “extension.” And, I understand how difficult it is to maintain focus in front of a computer for so long every day. And I too will miss my 45-minute lunches.”

For Ives, the switch in lunch time was the most difficult obstacle. “I loved having the 45 minutes lunch break in the middle of the day. I have never liked having lunch so early in the day.” •



PEER SUPPORTS STUDENTS

when distance learning brings ‘so much stress’

Chloe Beal | Guest Writer

March 11, 2020 was the last “normal” day of school for students in Loudoun County. Over the past year, COVID-19 has affected the everyday lives of students, causing many to feel stressed and overwhelmed. The student mentoring group PEER has worked to find ways to overcome challenges caused by Distance Learning to help support students.

As its name suggests, PEER (Positive Experiences in Educational Relationships) is a student group whose main goal, stated on their website, is making the school a positive and inclusive community for everyone. They strive to help students with any issues they are facing, and to be there if anyone needs someone to talk to.

“Everyone thinks of PEER as it’s to help people, but I feel like another

one of their big goals is just to strive to make others happy and just be a happy group,” senior **Belle Colon** said.

Colon is one of 18 specially trained student members of PEER. Peers are taught important skills and lessons by school professions before they can become PEER mentors.

“You really need to care about what you’re doing,” senior PEER member **Alexa Novak** said. “You can’t just be there just to say you’re doing something. You have to really care and really want to help people and not just help people, but be friends with people. You have to be very compassionate and show loyalty towards the person. If you’re talking to someone and it’s something personal, which is what we deal with a lot, you can’t be going around spreading that.”

In the past, PEER gave students the option to sign up for one-on-one meetings with a PEER mentor if they were struggling with anything related to academic stress, relationship issues, family dynamics, mental health, bullying, or just needed someone to talk to. This school year there has been even more students who have had issues related to those topics, and distance learning has made it harder for them to get help.

“The peers can help them think through some problems that they’re having, unfortunately, this year, they’re not letting us meet one on one, because of the COVID restrictions,” 6th year PEER faculty advisor, **Dorene Kuebler** said, “but now that we’re in school, we may be able to do that a little bit more.”

Lunch on the lawn is another

PEER writes positive messages to put on every desk in the school for Kindness Day in November before the pandemic. PEER is a student group whose main goal is making the school a positive and inclusive community for everyone. Photo courtesy of Dorene Kuebler.

feature PEER was well known for. Before the pandemic hit, every last A day of the week students could go outside during their lunch period and get some fresh air and hang out with their friends. Now, PEER is holding Open Lunch Google Meets every Thursday during C lunch, which are open for any student to join. During the Google Meets they listen and dance to music, play games, and talk about their day to give students a quick brain break from school work.

“Right now, especially being virtual, it’s so isolating, and it’s so easy to feel invisible and to feel that you’re not heard, and it’s such a frustrating thing,” Loudoun County High School’s Social Worker, **Keri Hendershot-Waymire** said. “So I would offer to reach out to trusted people”

One thing Hendershot-Waymire has learned from her 14 years as being a Loudoun County Public School social worker is how much students go through. “You are all under so much stress and there’s not always a place to let that stress out,” Hendershot-Waymire said. She emphasized, there will always be people like PEER at the school ready to help, but students must reach out or else others

won’t know.

“It’s really good to get the messaging out there that there’s people here to help,” Hendershot-Waymire said. “Even in this virtual setting that we’re in, reminding people that they’re not alone and if they need help, it’s okay to ask for help. It’s not a weakness to ask for help, everybody needs help. We’re not meant to live in isolation and this forced isolation has thrown everything into craziness. We do really want to be there to help, but we can’t help unless we know.”

“When school first started with COVID and everything online, I was very stubborn and I wouldn’t let anyone help me with my work, so I wasn’t doing too well,” Colon said. Colon recommends students reach out for support from a trusted adult or groups like PEER if they are struggling with schoolwork and learning online.

It’s also good for students to come up with different strategies that will support their needs and will help them efficiently learn through the

pandemic. “Whatever you do, try your best to come up with a good routine and good schedule to make sure that you do your work and don’t procrastinate because if you procrastinate, you just keep getting into a shell of just not doing work and in the long run, that is not a good habitat,” Colon said.

When students find ways that help them to stay calm or to destress it can also be very beneficial. “To help stay calm and destress I like to get outside as much as possible and be around my family so that I never surround myself with too much overwhelming work,” Novak said. “Even if that means just stepping outside to get a breath of fresh air for a quick minute or walking into my sister’s room to say hi halfway through the day.”

Despite challenges caused by distance learning, students have worked hard and tried their best to complete all their assignments. “They [students] are doing their best and that is what matters,” Novak said. “This has been a hard year for everyone and we all have had to make sacrifices and find new ways of doing things. Keep going, you are doing great.” •

PEER welcomes 2-day hybrid students back to school in March. Students have been distance learning since March 2020 and PEER has worked to find ways to overcome challenges to help support students. Photo courtesy of Dorene Kuebler.



OFFICER JOSH CARTER

meet county's new school resource officer

Jevonte Herron | Sports Writer

After spending time at Park View High School, **Josh Carter** says he feels confident about being the new school resource officer for the Captains.

"I was [school resource officer] at Parkview High School, so I've got some experience there," Carter said.

Carter says he feels confident with Loudoun County High School, especially since he is familiar with a few people already, noting that he knows history teacher **Kevin Hale** from church, and science teacher **Crystal Wolfgang** and athletic director **Mike Petrella** from Park View. Carter says he has gotten to know the school administration well, and several students from County live in his neighborhood.

Carter is looking forward to making new connections and

coming back and actually being in a school building, making his life more normal again after a year changed by COVID.

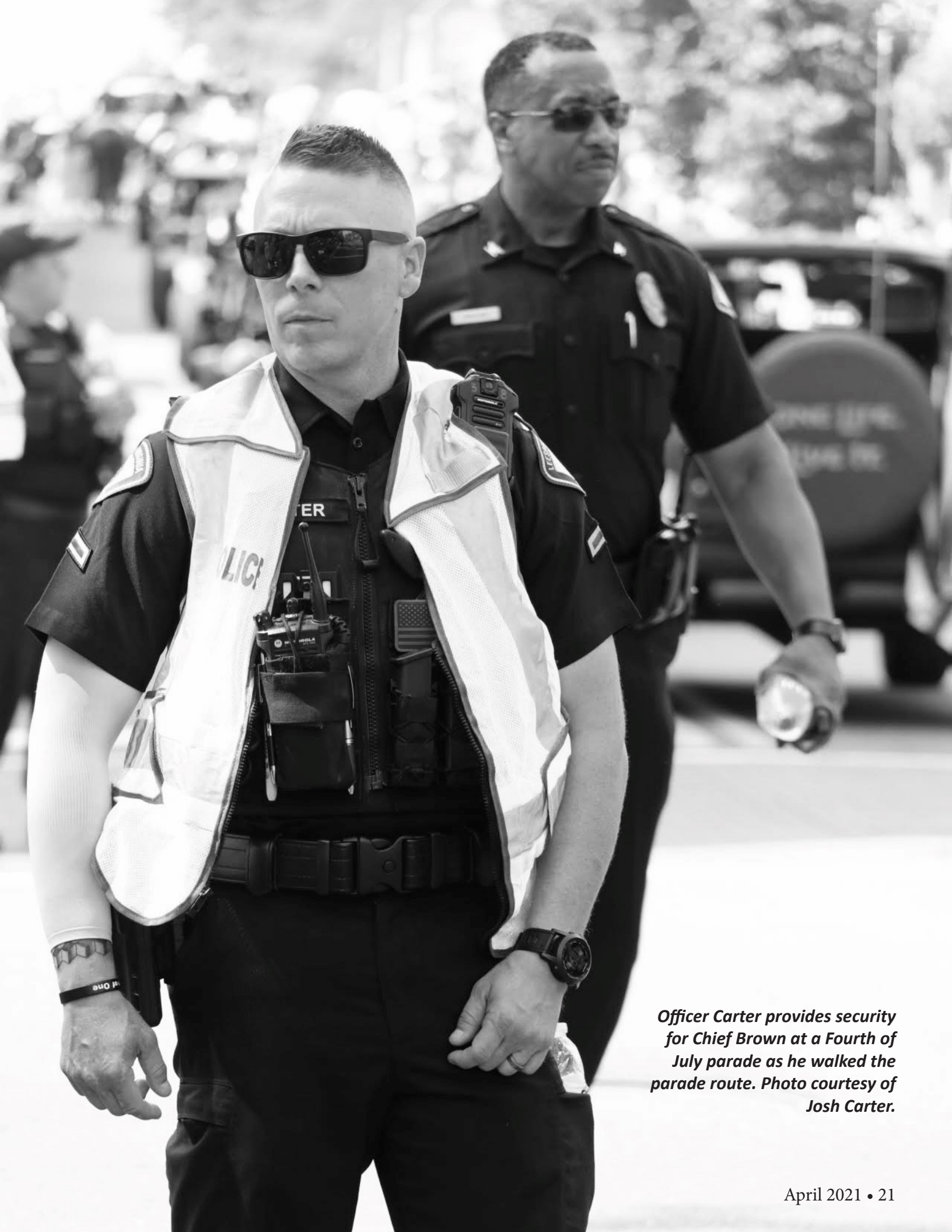
"I'm definitely looking forward to everybody just getting back at school and having some type of normal," Carter said.

Carter is looking forward to making connections, and just getting to know people, especially because he loves to teach.

"I love to get into the classrooms and talk to students, either about law enforcement or life experience," Carter said.

Carter always wanted to be a police officer, but he was too scared to chase his dream until his wife helped boost his confidence.

"It's probably been one of the best decisions I've made career wise," Carter said. "It's my niche, it's my thing." •



Officer Carter provides security for Chief Brown at a Fourth of July parade as he walked the parade route. Photo courtesy of Josh Carter.



Left: An iced coffee, as well as a coffee recipe unique to King Street Coffee known as the “Butter Together” and a jelly donut from their small bakery are pictured on a set in a small outdoor eating area in the space behind the shop. Above: King Street Coffee, and the lot behind it that was converted into their selling counter due to COVID mitigation procedures. Below: Fireworks Pizza’s outdoor seating area is pictured, with the long pipes from the propane pillar heaters, used to heat the area, reaching above its sloping roof. Photos by Liberty Harrison.



Restaurants of downtown Leesburg

surmount challenges posed by COVID-19

Liberty Harrison | Staff Writer

Just as our school community and individuals of Loudoun County have been affected by COVID, so have the many restaurants and cafes that inhabit our historic downtown Leesburg. They have had to face a set of unique challenges posed by COVID regulations but many have found new and innovative ways to overcome these challenges.

Fireworks Pizza is a restaurant on the southside of Leesburg known for, as **Jennifer Miller**, General Manager at the restaurant wrote, “Amazing pizza and craft beer. We also have sandwiches, salads, pasta, home-made desserts, and wine.”

Fireworks has been a part of the Leesburg restaurant scene since 2006. Its mission statement is: “To serve quality food made with the best ingredients, to have a very diverse craft beer selection, and to treat our guests like family!”

Like many of Leesburg’s restaurants, Fireworks is unique in several ways.

“We have been a staple in Leesburg for almost 15 years, operating out of a historic train depot that used to be located right next to the W&OD Trail,” Miller wrote. “Everything we cook gets cooked in our wood fired oven. We don’t have a frier, stove top, or a conventional oven. We have a menu specifically for dogs serving unseasoned meatballs, chicken and homemade dog biscuits. Finally, we

have one of the largest and most diverse beer selections in all of downtown Leesburg!”

Although a standout in Leesburg’s casual dining scene, Fireworks is also integrated into the community, collaborating with several other restaurants in Leesburg.

“We work with Tuscarora Mill and South Street Under (we are all part of the Tusksies Restaurant Group) to make our dough and the cake for our tiramisu,” Miller wrote, “We only have a wood fired oven and very limited kitchen space so we rely on their kitchens for the things we can’t do in our own!”

Another food service establishment, one housed in a building that has existed in downtown Leesburg for 40 years and has been operated by the current owner for five years is King Street Coffee.

King Street Coffee is known for its variety of coffees, coffee drinks and also offering bakery pastries, such as croissants, muffins, donuts and empanadas.

Describing their mission statement, **Vanessa Borg**, PR correspondent for King Street Coffee, said, “We really just think that we’re part of this historic community of downtown Leesburg. It’s been a hub of coffee and people coming together and conversation for decades, so we’re just happy to be continuing that tradition and giving people a place to get really good coffee.”

It seems they have achieved the goals of their mission, considering the niche they have found in the downtown community.

“I think [King Street Coffee] is unique in that there’s a really great community that has formed up around it, the people who work here and who own it and want to keep us running,” Borg said. “It’s really nice to have seen how many people came out to support us through all of this year, so I think that kind of being that hub of community is really special.”

Through Fireworks’ 14 years of operation and King Street Coffee’s five years, neither had experienced a challenge comparable to pandemic as COVID swept through the nation last year.

“COVID has posed some unprecedented business challenges,” Miller wrote, “We had to reinvent our business model several times to accommodate our guests and also to be profitable during the different levels of restriction. “

Nonetheless, after trial and error Fireworks was able to come up with several ways to mitigate COVID while still servicing the community.

“We do have different seating arrangements now as tables are required to be 6’ apart,” Miller wrote. “We have had to reduce our seating capacity by 33% and are offering patio seating year-round. We no longer have salt and pepper, crushed
continued on LEESBURG, page 45

DINING DURING COVID

tuscarora mill adapts to pandemic

Alexis Cuatlacuatl | Guest Writer

The life that COVID-19 gave us was unexpected. But restaurant manager **Colin Malone** didn't give up no matter the circumstances. He has adjusted to this new lifestyle and has helped his restaurant, Tuscarora Mill in Leesburg, adjust as well.

With COVID being with us for about a year now, normal daily lives have changed and there is plenty to reflect on. Restaurants like Tuscarora Mill have had to shift their operations in response to frequently-changing CDC guidelines and governor's orders. In the beginning of the pandemic, the restaurant closed. They lost their revenue, especially from their catering to weddings, banquets, and special events. Then, as businesses began to slowly reopen, they created a curbside pick-up program and an outdoor seating area.

"We are hoping that we are nearing the end of this situation we are in," Malone said. "It's been a trying year and very stressful at times and we have learned with our employees because they are very resilient and very adaptable with all that we have asked them to do."

Adaptations to the COVID lifestyle were needed. Malone's life quickly changed as the pandemic disrupted everyday operations. "I have to wear a mask and our children aren't in school anymore," Malone said. "So

our day to day routine has changed a great deal."

Not only did Malone need to adapt, but his staff needed help too. When the pandemic first hit, a lot of people had to file for unemployment and this caused them to not have a source of income for their necessities, and in the time that they were in, they needed aid with their financial life. Malone wanted to make sure that they would also move smoothly and get help if they needed help. "We've set up a GoFundMe page, so any needs they have or financially speaking we've been able to assist with that and we've helped with health insurance and paying for that, so we've done everything we can to help people get through this," he said.

The restaurant needed to change too. Some things were lost while new things were created to help keep social distancing. "We had to somewhat change our business model and put out a tent on our front parking lot for outdoor seating, of course, to space the tables and adjust our menu," Malone said. "For a long time during COVID we didn't have any seating at all so we had to create a curbside program, but we did lose our banquets, weddings, and special events, so that has been a big blow for the business."

There are some things that the restaurant has lost, but with that loss was an opportunity for new things



Management at Tuscarora Mill transformed the front parking lot into an outdoor dining tent that allowed outdoor dining during the easier months of the COVID pandemic. Photo by Alexis Cuatlacuatl.

to be created. “We’ve tried new things that have been successful and therefore will probably stick with,” Malone said. “The curbside program is something that we will continue to do and it has helped us build a brand with the program and has helped us in many ways.”

There have been challenges and obstacles that the restaurant faced. But regardless of those challenges, Malone is happy with how the business still runs. “Everyone has done a great job and has been very adaptable and there have been some people that had to take on different roles that they had not anticipated,” Malone said. “It’s not been ideal but we’ve had to deal with what we’ve given but everyone is in the same

boat so we are all happy that we are not alone in this.”

As with much of the globe, this pandemic has really affected the Leesburg area and it has made life very difficult and made us all eager for life to go back to the way life was before COVID. “If I had a wand I would make it so that COVID never happened, but there have been some good things to come from it,” Malone said. “As a net it has not been great for the restaurant and of course the public at large, but who could’ve seen this one coming?”

Malone believes we just have to give it time before life can go back to normal. “We do hope that once it gets back to whatever normal is on the other side of this, will be better

for it and more successful, but this experience will help us learn,” he said. “We’ll have weddings come back and all of that fun stuff and people will be ready to get out at it again.”

For Malone, if this pandemic has shown us anything, it’s that we have to make adaptations to this lifestyle but not let it have complete control over us. The community has been understanding, donating money to help with their revenue and these donations have been very generous and they wouldn’t be where they are if it weren’t for the community. “Without the community we wouldn’t be in business still, so the greatest appreciation we have is for the community and all the people that have supported us,” he said. •

ROTC

cadets overcome challenges posed by distance learning

Olivia Zavadil, Managing Editor

The NJROTC program has been a key component of our school's livelihood ever since its doors opened in 2009. The program, which is the only of its kind in Loudoun County, draws participation from students all over Northern Virginia. In a normal year, cadets would participate in hands-on activities that foster the development of important life skills such as leadership and communication. However, a new challenge has presented itself in the form of distance learning.

"In past years, we would go outside to practice marching (drill) and physical training (PT). We have not been able to do that since March of last year," said Master Chief **Deanna Foust**. NJROTC instructors have had to find new ways this year to adapt to a mostly virtual learning environment. "Similar to other teachers, we've moved much more of our syllabus online, but with NJROTC many of the things we do are hands-on, which makes it more difficult," Captain **Bill Johns** said.

With 39 percent of cadets opting to return for hybrid learning, extra precautions have been

taken to ensure that the program adheres to the COVID guidelines set forth by LCPS, while still giving students the experiences that they need.

"When it comes to COVID restrictions and guidelines, we follow what the school is doing. If there is a conflict between the school and the Navy, we coordinate with either to resolve it but would take the more restrictive of the two. It hasn't been an issue though," Foust said.

All cadets are required to wear masks, and social distancing measures are being put into place when needed. For example, wherein a normal year for drill cadets would stand 2-3 feet apart, they now stand 6 feet apart.

As for the physical training aspect, instructors have found a way to incorporate workouts into distance learning as well. This is accomplished by cadets completing short, stationary exercises from home while on a Google Meet.

The biggest change in the program, however, would be the lack of participation in competitions due to COVID restrictions put forth by the county. "This has

been the most dramatic change," Johns said. "We used to have three or four competitions a month per team; most of those have gone away,". Teams such as orienteering have taken an especially big hit, as it is almost impossible to compete virtually in that type of competition.

"The competitions we would normally attend, especially for the younger cadets, they get a really good sense of the discipline and comradery that many are drawn to, and from that motivate them to go into the military," Johns said.

Despite the challenge, some teams have still found impressive successes in virtual competitions. "We were able to compete fully (with COVID guidelines) in our CyberPatriot competitions because they were held here at the school. One of our teams even placed first in their tier!" Foust said. Additionally, the Academic Team competed virtually in the National Academic Exam for NJROTC and placed 9th in the DMV.

"For those cadets and parents who allow participation in person, we've been holding practices throughout the year, although



Incoming ROTC students participate in basic leadership training during the summer. The program was allowed to meet in person during that time if following social-distancing guidelines. Photo courtesy of Deanna Foust

the quantity of these practices has reduced,” Johns said. While in previous years teams would have ample amounts of practice time every week, COVID guidelines require a reduced number of cadets in the annex building, and a reduced number of teams allowed to practice at one time. As a result, teams can only practice one or two times a week, and can only have a limited number of cadets present at each session.

“Because we are not able to do hands-on training, the way we do military drill has suffered because the cadets have not been able to practice and receive hands-on tutoring from instructors and mentors; that is one of the key areas distance learning has hurt our program,” Johns said.

While cadets still have knowledge of the military and knowledge of the program in an academic sense, distance learning in most cases has taken away the aspect of the first-hand experience. “We have suffered in the sense of not being able to take trips and give cadets exposure to the military,” Johns said.

In previous years, cadets visited military installations, toured college campuses such as West Point and the Naval Academy, visited the Pentagon, and explored the Marine Corps Museum. “Those orientation visits help students get an early insight into what might be in store for them later on, and give motivation to those who might be on the fence about joining the military,” Johns said. In an attempt to continue providing

these important experiences, students this year have participated in virtual tours of important sites during class.

While distance learning has posed many challenges, there is still a positive takeaway from the difficulties. “We’ve all learned so many other skills that I believe prepare cadets for the bumps in the road that are sure to happen in the future. We’ve all been able to adapt and overcome many challenges as we’ve navigated the waters of COVID,” Foust said. •

COUNTY SPORTS

Matt Starchville | Staff Writer

On February 6, the Captains defeated the Dominion Titans 58-42 as they claimed the District Title back to back years. The Captains had help from junior guard **Brendon Boyers** and junior forward **George Mwesigwa**. Boyers scored 15 points and 5 rebounds. Mwesigwa scored 13 points and 7 rebounds.

“Dominion is a very good defensive team,” Boyers said. “I feel like we run a good offensive set. We know what we want to do with the ball every time we get the ball and succeed in high pressure situations and clutch moments.”

The Captains were riding a wave of confidence going into the District Championship game. They started their season 0-2 and haven’t looked back since, entering the game on a 13 game win streak.

“I think the win streak worked both ways for us,” Loudoun County head coach **Mark Alexander** said. “Losing those first to games was a big eye opener for us. I just let them know that we have to keep on grinding. I had to keep them confident and have them focus on what we need to do on offense and defense to be successful.”

“Our confidence has definitely been a big factor in our play,” Boyers said. “With a 14 game streak now it has definitely helped our play and how we enter games.”

The Captains outrebounded the Titans by six rebounds. This allowed the Captains to capitalize on second chance points which put them in a better position on offense.

“It didn’t start out that way though,” Alexander said. “We started to pick it up and got some good rotations. We got more physical as the game went on which worked in our favor.”

This win was a great team with



many players getting involved. Multiple players had good games. Those players include Sophomore Guard Jack West with 6 points, Senior Guard Caleb Rexroad with 7 points, and Junior Guard Jimmy Daughtry with 10 points.

“It was our goal going into the game to get multiple players involved,” Coach Alexander said. “With the masks you lose a bit of your conditioning, so we wanted to play more guys. We are very happy with how our guys stepped up when we needed them to.” •



BOYS BASKETBALL

captains are back-to-back district champs

The Captains win back to back district titles as they defeat Dominion Titans 58-42. Photo Credit: lchs_captains Instagram page.

TEAMS NAVIGATE CHANGES DURING THE SEASON

Maggie Sheridan | Editor-in-Chief
Michaela Scott | Editors-in-Chief

During the school year centered around a pandemic, to say it has been challenging to continue to play sports would be an understatement. Each team has had different struggles they've had to deal with and have been forced to find solutions to these problems. One issue in particular includes the suspension of out of season practices.

The deciding factors for this decision include, "Consistency from one season to the next season," according to athletic director **Kate Cassidy**. "Staff has shared concerns and that most are overwhelmed at this point, concerns on monitoring the mitigation strategies for out of season teams while we still have in-season competitions nightly, facility space and limitations due to COVID-19 restrictions mitigation, and increasing student attendance on school property with less supervision is a potential recipe for disaster."

With no preseason, each team has been forced to adapt. Some have chosen to simply practice twice as hard during the actual season, while others have had captains host small practices prior to the season.

"The other captains and I would host unofficial preseason practices on the turf for field hockey," senior **Emily Tyler** said. "Around ten people would show up to each, but coaches were not allowed to come due to regulations."

For volleyball, the Captains also had a bit of prep before the official season, an annual training camp, which is traditionally run by the seniors. "Our

preseason consists of a camp that runs a week long to get to know some of the players trying out," senior **Audrey Luhr**, a co-captain of the Varsity team, said. "One of the biggest parts of volleyball is the relationship you have with your teammates so it prepares us for that aspect of the game."

Although they had this small amount of practice, players have had to work incredibly hard to remain in shape and prepare alone. "Our players have been prepping themselves individually by playing club volleyball and working on getting stronger mentally and physically as one person," Luhr said.

For football, the players had to adapt much differently than in the previous years due to COVID-19 guidelines. "We had such a lack of preparation this year, like no weight room, 7on7s, and scrimmages," senior co-captain **Tariq Sims** said. "Some of us either go to a gym or have one; our coach would also post workouts on schoology for us to do."

For the different sports there are also different rules regarding a mask mandate according to the Virginia High School League. Some indoor sports are strict about it, while it is not as heavily enforced for the outdoor ones. However, these decisions are different for each sport.

"We are required to wear masks while at practice and on the bus going to the games, but players are not required to wear them during the games," Tyler said. Although, some players chose to wear their masks during games regardless of this in order to try and be as safe as possible.

Similarly, football and soccer are not required to wear masks during the games, unless they are on the sidelines. "This season is just overall different," senior co-captain **Sam Welstead** said. "The scheduling is really unique and wearing masks while playing an endurance game is really an added challenge."

On the other hand, masks are required for the volleyball players. "We have to wear masks the entire time in the gym during practices as well as during our games," Luhr said.

The number of spectators for sports has also decreased heavily this year. "Each player is only allowed to have one spectator come and watch them during the game," Luhr said. This also means that there is no student section, like there is in normal years.

"Us playing without our student section affects us and how loud we have to make the gym ourselves. We are our student section and we are now in control of how loud or quiet the gym is while playing," Luhr said.

"Not having many fans at the games is the main difference between this year and the previous seasons," Sims said. "The energy is completely different; it would have played a huge part in this season to have as many fans as possible."

One factor that has greatly impacted each sports team is the shortened schedule. "The main difference between this season and the previous normal seasons is the shortened schedule," Tyler said, "We usually have two games during the week but occasionally we will have a third game on the weekend. Which is different



from last year where we would play 1-2 games during the week.”

VHSL has also made the decision to change the field hockey games from two thirty minute halves to four periods.

Additionally, football faced many differences this season due to teams contracting COVID-19 and other schools not having enough players for a team. “Only two teams from our division can make playoffs, unfortunately, we weren’t one of them, so we got a bowl game against Riverside,” Sims said

Although football got to practice daily, Welstead explained that soccer players are practicing 2-4 times a week, and also have several games each week; she added how the shortened season can affect athletes much more mentally. “It has made teams

focus and get their head in the game sooner as we realize every game counts that much more this year,” Welstead said.

Although the lack of games has been disheartening for many players, it has also pushed many such as Luhr and girls basketball senior co-captain Elayna Whitley to work even harder and focus on doing well.

“As well as the rest of my teammates, I was definitely prepping for the basketball season individually by training and going to strength/conditioning training to get myself in the best position to help my team,” Whitley said.

“This year has introduced us to becoming stronger, faster. Our season has been cut in half and this pushes us to build relationships and bonds faster. Our leadership has to learn how to manage the team in a timely manner

due to the shorter season,” Luhr said. Luhr has emphasized the importance of remaining strong throughout this process and focusing on the things that matter.

“Our main focus is playing together and doing what we need to get done. Another focus for us is building memories we will remember forever. Our relationships with the girls on my team are ones that I will remember forever. These teammates are the nicest, most caring girls I have ever met,” Luhr said. •

Senior Audrey Luhr gets in position to make a pass at the varsity volleyball game vs. Loudoun Valley HS. Luhr explained that athletes are required to wear their mask at all times, on the court and off the court. Photo by Debbie Senchak.

PRESEASON PREP

how the football team prepares for the upcoming season during covid

Matt Starchville | Staff Writer

Practicing during this pandemic has not been an easy task, but with the precautions put in place by the school board and the Virginia High School League, athletes have been able to practice. The football team started their gatherings over the summer and has been taking certain steps to ensure the safety of the players while still preparing for the season.

“When we first started practicing again in mid-July, we had to temperature check when everyone arrived and they had to answer a series of questions about if they have any symptoms,” Coach **Matthew Reidenbaugh** said. “Once they are clear they have to wash their hands in the bathroom which has a limit on how many people are allowed in there. Then when they did that, they were allowed to go on the field, but they have to wear a mask.”

Practices and workouts have definitely changed since last

year. Last year, athletes could practice with masks and practice as a full team. The restrictions started over the summer and have increased as the COVID-19 numbers rose.

“Our players have to bring their own water and have to stay 10 feet apart for social distancing,” Reidenbaugh said. “In the beginning we weren’t allowed to have any equipment, so no footballs. We also weren’t allowed to lift at the start. As we went through the weeks our players were to bring one piece of equipment from home like a football or dumbbell.”

Weightlifting is a big part of the offseason of high school football, especially this year. The weight room is where the players get stronger. This year the format and rules were different but that didn’t change the mentality of the team. This year, athletes are not allowed to work out with a partner, so they can’t have a spotter which is really important with the player’s safety.

“When we are in the weight room anytime a player touches a weight or a bar, a coach has to go over to them and spray and wipe down the bar before the next person can use it,” Reidenbaugh said.

The Loudoun County football team has overcome challenges, adjusting to the rules so that they can practice and get ready for the season.

“Probably the biggest challenge for us was they wanted us to stay in pods of 10 people while we worked out and practiced,” Reidenbaugh said. “We broke up our guys into groups based on position so the wide receivers were a pod, the running backs were a pod, and the defensive and offensive lines were a pod. This wasn’t too bad because all the positions usually practiced together anyway.”

Masks were another challenge the players faced. “Since they were moving around all the time and breathing heavily it was sometimes hard to breathe,”

Reidenbaugh said.

“The players all had good attitudes towards these rules because they were willing to comply with any rule if it meant that they could practice and eventually play the game they love,” Reidenbaugh said.

The biggest element of this COVID season that high school sports has to face is the constant change in plans and regulations whether it’s for the season or restrictions for practices or weightlifting.

“For us it is the weekly changes of the protocols and the expectations for me as the head coach,” Reidenbaugh said. “My job is to organize everything and plan everything and make sure that our players and coaches are prepared, but when everything is changing it’s really hard to do that because the rules could change next week or even the next day.”

With the rules changing often the communication between the Virginia High School League and the schools has to be clear, and that has been improving over the course of the pandemic.

“I think that it has definitely gotten better since the beginning,” Reidenbaugh said. “In the beginning it was a huge challenge for [VHSL] because it is obviously new to all of us. Communication was definitely the biggest challenge in the beginning with keeping people in the loop about what is going on. Since they have done a great job keeping us safe and informing the coaches, players, and parents.”

The pandemic has shortened football’s season, which just intensifies every game like no other season has done before.



The Loudoun County football team practices last year during a regular football season. Now the Captains, they have been practicing through COVID protocols to play an abbreviated season just like last year. Photo by John Klimavicz.

“For our team it is a huge point of emphasis and again we just try to take it one game at a time,” Reidenbaugh said. “The beauty of it, though, is everyone plays the same schedule as us.” This year, there are seven teams and six games. “So everyone plays everyone, which means we

can’t lose as many games and each game will be under a microscope,” Reidenbaugh said. “My message to the team has been that we know that if we want to be the best, we have to beat the best and we play Broad Run first, who is a really good football team.” •

CAPTAINS PERSEVERE DESPITE SEASON CHANGES

Charlotte Edmonds | Guest Writer

As school opened back up one of the extracurricular activities most affected nationally by COVID has been sports, including cheerleading, posing unique challenges to coaches and participants as seasons have begun. The cheer team in particular has also had to adjust to the change in mascot from Raider to Captain that took place over the summer.

“We are really excited to use Captains as the team mascot this year,” varsity head coach **Samantha Mancini** said. “So we are hoping that the new mascot and new uniform will really give us a good vibe.”

These concurrent events have resulted in a distinctive year for the team, as they navigated new rules and regulations and found ways to continue supporting the other sports teams also affected by COVID.

Changes have contributed to both physical differences and the psyche of the team.

“We had to push back our season to the spring,” sophomore **Mia Rodgers** said. “We didn’t even know if we were going to have a season.”

Much to the relief of the girls on the team, they did have a season. However, there were significant changes that caught the girls off-guard.

“It’s disappointing and not the same without the fans rooting us on during our competitions,” sophomore

Riley Fox said. “It’s very quiet and we have to be more creative to keep the team spirit going for the players and cheerleaders.”

The new adjustments were especially difficult for the freshmen.

“Because a lot of our team is freshmen, it’s very hard [for them] to understand what the other girls have already experienced in regards to like school spirit,” Mancini said. “It’s really hard for the freshmen to grasp what it feels like to be out of football game on a Friday night and a competition full of fans in the crowd because they’re only allowed to have one parent per athlete so in that regard.”

The team had also experienced changes caused by the reduced number of students that tried out this year, affecting both JV and varsity teams, but having the most impact on varsity. This was both due to the fact that the high school had to change its cheer season from fall to winter, making it coincide with a different cheerleading program’s All Star Cheer season and the general apprehension around participating in team sports during COVID.

“I know this is a countywide issue, a lot of schools have lost like some of their girls because All Star Cheerleading is too big of a conflict for them, so a lot of girls had to choose, which really stinks,” Mancini said, noting that the number of students trying out dropped from around 42 last year



Isabella Mitchum hits a ball during a game against Loudoun Valley. This year, the team has had to adjust to multiple changes due to COVID. Photo courtesy of Lifetouch.

to 22 this year, leaving 17 on varsity and five on JV.

“The ones who came out, they’re making the best of it so we’re going to make it the best we can this season,” Mancini said. Tryouts were also changed for COVID regulations, which caused some difficulties. Whereas usually during tryouts groups were able to be rearranged to see who worked best together, due to COVID regulations cross-contaminating groups was not allowed.

“That was really tough trying to figure out based on size and all of that,” wrote Mancini. “Then making the competition routine has been really difficult because of that as well but I think we’re finally at a good spot now.”

Less time during the season has also affected the procedures usually followed, especially in regards to choreography.

“Usually the seniors, it’s their role to teach the younger girls, but we

didn’t really have that much time this year so we had to upload all the cheers to our Instagram account so the new girls had to learn it off of that,” Mancini said. “But we have had some practices to learn it.”

Choreography, as well as chants, have also been directly affected by both COVID and the mascot change.

“For the cheers for football games, the motions are all the same from what they used to be, we just kind of changed the word from the old mascot to captains,” Mancini said. For games, the team has no trouble following guidelines. On the sidelines, there is more than enough space to be 10 feet apart, especially with fewer participants this year. “Luckily that all is working in our favor,” Mancini said.

Competitions have been more challenging. As in previous years an independent choreographer does the more complicated choreography for competitions and there are more regulations for competitions, many

of which have been changed by the Virginia High School League because of COVID.

Some of these changes include the banning of pyramids and basket tosses. Prop regulations have also been tightened, meaning items such as signs and pompoms are not allowed to be exchanged between two girls, which has greatly affected the crowd involvement portion of the cheer-leading route.

“We are not able to stunt,” Rodgers said. “Stunting is very important to cheerleading and we have to work with what we are allowed to do. For competitions we are allowed to stunt, but it’s very limited.”

Participants in competitions are given the choice whether or not to use a mask, although according to Mancini most of Loudoun County High School’s cheerleaders have chosen to wear them throughout their competitions.

continued on FIELD, page 37

VARSITY FIELD HOCKEY BEATS VALLEY IN TRIPLE OVERTIME

Olivia DeWan | Staff Writer

As of April 5, the varsity field hockey team is number one in their district, but that didn't come without hard work. On March 27, the Captains beat the previously undefeated Loudoun Valley Vikings 6 to 5.

Earlier in the season the Captains lost to Valley, but they were determined to not let that happen again.

"There was no way I was going to let them beat us again," senior **Samantha Welstead** said.

The Captains kept a level head and went into the game eager to pull out a win.

"I felt confident we were going to win," junior **Caitlin Robinson** said. "I knew just how much every single person on our team wanted the win."

The girls fought hard for the first hour of the game. By the end, the score was tied 1-1. The game went into overtime, where the girls played seven on seven full field for fifteen minutes. A normal field hockey game has eleven players and four, fifteen minute quarters.

"The most challenging part was keeping the energy up especially during the 15 minute overtime," junior **Charlotte Penberthy** said. "It was brand new positioning and gameplay we all were not used to."

Regardless, the Captains fought for the win. They were all exhausted because they had just played for an hour under the scorching hot sun, and were running out of steam.

"It was so exhausting to run so much up and down the field after playing a whole game," junior and

team captain **Alyssa Markell** said. "I just kept thinking about wanting to win, kept running, and trying my hardest."

Even still, they refused to give up.

"I watched every girl on that field put aside their tiredness and fatigue to fight for another fifteen minutes," Robinson said.

At the end of the fifteen minutes, the score was still 1-1. No goals had been scored in the seven versus seven overtime. As a result, the Captains and the Vikings entered the second round of overtime, shoot-outs.

During a shoot-out, each team selects five players to go one on one against the opposing goalie. Shoot-outs are a best-of-five competition.

The players chosen from the Captains were senior and team captain **Emily Tyler**, Markell, Robinson, sophomore **Olivia DeWan**, and freshmen **Lindsey Johansen**.

"The most nerve wracking part of the game for me was when I had to take the last shot on goal in the second overtime," said Robinson. "We had taken four shots and only three went in, so that meant that if I made the shot then we got to advance to the next round. However, if I didn't, we would lose the game."

Robinson did not disappoint. She scored and the Captains were once again tied with the Vikings.

The teams then entered their third round of overtime: sudden-death. Sudden-death works like the basketball game "knock out," where if one player misses and the next makes their shot, the team

that scored the goal wins.

The Vikings missed their first shot in sudden-death, leaving Tyler an opening to win the game. Tyler finished with a bang, scoring the 50th goal of her field hockey career at County, and won the game for the Captains.

"I started tearing up when I heard the ball hit the back of the goal," said junior **Elliesheva Desser**. "I was overjoyed and relieved when I knew that all our hard work had paid off."

The Captains stormed the field to congratulate their goalie, **Gillian Deeb**, and the rest of the team.

"I could feel the energy from the crowd and the excitement on the sidelines," said Penberthy. "I was so proud of my entire team for our endurance and passion."

After their win they still wanted more. The girls set their eyes on becoming district champs.

"One of our team goals is to get a banner up in the gym," Markell said.

The Captains field hockey team has never won districts, but they are going to work hard to achieve their goal.

"I want to improve my stick skills, and also have more shots on goal," said Penberthy.

Similarly, many of the girls are aiming to grow their understanding of the game.

"My personal goal is to have a positive attitude," said Desser. "I want to carry the ball up the field more and make strategic passes."

At the start of their season, the Captains were worried that their

shortened season would impact their playing on the field, but they took it all in stride.

“The shortened season really made us get our heads in the game,” said Welstead. “Every game matters so much and we had very little practice time.”

Regardless, the girls put in the work and the effort.

The fierce competition of the Vikings proved to the Captains that they are capable of beating harder teams, and the girls are determined to do so.

“This game showed us we have so much more in us that we can fight with,” said Robinson. “When we really dig deep to that energy we can accomplish so much.” •



The Captains gather around for a team cheer before they battled the Valley Vikings on March 27. The girls finished the game with a 6-5 win. Photo by Stephanie DeWan.

continued from FIELD, page 35

“We’ve been having to do more dancy sections and a lot more jump sections,” Mancini said. “That’s actually good for us I would say because we’re strong and those areas”

Still, coming up with routines that followed COVID regulations has been a challenge. “That was really interesting and tricky trying to make sure that each girl only holds their sign,” Mancini said. “So we have three different sign sections this year, so we had to switch a lot of stuff around for that.”

The mascot change, which affected chants, didn’t pose as large of a challenge, although it did add another layer of change to be adjusted to.

“We didn’t have to come up with new cheers,” said Rodgers. “We just changed Raiders to Captains. There are some cheers that we can’t flip over to Captains because it doesn’t sound right or it has too many letters.”

Even Mancini noticed the girls struggling to accommodate for the

rapid change.

“The girls were at first still saying Raiders,” Mancini said. “Mentioning how old the school was, and subsequently how many years of cheers they had to change, she continued. “It really wasn’t that hard. Once we changed the new mascot to Captain, especially for the girls that did winter cheer, it just became a habit.”

Funding has not been a problem, particularly because they were already granted money to buy new uniforms because of the mascot change. Along with this the team also purchased two different sets of team masks, one for practice and a tighter one for competitions. The school has also been providing supplies related to COVID such as hand sanitizer and specific shoes to be sanitized and used when on the mat.

Regulations for transportation to away games have also stayed fairly similar to other seasons.

The rules limit how many athletes can travel on a bus, but that has not

impacted the team. “I know our athletic directors have been dealing with this all winter season, so luckily they have a hold of all that,” said Mancini.

On the bus the biggest change is the seating regulations to be followed, which includes a seating chart where each person sits along and at least one seat away from the bus driver.

Throughout changes and challenges, however, the cheer team has continued to keep a positive attitude both in relations to COVID mitigation procedures and the mascot change.

“I am definitely sad we didn’t get to have a normal season,” Rogers said. “But this new season gives us a chance to bond and better ourselves as a team.”

Regardless of all the challenges the team has faced, they persevered and continued to have an amazing season.

“I’ve really enjoyed watching our teams do so well this year,” said Fox. “But I miss the student section!” •

Captains claim REGION 4C CHAMPIONSHIP



Casey Hughes | Sports Writer

The Loudoun County indoor track team defeated seven high schools, Heritage, Fauquier, Dominion, Kettle Run, John Handley, Culpeper County, and Liberty, with a combined score of 97, to claim the Region 4c championship on February 9. Of those points, throwers and jumpers earned 20, sprinters earned 37, and distance runners earned 40 to claim the Region 4c championship this past Tuesday. The girls also competed hard and earned district runner up on February 9.

"This was a really complete team," head coach **Courtney Campbell** said. "Some years you are good in one area but this year we had

point scores in all the events."

Riding on their undefeated District competition record, the Captains were just glad to have the season come together, seeing how there were many outside forces such as a worldwide pandemic acting against their season.

"It was great just being able to compete and have a season in all of this mess and then get to a championship on top of it was fantastic," Campbell said. "In addition to competing well yesterday, they are just a great group of kids and coaches, which made it even more worthwhile."

Even though this was a very rushed, unconventional season, the Captains pushed through

Loudoun County Girls track team celebrates capturing Region Runner up at Fauquier High School February 9. Photo credit: Head Coach Courtney Campbell.

despite not actually running any indoor meets. They pushed through straight to the end and came out with the region championship. The Captain's coach acknowledged just how hard the season was after their Region's win.

"The biggest challenge was just the messed up nature of the season," Campbell said. "Getting used to doing online COVID forms, temp checks, and kids competing in masks. The first few weeks took quite a lot of getting used to." •

COMMITMENT TO VIRGINIA TECH

an inside look at gavin pitts' journey

Matt Starchville | *Sports Writer*

On January 23, starting quarterback **Gavin Pitts** committed to Virginia Tech University. He has played football all his life. It was only a matter of time before he was recognized for his hard work and dedication.

"I started playing football when I was four years old and have played ever since," Pitts said.

In addition to football, Pitts plays baseball for the Captains.

"I have just always been a multi-sport athlete but have always loved football," Pitts said.

Pitts didn't always go to Loudoun County High School. He previously went to Woodgrove and transferred to County going into his junior year. This was a big change not only for school but from a football aspect.

"It was difficult at first because as a quarterback I had to earn the respect and trust of my teammates and coaches," Pitts said. "I made it a challenge for myself and it only made me a better player. It also made me realize that I would be able to step up in those situations."

The biggest challenge that Pitts faced or any football player for that matter moving to a new

school was the process of learning the new offense and the play style of the coaches.

"At Woodgrove I was more of a running quarterback, which didn't fit my play style," Pitts said.

Pitts had had the opportunity to accomplish something that not many high school athletes can say they have done, navigating the college recruitment process during a pandemic.

"It was a very different experience than a lot of other students," Pitts said. "I think I'm speaking for the whole 2021 class when I say that this process was not exactly easy. When everything shut down last March was right when a lot of colleges had camps and visits, but all of those events got cancelled which limited exposure."

The biggest problem with everything getting shut down is the exposure aspect. It's difficult when recruiters only know athletes through videos or highlight reels.

"It was difficult to find interest at first because the coaches at the universities couldn't see couldn't see the aspects that count," Pitts said. "The biggest thing that helped me get recruit-

ed was putting myself on social media and allowing coaches to see my film of me throwing to my teammates Tariq Sims and Jimmy Kibble."

With those techniques the offers for Pitts started to come in.

"My first offer was from Catholic University which is a division three school in Washington D.C.," Pitts said. "My other offers were from Dickinson College, Colby College, Valparaiso University, and I was talking to William and Mary a little."

Pitts has a really good relationship with the Virginia Tech coaches, which influenced his decision.

Not only has Pitts had to deal with COVID protocols during his college recruitment process but has also had to deal with it during practices leading up to their upcoming high school season.

"For me specifically, I think the hardest part is not being able to be close to my teammates," Pitts said. "They are enforcing the rule of staying six feet away from anyone which has made it hard to run a practice normally. I'm not able to get the kind of connection with my teammates that I would have liked." •

Cheer Team

perseveres through covid



Olivia DeWan | Staff Writer
Liberty Harrison | Staff Writer

As school opened back up one of the extracurricular activities most affected nationally by COVID has been sports, including cheerleading, posing unique challenges to coaches and participants as seasons have begun. Loudoun County High School's Cheer team in particular has also had to adjust to the change in mascot from Raider to Captain that took place over the summer.

"We are really excited to use Captains as the team mascot this year," varsity head coach **Samantha Mancini** said. "So we are hoping that the new mascot and new uniform will really give us a good vibe."

These concurrent events have resulted in a distinctive year for the team as they navigated new rules and regulations and found ways to continue supporting the other sports teams also affected by COVID.

Changes have contributed to both physical differences and the psyche of the team.

"We had to push back our season to the spring," said sophomore **Mia Rodgers**. "We didn't

In this photo from the team's Instagram page, the Captain's cheer team practices a routine in the school hallway. For a few months, COVID prevented the girls from practicing in the gym.

even know if we were going to have a season."

Much to the relief of the girls on the team, they did have a season. However, there were significant changes that caught the girls off-guard.

"It's disappointing and not the same without the fans rooting us on during our competitions," sophomore **Riley Fox** said. "It's very quiet and we have to be more creative to keep the team spirit going for the players and cheerleaders."

The new adjustments were especially difficult for the freshmen.

"Because a lot of our team is freshmen, it's very hard [for them] to understand what the other girls have already experienced in regards to like school spirit," Mancini said. "It's really hard for the freshmen to grasp what it feels like to be out of football game on a Friday night and a competition full of fans in the crowd because they're only allowed to have one parent per athlete so in that regard it's been a little bit tough to try to get the younger ones to understand, but they're getting better at each practice."

The team had also experienced changes caused by the reduced number of students that tried out this year, affecting both JV and varsity teams, but having the most impact on varsity. This was both due to the fact that the high school had to change its cheer

season from fall to winter, making it coincide with a different cheerleading program's All Star Cheer season and the general apprehension around participating in team sports during COVID.

"I know this is a countywide issue, a lot of schools have lost some of their girls because All Star Cheerleading is too big of a conflict for them, so a lot of girls had to choose, which really stinks," Mancini said, noting that the number of students trying out dropped from around 42 last year to 22 this year, leaving 17 on varsity and five on JV.

"The ones who came out, they're making the best of it so we're going to make it the best we can this season," Mancini said. Tryouts were also changed for COVID regulations, which caused some difficulties. Whereas usually during tryouts groups were able to be rearranged to see who worked best together, due to COVID regulations cross-contaminating groups was not allowed.

"That was really tough trying to figure out based on size and all of that," wrote Mancini. "Then making the competition routine has been really difficult because of that as well but I think we're finally at a good spot now."

Less time during the season has also affected the procedures usually followed, especially in regards to choreography.

continued on CHEER, page 43

A swimmer in a white cap and goggles is captured mid-stroke in a swimming pool. The water is blue and splashing around the swimmer. The swimmer's arms are extended forward, and their head is above water. The background shows the pool's lane lines.

Vanderloo captures region crown with standout performance

Casey Hughes | Sports Writer

On February 10, **Lexie Vanderloo** started off a huge day for the Loudoun County Captains, a day that would include region wins by the indoor track team and Dull-es district wins by the Captains wrestling team. Vanderloo added to the Captains' victory by claiming region titles in both 200 and 500 free events at the regional meet. She credits her hard work and dedication for her standout performance at regionals.

"The biggest factor is definitely all the time I spend training, around 20 hours per week," Vanderloo said. "I have also done these races a lot and it has helped me strategize how to swim them."

Vanderloo is no stranger to success. She holds multiple school records and her standout performance at regionals helped her break her own record in the 200 and 500 free.

Vanderloo felt a sense of accomplishment breaking her own record. "It felt amazing,

Vanderloo slices through the water on her way to winning Regionals. Photo Credit: Loco Sports Photographer Caroline Layne (with permission from Loco Sports).

especially when I looked back at how far I had come from my freshman year," she said. "It also showed me all the work I was doing was paying off."

Over her four years at Loudoun County Vanderloo has had many great moments and experiences, both with her team and individually. But she has a few memories that stick out to her as she prepares for the state swimming competition and her final swim as a Captain.

"My proudest moment was securing nine school records over my four years at LCHS," said Vanderloo. "I also had a lot of fun working with my relay team to get all three relay records. It is super rewarding to see my name on the record board." •

continued from CHEER, page 41

“Usually the seniors, it’s their role to teach the younger girls, but we didn’t really have that much time this year so we had to upload all the cheers to our Instagram account so the new girls had to learn it off of that,” said Mancini. “But we have had some practices to learn it.”

Choreography, as well as chants, have also been directly affected by both COVID and the mascot change.

“For the cheers for football games, the motions are all the same from what they used to be, we just kind of changed the word from the old mascot to captains,” Mancini said.

For games, the team has no trouble following guidelines. On the sidelines, there is more than enough space to be 10 feet apart, especially with fewer participants this year. “Luckily that all is working in our favor,” Mancini said.

Competitions have been more challenging. As in previous years an independent choreographer does the more complicated choreography for competitions and there are more regulations for competitions, many of which have been changed by the Virginia High School League because of COVID.

Some of these changes include the banning of pyramids and basket tosses. Prop regulations have also been tightened, meaning items such as signs and pompoms are not allowed to be exchanged between two girls, which has greatly affected the crowd involvement portion of the cheerleading route.

“We are not able to stunt,” Rodgers said. “Stunting is very important to cheerleading and we have to work with what we are

allowed to do. For competitions we are allowed to stunt, but it’s very limited.”

Participants in competitions are given the choice whether or not to use a mask, although according to Mancini most of Loudoun County High School’s cheerleaders have chosen to wear them throughout their competitions.

“We’ve been having to do more dancy sections and a lot more jump sections,” Mancini said. “That’s actually good for us I would say because we’re strong in those areas.”

Still, coming up with routines that followed COVID regulations has been a challenge. “That was really interesting and tricky trying to make sure that each girl only holds their sign,” Mancini said. “So we have three different sign sections this year, so we had to switch a lot of stuff around for that.”

The mascot change, which affected chants, didn’t pose as large of a challenge, although it did add another layer of change to be adjusted to.

“We didn’t have to come up with new cheers,” said Rodgers. “We just changed Raiders to Captains. There are some cheers that we can’t flip over to Captains because it doesn’t sound right or it has too many letters.”

Mancini noticed the girls struggling to accommodate for the rapid change.

“The girls were at first still saying Raiders,” Mancini said. Mentioning how old the school was, and subsequently how many years of cheers they had to change, she continued. “It really wasn’t that hard. Once we changed the new mascot to Captain, especially for the girls that

did winter cheer, it just became a habit.”

Funding has not been a problem, particularly because they were already granted money to buy new uniforms because of the mascot change. Along with this the team also purchased two different sets of team masks, one for practice and a tighter one for competitions. The school has also been providing supplies related to COVID such as hand sanitizer and specific shoes to be sanitized and used when on the mat.

Regulations for transportation to away games have also stayed fairly similar to other seasons.

The rules limit how many athletes can travel on a bus, but that has not impacted the team. “I know our athletic directors have been dealing with this all winter season, so luckily they have a hold of all that,” said Mancini.

On the bus the biggest change is the seating regulations to be followed, which includes a seating chart where each person sits alone and at least one seat away from the bus driver.

Throughout changes and challenges, however, the cheer team has continued to keep a positive attitude both in relations to COVID mitigation procedures and the mascot change.

“I am definitely sad we didn’t get to have a normal season,” Rogers said. “But this new season gives us a chance to bond and better ourselves as a team.”

Regardless of all the challenges the team has faced, they persevered and continued to have an amazing season.

“I’ve really enjoyed watching our teams do so well this year,” said Fox. “But I miss the student section!” •

DESPITE SUCCESS, captains fall short

in regional basketball championship

Jevonte Herron | sports writer

Loudoun County boys basketball had another successful season even with the challenges of the pandemic, such as a shortened season and no fans allowed at games. The Captains didn't let that bother them, taking the season all the way to the regional finals, where they lost to Handley.

The team finished 15-3 and were ranked as high as number 1 in the state for Division 4. "We had a great year," head coach **Mark Alexander** said. "They really bonded and established some great relationships. We played 18 games which is a lot more than some schools got to play. We are very fortunate. We are thankful to have the opportunity to play."

The Captains' successful season follows last year's nearly undefeated season of 15-2.

"This team was as competitive and disciplined as last year and both teams represented their school very well," Alexander said.

According to Alexander, COVID actually made the team push harder and helped show the team how much they really care about the game.

"The kids were extremely flexible and adapted to the COVID migration procedures very well," Alexander said. "Their ability to

deal with the uncertainty and changes made them more successful. I would say the tough circumstances brought these guys together and actually helped us, it revealed the true character of the team and how much they cared about each other."

"We played very well in our last game, but Handley just outplayed us in the last minute of the game," said senior guard **Caleb Rexroad**. "We missed a couple critical shots which gave them the opportunity to hit the final shot and win the game."

Even though the Captains took a tough loss in the Region championship at Handley High School on a Tuesday evening, they still played their best.

"Handly played well," Alexander said. "It was a very competitive game that could have gone either way, we just ran out of time."

According to the Center on the team **George Mwesigwa**, one of the team's main strengths was defense.

"One of our strengths this year was definitely our defense and something that made us really good on defense was our communication," said

Mwesigwa.

After they lost their first two games of the season the team made a few changes and went on a roll.

"This was an unselfish and very tough team, after an 0-2 start and a few changes, the guys ran off 15 straight wins," Alexander said. "You don't accomplish that unless you show character and toughness. Some guys really stepped up and accepted coaching and their roles, we called up some young guys that really stepped up and fulfilled vital roles for us as well, it was a total team effort this year." •

"I would say the tough circumstances brought these guys together and actually helped us, it revealed the true character of the team and how much they cared about each other."

red pepper, or sweetener on the tables but instead are offering single use packets. This assists us in keeping tables sanitized. We are also using QR codes and single use menus.”

Fireworks has also increased the frequency of already existing services to more effectively operate under COVID.

“We have always offered carry out but we certainly do a lot more of it now. We also started to offer contactless curbside delivery,” Miller wrote.

King Street Coffee also evolved the way it conducted business to best work with attention to COVID safety concerns.

“The inside of our shop is a really small to really close space, so we quickly started realizing that we weren’t going to be able to safely keep the inside open and distance people,” Borg said. “There just isn’t enough space to distance. So we closed the entire shop entirely inside and we’ve just switched to a walk-up window.”

Some of the mitigation procedures themselves have posed challenges to Fireworks, particularly because of their added costs, which can be detrimental to smaller businesses when already dealing with COVID.

“Since so much more of our food is being packaged to-go now rather than for dine-in we have had to purchase a lot more packaging,” Miller wrote. “We are not using our regular menus right now but rather printing single use menus everyday causing our usage of paper and ink to increase dramatically. Normally, this time of year we would not be using the patio but due to COVID we are. In order to keep it warm enough we have been using a lot of propane to heat it.”

King Street Coffee as well has faced several challenges created by their mitigation procedures.

“In summer people can still come by, but this winter and on rainy days like today, it’s been a little bit more difficult for people to feel super comfortable coming up to the window, but overall I think that, you know switching to walk up only has been really great in terms of keeping people feeling safe and keeping all of our staff safe as well as healthy,” Borg said.

King Street Coffee has also had to deal with added costs from their new methods.

“We have to print new outdoor menus fairly often as we kind of experimented with trying to figure out how to run that,” said Borg. “For a while we were doing deliveries of cold brew and iced coffee in half gallons.” Borg explained that they had to invest in new materials to support the service, and added that the service might be brought back for the summer months. Borg continued, describing the financial challenges they’ve faced, “But just different stuff like that where we were trying to get creative trying to find ways to bring coffee to people’s homes instead.”

At times difficulties arose on exactly what mitigation procedures should be taken as the government guidelines and restrictions evolved, however appreciation for the government’s effort seems to be the consensus.

“I think that it’s been a little bit confusing sometimes in terms of getting conflicting information from different levels of government, but overall I think they’re doing a really great job giving us guidelines that help keep everyone safe and contribute to public health,” Borg said.

COVID has also affected many of

the individuals working within these companies in a significant way.

“COVID has been the biggest challenge I have faced in my 20 year restaurant career,” Miller wrote. “We had to completely change the way we handled business, staffing, food preparation, purchasing and more while still maintaining our high standards. We had to learn what hospitality looked like in a mask, figure out how to keep morale up with our staff, keep everyone safe, and always be ready for more change. It was stressful but also taught me so much about the dedication of my amazing staff and my own strengths and weaknesses.”

During these hard times many residents of Leesburg have looked for ways to support small businesses, and Fireworks and King Street Coffee both agreed on the best way to do it.

“Come eat our food!” Miller wrote. “We are offering inside socially distanced dining as well as patio seating with heaters. We can prepare anything to go as well and are offering no contact curbside delivery.”

King Street Coffee held the same sentiment.

“I think just like coming out and enjoying what we’re offering, you know, if you like coffee then come by and grab a coffee and you’ll probably love it because our roaster is great and the people who make it love making it, so you know that there’s a lot of love that has gone into the product,” Borg said, continuing “If you have a dog come by and bring them! We love seeing all the dogs, puppuccinos and dog treats are always free!”

Both companies also agreed on the gratitude they feel towards the support they have already received.

“Our loyal guests supported us and cheered us on through it all and we couldn’t be more grateful,” Miller wrote. •



sierra captures love of photography

Maggie Sheridan | Editor-in-Chief

Walking into the Brambleton Library felt like a dream. Right in front of her for all passersby to see was her very own photographs, which she worked tirelessly to capture—work that she was very proud of and immensely happy to share with others.

Junior **Isabella Sierra** has recently found a passion with photography. This interest started around two years ago and has only been getting stronger and stronger. “After taking photography and film classes at school I realized how much I truly enjoyed it and wanted to keep doing it,” Sierra said.

These classes have urged her to continue to progress and get better. “I love creating and I love working with others, photography lets me do both and also allows me to capture the tiny moments in life that make it beautiful,” Sierra said.

She enjoys doing things the long way and letting the photos develop. “I like to shoot on my digital Canon, but my real passion is using my Pentax to shoot film and developing the images in my

darkroom,” Sierra said.

Sierra recently applied to a photography contest through the Brambleton Library Teen center. “My art teacher Mrs. Woshner made me aware of the contest and I decided to go for it,” Sierra said. The application process was quite simple, she just had to complete a form to show her work and a form to include her artist statement.

Her collection was selected by the Librarians and declared one of the winners and was going to be one of few used in the Micro Gallery. It will be up for the entire month of February for people to go observe.

Sierra’s collection is called “Breathing Fresh Air.” “The grey tones of the sand can feel suffocating, while in contrast, the openness of the sky gives you a sense of effortless peace,” Sierra said.

Her goal with this collection was to create a story, rather than individual black and white pictures that did not go together. Sierra believes this idea was achieved. “My goal when creating art is to capture the tiny moments that make life beautiful and preserve them forever,” Sierra said.

Sierra is very proud of the way it turned out, after all of her hard work. “I feel so much joy. It is a great milestone in my art career and just motivates me to continue to work hard and pursue this interest,” Sierra said.

In the future, Sierra plans to continue to incorporate art into her life. “My dream is to attend the Monroe Advanced Technical Academy, also known as MATA, for TV production and film making next year. I also hope to minor or major in Film during college,” Sierra said. •

GALLERY DISPLAYS STUDENT WORK

behind the brush: artist sydney martin

Braydon Kelman | Guest Writer

Artist **Sydney Martin** is involved in the art program at Loudoun County High School. To those who know her this is no surprise, as the junior has been creating since sixth grade.

"At first I was obsessed with drawing eyes, and from there, faces," Martin said.

Martin has been creating since she was 12 and has been making major improvements ever since.

"I first realized Sydney had a ton of potential way back in Art 1, when she drew an amazing pencil portrait of her favorite author," **Stephanie Woshner**, Art Teacher and Artist said.

With five years under Martin's belt she is still having a hard time knowing what theme and style fits her and represents her art best.

According to Woshner, art classes in ninth and tenth grade lean toward representational and realistic, where students are learning technique and developing a style. "This year Martin has transitioned into a more surreal, abstract style which I LOVE," Woshner said. "It is very unique and much her own."

Woshner, Martin's art teacher of three years, has seen Martin develop and learn multiple styles and themes. Woshner believes that Martin has a great amount of potential and has been a key factor in developing Martin's love for art and for her own style.

"I strongly look up to El Greco and David Foster Wallace," Martin



said. "El greco's dreamy realism has a quality of seamlessness which I hope to obtain one day. David Foster Wallace wrote with the detail I try to include in my paintings, and made familiar topics into deep and chaotic theories that cause the audience to think beyond the surface they are presented with."

Martin's passion for art and creativity has led her to think about her plans for the future.

"I have no certain colleges in mind for art, all I know is that a place that happens to be warm year round would help me stay motivated to create my best work."

Martin hopes to make it big one day as an artist and hopes to be recognized and she wants to be able to sell her work to the world.

"In ten years I see myself making commissioned oil paintings with an atomic level of detail and mastery that I will have absorbed from my years at college majoring in fine arts/ painting!"

Woshner is ecstatic watching how Martin does these next few years and is excited to make major progress and strives in college to be the best artist she can be.

"She is no longer timid or shy in her work," Woshner said. "She is making her art for herself and no one else - that is a huge jump for an artist."

"My goals with art is to develop a voice through my work, one that is perceived through interpretation but heard loudly by whomever the audience may be," Martin said. •

Time for positivity

sachi kataria creates a positivity blog to help others

Alexis Shugars | Staff Writer

With all the negative stories we hear on a daily basis, it's always very refreshing to hear something positive for a change. That is one thing sophomore **Sachi Kataria** set out to achieve when she created the "One of a Kind" blog.

Kataria says that the purpose of her blog is to create a community where she can help others see that things will get better, and others are likely going through similar things. "It's a blog that works to bring those who are afraid to speak up a way to come together, feel loved and accepted, empower others, and feel good about themselves," Kataria wrote.

According to Kataria, the name One of a Kind derives from the fact that no one person is the same as another. "Everyone has their achievements, quirks, flaws, and goals," Kataria wrote. "That's what makes each and everyone so special."

She decided to start One of a Kind because of her own self-image issues. "I hope that people who visit my blog will come to realize that they are worth it," Kataria stated.

Kataria originally came up with the idea to start One of a Kind in October, and first posted January 7, around her birthday. Kataria reveals, "During this time, I was struggling to be content with who I was, but writing on the blog helped me see that I'm perfect the way I am and I don't have to change anything." Kataria mostly writes about things she finds herself struggling with as a teenager and student.

In the future, Kataria hopes that she will be able to encourage more people to join her blog and become an active reader or commenter. Kataria concludes, "The more people that feel comfortable helping others by showing them that they are not alone, the stronger the community can form." •



Sachi Kataria gets to work on her blog "One of a Kind", where she writes positive messages to help others.

To check out the One of a Kind blog:

Website: <https://sachikataria.com>

Instagram: oneofakind_blog

Twitter: oneofakind_blog

Facebook: one1ofakindblog

Tiktok: oneofakind_blog

WOSHNER'S PAINTING SELECTED FOR MUSEUM OF THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY

Alexis Shugars, Staff Writer

Art teacher **Stephanie Woshner** was chosen by the Shenandoah Art Council this year to have her painting displayed at The Museum of the Shenandoah Valley in Winchester.

Woshner had previously known about Artscape, Baltimore's largest annual arts festival, and has even had former students submit work of their own. Woshner was reminded of the project by a Facebook post. "It was

always something that I wanted to enter but never really took advantage of the opportunity for one reason or another," she explained. "I saw the post and decided that this was the year."

Woshner admits that the application process for Artscape was "surprisingly easy." She was required to complete an online form, write an artist statement, send a photo of her piece, and finally pay an entrance fee.

From April 19 to April 24, Woshner's watercolor painting will be on display at The Museum of the Shenandoah Valley. Following that, the painting will be photographed and printed on a banner. This banner will be hung on a lamppost on the Old Town Walking Mall in downtown Winchester. It will be hung in July, and remain there for a year.

Woshner was very excited to hear the news that her work had been selected. "It has always been on my bucket list," she said. Although she is thrilled to be accepted, Woshner admits that "I didn't know what to expect. I just wanted to try and see what happened," she said.

The painting titled "Grandpap's Garden" took about three weeks for Woshner to complete. It was originally completed for a watercolor class she was taking in order to obtain her teaching license recertification. A big inspiration for Woshner's painting was a picture she had taken a photo of chili peppers growing in her father-in-law's garden. "The color and light of the peppers in the garden were what drew me to paint it," said Woshner.

Some other art related activities that Woshner has participated in include paint nights as fundraisers and occasionally being hired to paint a pet or a family member. She says that she'd like to work as a professional artist once she retires from teaching and adds that date is far away. "Right now, my main art media are my students," said Woshner. "I mold and shape them into future artists." •



Art teacher, Stephanie Woshner's watercolor painting, titled "Grandpap's Garden".

OVER THE MOON ABOUT TEACHING

moon's passion for business inspires his students



Maggie Sheridan, Editor in Chief

Jaqua Moon has always been a business teacher. He has taught several classes such as accounting, computer classes, and personal finance in Fairfax County. This will be his second year working at Loudoun County. He enjoys teaching finance because it teaches students how to prepare for life and managing money.

Personal finance is one of several classes students will take in school that really helps them understand what they will be expected to do in the future and how to properly handle their money. Moon hopes to help his students realize that they are talking about life-changing topics that will directly affect them.

“You need this information in

Moon spends time on vacation at the beach with his daughter before the start of the school year. He enjoys spending some quality time with his family and taking a break from work when necessary.

order to be prepared in the future,” Moon said. “If not, you will have to learn the hard way what life is like and it will have really big repercussions down the road.”

Moon’s students also appear to be understanding these life lessons from his class. “Mr. Moon is such a great teacher,” junior **Jessica Booker** said. “His class has really helped me understand how important it is to manage my money wisely and I really enjoy his lessons.”

Moon expresses frustration when students fail to pay attention and understand the importance of his lessons. “It ends up costing you when you make poor decisions with your money,” Moon said. “That cost can really add up over the span of your life.”

Moon was completely lost about the basics of handling his money after graduating from college. “I personally made so many financial mistakes because my parents never talked to me about money,” Moon said. “It was a topic that they just didn’t teach me about.”

One issue Moon brought to light was how the school system impacts work. “I feel like we are lowering the ball for high school students and I think it’s hurting their motivation,” Moon said, “They will only receive a fifty percent for not doing assignments and will check in and out with their focus.”

He believes school is getting easier and easier for them and they won’t realize what life will be like. “They know they can cruise through and instead of raising the bar, which just ends up hurting them,” Moon said.

Moon also argues that schools should work on teaching more applicable content that will teach student’s lessons they will use as adults. “Whether we like it or not, each

and every student is going to have the courses that they love and they don’t love,” Moon said. “I would like for students to have more options into structuring their schedule and how they spend their time in high school.”

Moon believes that if students have more choices in their courses, it could positively affect them as well as their futures. “Would having the power to decide (free of requirements, other than taking a full schedule) change how a student approaches their education, could it lead to more engagement and learning?” Moon asked. “The sooner we start making decisions that have real impact in our lives the sooner we start maturing into young adults from the trials and tribulations of those decisions.”

He stresses these important issues because he hopes his students do not make the same mistakes he did. “I was very lost and disengaged as a high school student,” Moon said. “A lightbulb eventually went off and I realized how much I could help students and hopefully make their lives better.”

Moon enjoys distance learning because he believes it is more straight to the point and a student’s grade will reflect how much work they put into it. “I think some students are getting more out of this because of the focus I have with them,” Moon said. “It feels like we’ve been more efficient with tackling everything in the curriculum.”

Although students appear to be benefitting more learning-wise, Moon believes they are negatively impacted socially. “For students to not be able to interact with each other is definitely a drawback and different from what they’re used to,” Moon said.

Right out of college, Moon tried

substitute teaching before becoming a teacher full-time. It helped him work in different areas of teaching and figure out which one he wanted to focus on as a job.

His goal was to positively impact their lives in whatever way he could, and he did this through subbing, coaching baseball and softball for a short period of time, and eventually starting to teach. He also hoped his students would learn from his mistakes and know how to manage their money more wisely.

“When you look back on your life, you will want to know you made a difference and to me, teaching was one of the few professions that I looked at and thought I would be happy knowing I helped other people and had a purpose,” Moon said.

Moon is very proud to have continued to teach and help more students. “One of the best moments in my life is when a student is truly loving what we are doing in class and wants to know more and do more. It makes me feel like everything I am doing is worth it, because I have just opened a new door for this student that could take them somewhere good,” Moon said.

One of the most important things Moon has learned from teaching relates to patience and understanding. “Teachers will make assumptions about students based on their work ethic, Moon said. “I have learned not to do this and to patiently observe without judging others.”

He has also learned how to persevere through challenging situations. Even when students are disrespectful towards him, he knows to ignore it and not let it bother him.

“As a person, I am now more patient than I have been before and I have found ways to build important bonds and relationships with students,” Moon said. •

CHRIS COLSTON

on how he became an author

Karen Cortes | Managing Editor

Most people know that **Chris Colston** is the yearbook adviser and a 9th grade honors teacher for LCHS. What many may not know is that he is an author and has several published sports-related books. He takes pride in them because he worked hard on those books.

Colston started writing when he was 11 years old. “I would write stories about my friends and I in the neighborhood, and our various adventures. I wrote them in longhand and drew pictures to accompany the stories

and stapled the pages together. I did it just to make myself laugh,” he said. “And then in junior high school I teamed up with a neighbor to write a teenage mystery book. It was based on the old “Three Investigators” books. We sold them in the cafeteria for whatever money our classmates had on them: A nickel, a dime, fifteen cents, whatever. We printed them on an old-fashioned mimeograph machine. I think we sold about 30 of them.”

He says his goal is just to entertain the reader, and he explained his process before he started writing books. “What I really want to start doing is re-reading what I wrote the day before out loud,” he said. “That will help me find errors and verify the flow of the narrative. That will get me going so I can write the next 500 words.”

Colston said it took him about twenty years to write his first book. “What I really want to start doing is re-reading what I wrote the day before out loud. That will help me find errors and verify the flow of the narrative. That will get me going so I can write the next 500 words.”

As for deadlines, Colston said he sets goals for when he wants something completed. “But if I miss it, I don’t beat myself up about it,” he said. “As long as I do something productive every day, I’m happy.”

Colston has written about five books in his American Sportswriter series, with two published and the other rolling out by June. He has also written a psychological horror/thriller called *I Am the Wolfman*. It takes place here in Loudoun County, but the book is written for a mature audience. He has also written eight non-fiction books about Virginia Tech football titled “Go Tech Go: The Inside Story Behind Virginia Tech Football.”

Colston shared a word of advice for people who want to become authors. “If you want to be a good writer, you must do two things: Read great writers every day, and write every day. That’s it. It’s that simple. Even if you read for just 15 minutes, do it. And then try to emulate what you read by writing something. Eventually your own voice will emerge.” •

Colston poses for his author photo. Part of being an author is self-promotion. Photo courtesy of Chris Colston.

