



Tornado Warning Delays Annual Homecoming Parade



(Left to Right) Junior Connor Colavita, senior Tucker Boos, junior Jordan Bruce, senior Logan Deladurantaye, senior Connor Quinn, senior Ben Lierni, senior Andrew Massey, senior Erik Buer, senior Justin Johnston, members of the NJROTC Armed Exhibition, throw their drill rifles as part of their routine. The Armed Exhibition was one of many student organizations that had to wait out the rain in Safeway. Picture by Nik Scuric.

Rand Harrison | staff writer

Lining the floor of the store, students sat with their friends, played games, and even started doing their homework as rain pummeled outside. **Elisha Casarrubias**, a senior and a worker at Safeway stated that this was the most packed and chaotic the store had ever been. He also made sure to mention his relief that our students were respectful of the store and its customers.

This was the scene on the evening of September 25. Before this, the homecoming parade started like normal; floats setting up, students gathering together, and convertibles pulling up to the event. The event requires advanced planning, with several local streets closed to drivers, so the event was to be held rain or shine. Everyone was ready to march, even in the rain. This quickly changed as a tornado warning and sudden rainstorm hit the Leesburg area, forcing students to evacuate from the parking lot into the attached Safeway.

There, many students gathered around the windows looking out at the rain, a majority of whom were

part of NJROTC. **Jordan Bruce**, a member of the NJROTC Armed Exhibition drill team, was in the store while these events occurred.

“Chaos was happening all around us but because of me and my friends, the NJROTC students stayed orderly,” Bruce said, a claim backed up by Casarrubias who commented on how established and polite they were.

Once the rain ended, students emerged from the store with new energy, excited to continue the parade. A rainbow had also formed, creating a beautiful atmosphere for the delayed event.

Marketing teacher **Schyuler Henderson** said he was happy they were finally free to get the parade going, and that the flexibility and commitment of the students really made a difference. Many students could be spotted handing out candy and gifts to kids on the sidewalk, which really summed the day up, as not only adventurous but successful.

“Neither rain nor a tornado warning could stop the Captains from celebrating,” said student activities coordinator **Crystal Wolfgang**. •



Seniors Karen Jimenez and Jordyn Caballero, sponsor Tracy Webster, and seniors Gabby Argueta and Imamah Mahzar hold a sign in the Safeway parking lot before the pause. During the pause, the entire Environmental Club had to file into the Roy Rogers, in the same parking lot, due to lack of space. Photo courtesy of @lchsenvironmental.

Charlie Kirk's assassination deserves to be remembered

Editorial

On September 10 at 12:23 p.m., **Charlie Kirk**, the founder of Turning Point USA and controversial conservative political activist, was assassinated at Utah Valley University in front of a crowd of roughly 3,000 students. UVU was one of many campuses he visited to encourage open debate between himself and college students on controversial topics in today's culture.

Following his death, students, followers, and opposers alike have taken to the internet to express their drastically varying opinions.

The evening of Kirk's death, MSNBC aired their nightly edition and featured **Matthew Dowd**, a political pundit for the network, who insinuated that Kirk brought his death on himself: "...hateful thoughts lead to hateful words,

which then lead to hateful actions...that is the environment we are in."

Conversely, writer for liberal media outlet The New York Times, **Ezra Klein**, highlighted Kirk's work, saying "Charlie Kirk was practicing politics the right way." Despite their ideological differences, Klein recognizes that healthy American society consists of healthy debates and hard conversations. It's essential that each one of us recognizes this.

The difference in response only highlights the growing political polarization in America. Both sides have made baseless claims regarding September 10, and both have, at points, been needlessly inflammatory.

Whether or not you agreed with his views or methods, Kirk was an example of someone who practiced open dialogue with people

who disagreed with him. Democracy demands that we, as citizens, acknowledge that words and not violence are what uphold American ambitions. We can't let one man's death be the start of an American society that endorses echo chambers of opinions and vilifies those with different beliefs. Democracy cannot thrive in such a society. Kirk's assassination must serve as a wake-up call to all of us, spurring us to talk maturely about our differences.

Kirk's assassination is not only a tragedy for those who knew and loved him, or for his supporters — it's a tragedy for Americans because it threatens civil liberties and it challenges democratic ideals. When a proponent of civil liberty is killed in such a public way, it isn't only the individual who is attacked; the freedoms America embodies are attacked as well. •

Thriving relationships depend on honesty

Abigail Cunnington | copy editor

I once asked a friend after many failed attempts to reach out if I mattered to her. Her response? A simple, "No." It was a slap in the face, but I've come to admire her candor. Her words stung; but she respected me enough to be honest.

Too often, I see people miss out on fulfilling relationships because the thought of offending or being harshly judged paralyzes their ability to be honest; however, relationships that thrive do so because they're founded on honesty.

Honesty goes beyond simply not lying. It's about disclosing vulnerable parts of yourself in order to open a door for candid conversation. This means sharing when you've been hurt and not backing down from confrontation.

But it's not all about airing your grievances. Honesty also

welcomes feedback that may be challenging to hear. It demands that you humble yourself. True honesty is the courage to admit when you're in the wrong, and the sense to value another's critiques.

Honesty presents the possibility that a relationship falters; however, it also presents an opportunity for a relationship to become more meaningful. Resilient relationships are built on a willingness to be honest and vulnerable, and to invite the same from others. Conversely, when we mask superficial relationships as genuine ones, they remain stagnant or slowly fade out.

When people fail to be honest with you, they're sending a message; they don't trust that the relationship will survive momentary discomfort, even if it means achieving a more fulfilling relationship with you.

Of course, there is prudence in taking time to process and in

keeping some things private. Not every friendship is designed to go very deep, and that doesn't mean there isn't value in it. But understand that honesty is a catalyst for deep connection because it generates understanding, if not agreement.

This principle is more than just sentiment. A study conducted by the University of Rochester determined that "...even if partners in a relationship don't perfectly understand...each other's honesty, the simple act of expressing honesty...has a positive effect on the relationship."

People tend to err on the side of self-protection in order to spare someone else's feelings or to preserve their own comfort—reject this habit. Embrace honesty and the discomfort it entails, because it often means that we get to experience the richness that a deeper relationship has to offer.

Honesty isn't always easy to practice, and it certainly doesn't guarantee a fulfilled relationship. Regardless, let's strive for honesty, not because it always offers us the desired outcome, but because there's dignity in pursuing a relationship of substance. Don't shy away from honesty and so sacrifice relationships that could mean so much more.

Let's stop faking smiles and saying "I'm fine," when we're not. Let's get comfortable saying "I was wrong." Let's learn to say "I disagree with you; here's why," with boldness. •

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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@lcp.org.

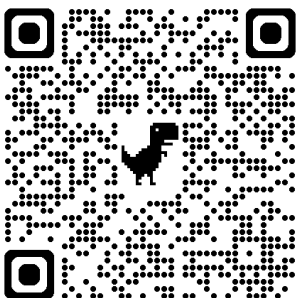
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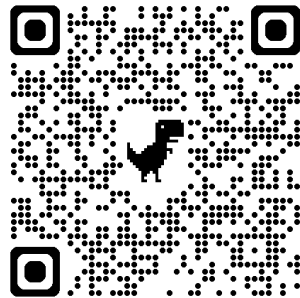
Teaching one religious ideology hinders academic growth

Taylor Helfer | editor-in-chief



Book review: alumni-written "Culpability" offers a chilling glimpse into the new role of AI

Scarlett Ashford | managing editor



STUDENT LIFE

Ranking seasonal drinks from local cafés: fall edition

Ashleigh Whitlock | staff writer

The newly fallen warm-colored leaves are kicked up off the ground by the howling wind. Your thick scarf and fuzzy sweater can't bundle you up enough to protect you from the unexpected cold coming on. The cloudy skies and early evenings drain the energy out of your body. The perfect solution: a warm, spicy, and awakening coffee to cozy up with during the approaching autumn season. The local cafés of Leesburg are perfect with their seasonal drinks to energize you on your way to school, or to settle down with on one of the upcoming holidays.

SECOND NATURE COFFEE

Second Nature Coffee Co., the café that took over King Street Coffee just over a year ago, is an intimate, friendly, and cozy coffee shop that's open between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m., just enough time to stop in before or after school. The shop receives its coffee roasts from Lone Oak Coffee Company, where their coffee beans come from all around the world, including countries such as El Salvador, Colombia, Ethiopia, and many more.

Their current seasonal specials are the golden milk latte, the cinnamon bun brew, and the pumpkin pie latte. I settled on buying the pumpkin pie latte, expecting it to be similar to a classic pumpkin spice latte.

I ordered the latte hot in a medium size with half-caf and almond milk. The drink had an almost planty taste, which I was discontented with, but it may have been self-inflicted due to the almond milk replacement. Besides the flavor of the milk, the pumpkin taste was prominent, but not over the top, along with a slight hint of warm spices. I would give the latte a 7/10, mostly because it tasted like a downgraded version of a pumpkin spice latte.

SHAKE & BOPS BOTANICAL CAFE

Shake & Bops Botanical Café is another coffee shop in downtown Leesburg that is under a year old, opening in December of 2024. The business is owned by a mother of two daughters, whose nicknames are "shake" and "bops," hence, the name of the company. Their operating hours are between 8 a.m. and 3 p.m., allowing students time to grab a drink if they wake up early enough before school.

As expected of a café with a plethora of plants, the café radiated a natural and homey energy, bolstered by its wide variety of drinks from bitter black to sugary sweet. I'd highly recommend plant lovers and green thumbs to go to this café to see the arrangement of plants that can be bought.

The botanical café is offering the classic pumpkin spice latte this fall, which I had to try. Unfortunately, I have little to say about the positives of the drink. The latte part of the drink was decent and had a basic flavor to it; however, the drink seemed mostly watered down, and I could barely taste the pumpkin or the spices. I would rank the beverage a 5/10, as it was a fine latte but failed to possess the classic, complex flavor.

SIDEBAR COFFEE

Sidebar Coffee is the coffee shop addition to its restaurant and bar, SideBar. This unique business, open from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m., has window service only, allowing customers to quickly stop by and grab a delicious drink while strolling around downtown. The coffee shop's autumn menu includes a pumpkin spice latte and their maple pecan syrup, which can be added to any drink of your choice.

I decided to add the maple pecan syrup to a 12-oz, half-caf hot latte. The coffee was rich with a warm and nutty taste from the pecan flavor, along with the perfect middle



Maple Pecan Latte from SideBar Coffee. Sidebar Coffee is an addition to the SideBar restaurant in downtown Leesburg. Photo by Ashleigh Whitlock.

ground between bitter and sweet.

The maple flavor of the latte came as an aftertaste, which was both a pro, adding depth to the experience of the drink, and a con, lacking the sweetness of the syrupy flavor. I also found myself disappointed by the strength of the espresso and milk slightly muting the maple pecan flavor. Despite the few downsides, I'd give the drink a 9/10 rating and would definitely recommend trying it.

TRINITY HOUSE CAFE

The Trinity House Café is a Catholic-affiliated coffee shop located between Church Street and Market Street. The small café is in a vintage building and is decorated with religious trinkets and artwork crafted by local artisans. Although they are associated with St. John the Apostle Catholic Church, they

are very welcoming of people not affiliated with the church. The warming coffee house is open from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. on weekdays, and extends through 5 p.m. on Saturdays.

The fall seasonal drinks of Trinity House include their pumpkin spice latte, caramel apple cider, and pumpkin chai latte. Additionally, the coffee house offers fresh-baked goods that change on a daily basis, which I would highly recommend trying.

As a chai lover, my obvious choice was the pumpkin chai latte. On the first sip, I was greeted by an explosion of delicious flavors and spices, along with a creamy foam on top with the utmost perfect texture. The flawless balance of sweetness, spiciness, and milkiness pulled together a sensational drink, one that I would give a solid 10/10. •

UPCOMING EVENTS

Charlie Pizzarello | staff writer

NOVEMBER

11/11: Veterans Day Assembly
11/12: Dr. Spence town hall with students
11/26-11/28: Thanksgiving Break



DECEMBER

12/2-12/4: Governors Assembly for World Languages
12/5-12/7: Fall Play of "Macbeth"
12/15: Winter pep rally
12/15-12/19: Winter spirit week
12/19: Fine arts assembly
12/22: Winter break begins

JANUARY

1/2: Winter break ends
1/19: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
1/22: End of second quarter
1/23: Student holiday



SENIORS PAINT PARKING SPOTS

Taylor Helfer | editor-in-chief

One of the most anticipated privileges amongst students is painting a parking spot. For seniors, juniors, and now faculty, this means having the opportunity to display their artistic ability. Students must follow simple instructions: pay \$20, submit their design for approval, and finally, paint their spot on designated days. No juniors or faculty painted their parking spots.



Senior **Isabella Boland**'s spot took inspiration from Pinterest. "I was really looking forward to painting my parking spot," Boland said. "It's one of those senior traditions you just can't miss out on."



Senior **Maddie White** took inspiration from her favorite film, Tangled, painting the iconic sun from the film. However, she did not anticipate the cost, saying "It definitely cost over \$100, but I believe it was worth it."



Senior **Grayson Bradley** took inspiration from one of his favorite games, Zelda, recreating the Mirror of Twilight from Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess. His design cost around \$30, "super fun and not that hard [to paint]."

AP SEMINAR: WHAT IS THE NEW ELECTIVE ABOUT?



What You Do In AP Seminar

- "Students take an interest and craft something and do something through research, through inquiry, through presentation, through writing...and to be able to present it both in writing, in both in a visual and a presentation mode that is so authentic"
- "The students will learn to go from a topic, generating a research question, seeing that through a very logical process and building sources to be able to have media literacy, and then take that inquiry all the way to presentation and to writing."



AP Seminar at LCHS

- Offered since August 2025
- Course Type: English Elective
- Taught by: Mr. **Jason Bryant**
- Open to: Sophomores, juniors, and seniors
- Sections Offered This Year: 3



The AP Seminar Exam

- Two parts: A Digital Portfolio and an End-of-Course Survey
- Digital Portfolio includes 2 performance tasks: a research paper and a team presentation



The AP Capstone Diploma

By taking AP Seminar, students are eligible for the AP Capstone Diploma. Requirements for this are:

- Take AP Seminar and get at least a 3 on the exam
- Take AP Research, and get at least a 3 on the exam
- Take 4 other AP classes and earn a 3 or above on all 4 exams



From Mr. Bryant Himself

- "The first couple of months is all about teaching skills. But afterwards, then it tends to be less teacher-driven"
- "The things that I'm teaching my AP seminar students are the things that I do every day in my profession and that I'm counted on to do in my profession day-to-day. So it's real world. It's not just something that's found in a college classroom, but it's skills for real life."
- "I'm hoping that my students that finish the course will see the benefit and the value in it that they'll be able to tell each other."

Powderpuff: Juniors secure last minute win

Charlie Pizzarello | staff writer

The powderpuff game, originally scheduled for homecoming week, pitted the seniors against the juniors. After being rescheduled due to weather, the game was held Wednesday, October 8. When sixth block came around, the faculty escorted all students to the stands to watch. The seniors wore black, and the juniors

wore pink, with the crowd wearing colors of the team they supported.

The teams scored equally, ending with a tie. Although the crowd seemed eager for the game to go into overtime, school administration did not want the game to run into scheduled class time, so the game was decided by a round of rock-paper-scissors, which the juniors won. •

Powderpuff players and coaches

Seniors

Kate Andres
 Yari Garcia Andrade
 Jacky Carmona
 Parker Clarey
 Ella Cortisoz
 Montez Dyson
 Lizzie Garlington
 Jeremiah Davis
 Olivia Janusko
 Harper Kues
 Keera Lawlor
 Jake Miller
 Alaina Plasmier
 Melanie Sanchez De La Cruz
 Alexa Sterner
 Annie Stone
 Jade Taylor
 Sophie Webb

Juniors

Val Aguilar
 Sammy Boyers
 Brie Feeney
 Sara Habibzai
 Kallie Harris
 Dominick Gadell
 Kate Garren
 Nava Gessesse
 Alexa Karschner
 Madison Karschner
 Abby Lippincott
 Andy Lovo
 Jackson Patterson
 Lincoln Segersten
 Bailey Welch



Top: The junior team stands on the sidelines, cheering as their team scores a touchdown early in the game. Spirits were high on both sides and results were decided by a match of rock, paper, scissors with the juniors winning. Photo by Karan Singh.

Middle: Senior Olivia Janusko (right) reaches for junior Kate Garren's (left) flag in an attempt to prevent the junior team from scoring a touchdown. Photo by Valerie Egger.

Bottom left: Junior Nava Gessesse makes a sprint across the field with the football burrowed in her arms, while seniors Keera Lawlor and Jade Tiffany chase after her. Junior Kate Garren also runs after Gessesse in an attempt to protect her teammate from a potential flag pull. Photo by Valerie Egger.



Homecoming Week



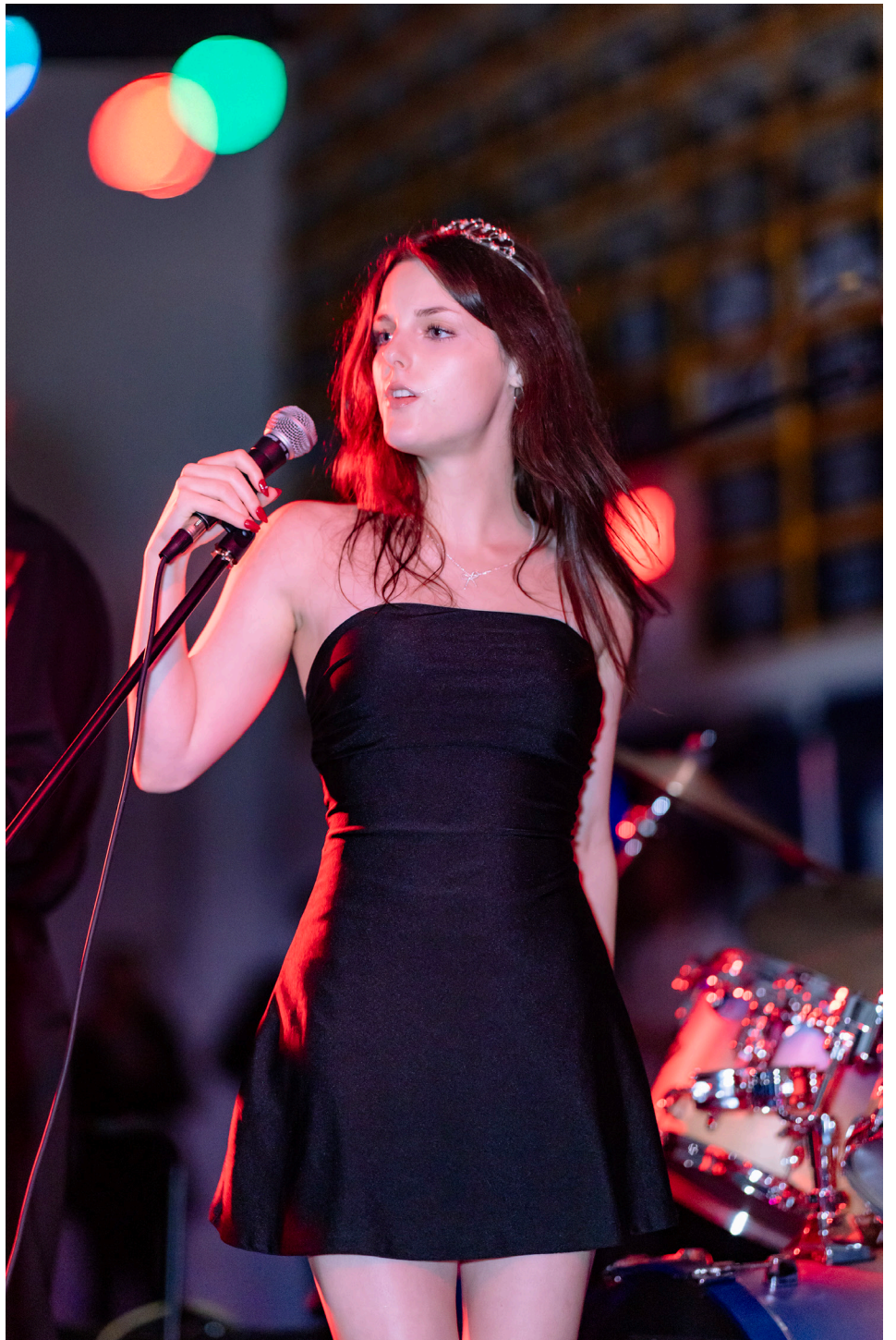
Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA) marches on Catoctin Street after the parade was cleared to run moments earlier. DECA is one of the largest clubs in the school, attracting many who are interested in business and marketing careers. "I think that it was cool to be able to represent our organization among all of the great organizations that the school has," said the DECA co-sponsor Schuyler Henderson. "It's just great exposure getting our faces out there and showing that we are a part of the community and that we care." Photo courtesy of @decaloudouncounty on Instagram.



(From Left to Right) Freshman Charlotte O'Brien, sophomore Juliette Fedders, senior Gabe Cunnington, and junior Michael Tafe, play music from the back of the cross country truck after being cleared to start the parade. Cross Country was one of many sports that were required to appear in the parade. Photos by Rand Harrison.



Students, including Naval Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (NJROTC) cadets, various clubs such as Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA), or Environmental Club rush into Safeway as ominous clouds hover above them. Right before the parade was set to commence, the parade was put on pause due to a tornado warning, forcing student organizations to gather their instruments, NJROTC exhibition guns, and other hand-made signs to avoid the weather. After heavy rain, lightning, and strong winds, the parade commenced. Photo by Rand Harrison.



Senior Norah Lee, a member of Eternal Moon, sings during the Homecoming dance. SCA invited several student bands such as Eternal Moon, Suncrest, and Jack Bateman, to play during the dance in an effort to cater to students. Photo by Victor O'Neill Studios.



Coach Mike Mitchell talks to sophomore Vincenzo Gagliardi during a time out. The Captains ended up winning the game 42-14. Photo by Victor O'Neill Studios.



Seniors Silvia Keyes and Caitlyn Kozowyk dance together at the "Hocoachella" dance. Keyes and Kozowyk were one of few seniors who went to the dance. "I wanted to support friends who were performing, and have fun for my last Homecoming." Photo courtesy of Silvia Keyes.



Homecoming Court, made up of seniors who were voted on by their classmates, include Josephine Seekford, Harper Keus, Norah Lee, Zoe Ward, and Ella Sloane Griffin. The group stands with Lee, who was crowned queen, shortly after the half-time ceremony. Each girl went through a series of rounds of voting, pep rally contests, and rides at the parade to celebrate the week. Photo by @jklimphotos on Instagram.



(Left to right) Junior Ashleigh Whitlock, senior Karan Singh, and junior Madelyn Homa smile for the camera at the homecoming dance. Photo courtesy of Karan Singh.



Sophomore Ryan Chambers runs with the ball in an effort to get it down the field. County played the crosstown rival Tuscarora for the Homecoming game. Photo by Victor O'Neil.

ATHLETICS

Golf gets cool: team sees record turnout for tryouts

Charlie Pizzarello | staff writer

Golf tryouts this year saw an unexpected surge in interest, with 29 students showing up for a spot on the team roster — a considerable jump from previous seasons. For new head coach **Rusty Oatman**, the numbers surprised him.

“I was sort of surprised, actually,” he said. “My son played for the team a couple years ago, and they never had this many kids come out.”

While the turnout shocked some, the coach recalled his high school days, when golf was a popular sport. “We had a golf course literally next to our school, and the owner of the club actively promoted youth golf. Big tryouts were routine at that time,” Oatman said.

So, what is behind the sudden popularity boom?

Oatman admits there’s no single explanation. “I really can’t say what caused the explosion of interest in County’s golf team,” he said. “Although I’d like to think it’s the new head coach.”

Jokes aside, he credits a major cultural shift in how golf is consumed by young people today — particularly through social media

and YouTube.

“Golf personalities like **Good Good, Grant Horvat, Bryson DeChambeau, Bryan Bros, and Rick Shiels** have made golf cool,” he said. “They’ve put a fun new energy into the game and kids are relating to that.”

Internet content appears to be a powerful engine behind the sport’s growing popularity. “Social media has exposed golf more, and kids are seeing their friends get involved,” Oatman said. “Many of them are showing up for the social aspect, not just the game.”

County’s recent golf success probably contributes to its appeal. Just a few years ago, the team finished third in the state, and five of the six starters are now competing at the college level. The sixth is this year’s team captain — Senior **Jackson Quinn** — and he’s likely to see playing time in college as well.

“Success like that builds a reputation,” Oatman said. “Younger players see a path to college golf and want in.”

Aside from its social impact, advances in golf technology have enabled players to improve more easily and remain stimulated.



Jackson Quinn, region 4C champion, takes the tee with a driver at Raspberry Falls on the third hole 421 yard downhill. After finishing all the holes, they won the game. Photo courtesy of Cary Quinn.

“Golf clubs and teaching aids are [present] more than ever,” Oatman said. “Trackman, a golf simulator and video analysis, enables players to see their improvement and sharpen their game in fewer hours.”

“Golf is an excellent sport. One of the most challenging to master,

but that’s why it’s so rewarding,” he said. “Most athletes lean towards golf eventually in their older years. Why not sooner?”

Whether it’s all of the golf on the internet, championship tradition, or just a shift in adolescent trends, one thing is certain: Golf isn’t a boring sport. •

SPORTS BRIEFS

Taylor Helfer, Charlie Pizzarello, Abigail Cunnington

FOOTBALL

On August 28, the Captains hosted Riverside for the first home game. The student section, led by seniors **Patrick Williamson, Jacky Carmona, Kiley Forlenza, and Kate Klerekoper**, dressed up in USA-themed gear to rally school spirit. The Captains defended the home turf and won 35-0.

Since then, the team has gone nearly undefeated, only losing in double overtime 34-35 against the Jefferson Cougars in West Virginia on October 17, while winning 21-20 in overtime against Woodgrove High School on October 30 and capturing the Catocin District Championship.

Aug 28 vs Riverside 0-35 W
Sept 5 vs Sherando 14-15 W
Sept 12 vs Millbrook 28-21 W
Sept 18 vs Park View 42-0 W
Sept 26 vs Tuscarora 14-42 W
Oct 3 vs Broad Run 43-8 W
Oct 10 vs Loudoun Valley 7-31 W
Oct 17 vs Jefferson 34-35 L
Oct 30 vs Woodgrove 21-20 W

VOLLEYBALL



Photo courtesy of Victor O’ Neill.

Aug 25 vs Potomac Falls 3-0 W
Aug 27 vs Riverside 3-1 L
Sept 4 vs Freedom 3-0 W
Sept 8 vs Briar Woods 3-2 L
Sept 25 vs Loudoun Valley 3-0 W
Oct 16 vs Woodgrove 3-0 W
Oct 27 vs Woodgrove 1-3 W

CROSS COUNTRY

Cross country saw a series of personal records culminating in district wins. On October 23, both the boys and girls cross country teams won the district championship at Woodgrove for the first time in school history. The boys cross country team won their third consecutive district championship. Five runners placed in the top 11 finishers, with junior **Michael Tafe** taking first place with a new school record of 14:49:53. Junior **Fallon Fetterolf** also won her third consecutive individual district title, breaking her own school record and setting a time of 18:19:58. A total of five runners from the girls cross country team placed in the top nine finishers. These wins brought both teams to Oatlands for the Region 4C championship on October 29 where both earned a place at states on November 8. The girls XC team hasn’t been to states since 2016. **Coach Courtney Campbell** posted on X, saying “What a fantastic day for County XC!!!! Everyone runs a course PR and everyone headed to the State meet. Great job to everyone!!!!”

A personal finance teacher by day, Mario Kart driver by night

Sarah Maneematcha | staff writer

Personal finance can be difficult, it can be challenging, and students can struggle. Despite the subject being difficult, the room can be lightened up with randomness of a Gen Z teacher, **Anthony Garabito**, a personal finance and aerospace teacher who has worked in the teaching field for a decade.

Any student who has spent even one class with Garabito is probably familiar with his catch phrase, “Speak now or forever hold your peace.” Garabito says that he chose the catch phrase because he feels “it can be related to students every time I go over study material.”

According to Garabito, this phrase wasn’t invented by him. The purpose of using this catch phrase is to give opportunities to students since they are allowed to ask questions while going over the study guide. Students can ask as many questions as they want, as long as it is related to the test or quiz. When the time is up for study material, after his famous phrase, Garabito will no longer answer any questions. The phrase also helps emphasize timeliness, which is important to business and personal finance.

Beside his catchy phrase, Garabito is a very smart teacher

with a characteristic that suits his subject. “I like fixing things. If I can fix it myself I see no point in paying others to fix it for me,” he said.

Personal finance not only teaches Garabito the basics of economic principles but also how to manage his money. Garabito has his own habits of fixing and learning, gaining both money and experience on certain subjects that he would like to fix. It is very suitable to him since personal finance teaches how to spend money in reasonable ways and raise awareness of one’s spendings.

Garabito mentioned he likes learning, especially when things are broken. “If there was something wrong with my car, I usually would try to fix it myself first because I just like fixing things and it saves money,” he said.

In this way, Garabito expanded his knowledge to different varieties. This not only saved money but it also allowed him to teach other people.

Garabito also teaches aerospace engineering. Aerospace engineering teaches students both about how to make faster, safer, efficient vehicles that fly in the earth’s atmosphere and out of earth’s atmosphere. Even with such a difficult subject, Garabito keeps it relevant.

“I use a 3D model pumpkin to



Anthony Garabito speaks to students during personal finance class. The personal finance teacher could be said to have the randomness of a dice, with interest in everything from home improvement to video games, but always strives to make connections between student work and the real world. Photo by Sarah Maneematcha.

teach my students, and I thought it would be a fun way to teach them,” Garabito said. He said that incorporating familiar concepts helps relieve students’ stress and overwhelm.

Despite Garabito’s first year of teaching aerospace engineering and personal finance that can be stressful, he still kept one of his hobbies alive outside of school hours, which is gaming.

“I love playing video games,” Garabito said. “It’s my main interest.” One of his favorite games

is Mario Kart, a digital game that has no age restrictions or gender limit, allowing anybody and everybody to play.

Garabito can be seen as a serious teacher who wants his students to understand and succeed without putting much stress on them. However, he also has a fun side to not get overly stressed on teaching.

Despite how serious Garabito can be seen during the day, he’ll always be a fun Mario Kart driver during the night. •

SPORTS BRIEFS, CONTINUED

Taylor Helfer | editor-in-chief

FIELD HOCKEY

The girls’ season came to an end with their October 27 loss in overtime in the regional semifinals to Loudoun Valley 1-0.

Aug 27 vs Park View 7-0 W
 Aug 28 vs Chancellor 0-4 L
 Sept 2 vs Potomac Falls 8-2 W
 Sept 4 vs Riverside 1-2 L
 Sept 8 vs Independence 2-5 L
 Sept 17 vs Woodgrove 1-4 L
 Sept 18 vs Rock Ridge 7-0 L
 Sept 29 vs Dominion 3-2 W
 Sept 30 vs Tuscarora 7-0 W
 Oct 6 vs Broad Run 6-0 W
 Oct 7 vs Loudoun Valley 1-2 L
 Oct 9 vs Woodgrove 3-1 W
 Oct 14 vs Broad Run 7-1 W
 Oct 16 vs Park View 7-0 W
 Oct 21 vs Heritage 6-1 w
 Oct 23 vs Broad Run 5-0 W
 Oct 27 vs Loudoun Valley 0-1 L



Photo courtesy of @jklmphotos.

COMPETITIVE CHEER

On October 21, competition cheer won their regular season championship at Park View, with a score of 263 points. Their season ended October 29 with a loss at the Broad Run competition.



Photo courtesy of @jklmphotos.

Sayda Martinez-Alvarado wins Rhodes Scholarship: 2019 Alum to study at Oxford to improve education system



Sayda Martinez-Alvarado graduated from Yale University with a BA in Psychology and a certificate in education studies. She will be leaving for Oxford this fall. Photo courtesy of Sayda Martinez-Alvarado.

Scarlett Ashford | Managing Editor

As a kid, **Sayda Martinez-Alvarado** didn't have the privileges of having a strong socioeconomic family. Despite this challenge, Martinez-Alvarado defied the odds by becoming the first in her family to attend

college, and has now worked her way to studying at Oxford University.

Yale University graduate and LCHS alum Martinez-Alvarado was recently selected as a recipient of the Rhodes Scholarship, one of the most prestigious scholarships of today, and will be attending Oxford University

for the next two years while studying education policy at the Education School of Diversity.

"I'm most looking forward to having like two years to just think about these really big questions in education that I'm interested in," Martinez-Alvarado said.

Some of these questions include how having strong relationships, community, and cultural capital - advantages obtained through situation of life - allow someone to succeed socioeconomically, and reasons behind distrust of higher education.

"[Socioeconomics being] your circumstances at home when you're still dependent on your parents," Martinez-Alvarado said. "I think in the U.S., we need to do more to intentionally think about how we are investing in schools and the education of students."

Martinez-Alvarado emphasizes applying research to make education more productive, rather than expending money into something without thinking it through completely.

"But I do not just focus on the problems," Martinez-Alvarado said. "Something that's really, in my opinion, amazing and unique about the American education system is that theoretically anyone could go to college."

American students are given more choice of career, even while in college, whereas some countries place students on a track at ages as early as 12 or 13. Martinez-Alvarado works to

recognize the value of the American education system while also working to promote necessary changes to improve it as a whole.

This determination is what drove her to apply for the Rhodes scholarship, developed in 1902 by British politician **Cecil Rhodes** in order to promote youth leadership and develop global understanding.

"What motivated me then [senior year] to apply was thinking about 'what do you want to do next' and 'the whole world is your oyster,'" Martinez-Alvarado said. Despite making it as a finalist, she lost the first time she applied. After working as a Senior Policy Analyst at EdTrust for two years, her former professor encouraged her to reapply, and she won.

"It's just really hard to ever imagine yourself winning one of those things, even at an institution like Yale," Martinez-Alvarado said. "[But] the more that I thought about it, the more I was like, 'Wow, I do really miss being in an academic setting where I have control.'"

As one of only 32 people chosen as this year's Rhodes Scholars, she hopes to attend law school and implement her new ideas; however, for now, she will get to focus on her passions and new experiences while studying abroad for the first time.

"I'm just really excited to be surrounded by people who are really passionate about their topic, even if it's not my topic," Martinez-Alvarado said. •

Marching Captains succeed in all competitions this season

Ashleigh Whitlock | staff writer

In the midst of our football games is the halftime show, performed by our national-competing marching band. The talented group is led by the band director **Darron Young**, alongside **Mika Saario**. Additional adult leaders include visual instructor **Aleksi Saario**, percussion instructor **Aaron Bertoglio**, and colorguard instructor **Christopher Focer**.

Performing their program "The Silver Lining," the band is conducted by senior **Rachel Nimt**z and junior **Shannon Amos**. Nimtz says the band is "really just a family, [they] love what [they] do." Many parents play an active role in helping the organization through providing food and assisting in the transportation of materials.

The marching band begins practicing in the summer from seven a.m. until three p.m., and finishes at the end of their competition season typically in the first week of November, with 90 minute practices after school. Their long hours of practice have paid off in first place wins in the national band competition several times, and they

are expecting to win again, at the time of publication.

On September 25 at Chopticon High School in Morganza, Maryland, the band won by default as the only high school in their category, Open - Group II. Their total score of 81.3 received the highest score out of all of the categories by a shocking average of 8 points.

Following their initial success at Chopticon, they won by defaults at Mechanicsburg Area Senior High School and Huntingtown High School, with improved scores of 83.2 and 83.6, beating all the other schools.

At the Marine Corps Invitational, the band finally ran into some competition in their category: Calvert Hall College High School and Gov. Thomas Jefferson High School. The Captains won with a score of 86.6 and won again at Leonard Town High School with a score of 89.1.

The band competed at regionals on October 25 against Calvert Hall and successfully won with a score of 90.3, the highest score in the area. On November 1, they won the state competition with a score of 93.9.



*Junior **Bahia Omais**, Senior **Amelia Cunnington**, Senior **Rachel Nimt**z, Junior **Shannon Amos**, Senior **Ryan Stultz**, Senior **Grayson Bradley**, and senior **Carter Cumisky** of the band pose after winning states with a score of 93.9 on November 1. Photo courtesy of @LCHS1954.*

The Captains are anticipating their most important competition of the season, nationals, at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey. Although football performances are what we may see the most, this exact competition is what truly makes or breaks their status, reputation, and identity as a team.

Saxophone soloist and junior

Noah Wollam said "it feels amazing to perform in front of all those people" at the MetLife stadium, where "there are [about] 50 other bands that compete." Whether or not the Captains win at nationals, one thing is for certain: their hard work and sense of community are first-place-deserving in itself. •

Artist of the Issue: Genesis Segovia finds relaxation in realism

Sarah Maneematcha | staff writer

A dark, gloomy contrast of pencil combined with coal. Dark liquid drips from a man's head to his cheek bones, almost seen through his thin pale skin. His head is decorated with thorns — his crown. His eyes look up, creating a tense and disturbing facial expression, almost pitiful.

Junior **Genesis Segovia** created this realistic work of art entitled “Last Look” to represent religion using the subject of **Jesus Christ**.

At the age of 10, Segovia's cousin introduced her to art. Inspired by her cousin's unique art style, Segovia started to learn and understand art piece by piece. It took more than four years of scrubbing and shaping her art then developing it into realism, which is the style Segovia has adopted.

“A realistic thing, it takes hours to make,” Segovia said. “You're not just standing there or sitting there not doing anything. You're focused, you put all effort into that one piece.”

Realism requires time and dedication, because the artist captures the smallest details, even if the details are barely noticeable in the whole picture.

According to Segovia, her standard time to finish a small, singular realistic piece without any color is about five hours.

“I don't finish one singular piece of realism in a day,” Segovia said. “I took my time, I carefully sculpted it and day by day I finished it.”

This amount of time is equivalent to the daily average screentime for some people.

According to Segovia, her piece “In the darkness” is created to represent manipulation. The art shows an image of a beautiful woman with a shocking expression, however she listens to a dark figure with lifeless eyes, creeping, crawling against her skin as if manipulating her choices.

“I like to draw things that look interesting to me despite not having any meaning behind it. I create when I want and rest when I want,” Segovia said. •



The “Last Look” is a piece of realism art by Genesis Segovia using coal and pencils. Its purpose was to represent religion, more specifically Christianity. Photo courtesy of Genesis Segovia.

Student bands given opportunity to perform at “Hocoachella”

Matthew O'Hara | staff writer

Ashleigh Whitlock | staff writer

Colorful flashing lights, blasting music, fun outfits, and visual performances are what the famous Indio, California, music festival Coachella is all about. It was also the homecoming theme. Following this theme, two student groups and a guest performed for the school during the homecoming dance: senior **Norah Lee** sang with her band **Eternal Moon**, junior **Will Schweiker** performed with his band **Suncrest**, and Heritage High School's senior **Jack Bateman** performed as well. These musical artists showcased their talents on stage, with audiences cheering on the wide range of music from melancholy acoustics to anthemic rhythms and distorted sounds.

The lead singer of **Eternal Moon**, **Norah Lee** said she “had a great experience performing for [her] friends” alongside her band members, including guitarist and junior **August Miller**. The band formed in 2020 through the “Bach to Rock” program, but ultimately separated from the program in 2023 to develop their band independently. Since then, **Eternal Moon** has performed in Loudoun County's “Battle of the Bands,” as well as the First Fridays in downtown Leesburg.

Eternal Moon collaborated with **Suncrest** and **Bateman** to develop their setlist, timing, and equipment usage. Being the first performance, **Lee** described her feelings of being “a bit nervous before playing,” primarily due to the high potential of technical difficulties.

The experience went smoothly, and **Lee** exhibited her artistic element on stage.

Lee and her band played the songs “Hot for the Teacher” by **Van Halen**, repeatedly apologizing to the teachers in the audience with a smile on her face, as well as “Party in the U.S.A.” by **Miley Cyrus**. The glam rock and dance-pop songs sharply contrast each other, but were the perfect mini-setlist for the group. **Lee** states that “Hot for the Teacher” was chosen because “of the irony of it being played in a school, also it's one of [their] favorite songs to perform,” while “Party in the U.S.A.” was a major crowd pleaser that had everyone singing and clapping along.

Following **Lee**, **Will Schweiker's** band, **Suncrest**, took and rocked the stage.

Schweiker's band formed in 2024, and currently has two songs out, “Stargirl” and “Latin.”

“We started in July of 2024,” **Schweiker** said. Both of the songs that **Suncrest** has released are alt-rock songs. “The songs don't really have a certain meaning or story to them.” The band currently has 200 monthly listeners on Spotify and cover many other artists.

Schweiker was asked to play at the dance by the school's SCA. “I was approached by [SCA member] senior **Colin Diem** during my guitar class, and he asked us to play two weeks before homecoming,” **Schweiker** said. The band gladly took on the job. “The band and I thought it was a cool opportunity. It was cool to see my friends and people I know from

school to see us play for the first time and hear our songs,” he said.

Schweiker plays lead guitar and can do backup vocals. “I started because I just really liked Guitar Hero and bands with awesome guitarists in them, like **Van Halen**,” **Schweiker**, who has been playing guitar for seven years, said.

As for the style of his music, **Schweiker** finds inspiration from many famous musicians. “My musical

influences come from certain guitarists like **Stevie Ray Vaughan** and **Mike Eizinger**.” He also has been influenced by notable bands “My influences also come from my favorite bands like **Queens of the Stone Age**, **Deftones**, and **Incubus**.”

As for listening to the music, **Suncrest's** songs are readily available for everyone to listen to. “Our music is out on all platforms like Spotify and Apple Music.” •



Junior **August Miller** of **Eternal Moon** plays the guitar during the Homecoming Celebration, with the theme of “Hocoachella.” **Eternal Moon** was one of many bands who were given the opportunity to play. Photo by **Victor O'Neill studios**.

‘My advice is always ruin the friendship.’ Taylor Swift brings love to heightened levels with new album

Karan Singh | editor-in-chief

In a dazzling matinée, Taylor Swift has presented her greatest fête yet: “The Life of a Showgirl.” Her twelfth studio album captures what love and passion feel like in glimmers of bright orange and shimmering teal, winding these topics into webs of friendship, hope, and admiration through an anthology of 12 tracks.

The album came shortly after Swift announced it on her fiancée Travis Kelce’s podcast “New Heights.” Pulling out a blurred vinyl from a suitcase, Swift told audiences “this is my brand new album.”

The bright teal cover features Swift in a diamond suit, laying below water with just her head peeking out, a reference to Shakespeare’s play “Hamlet,” in which a character named Ophelia is driven to madness, which results in her drowning in a brook after falling from a willow tree. The album cover also references the first track on the record, as well as the first single from the album itself.

Breaking the record for biggest first week, “The Life of a Showgirl” surpassed Adele’s album “25,” which debuted with 3.5 million copies sold in its first week back during its release in 2015. Swift’s new album debuted with over 4 million, shattering a record

unbeaten for over a decade.

ELDEST DAUGHTER

Swift takes on the persona of an individual lost in the ever changing world known as the internet, unable to use slang correctly and, therefore, falling into a looping hole of insecurity. She acknowledges the difficulties that come with trying to be relatable online and provides commentary on the infamous “cancel culture.”

The first verse is, though on theme with the track’s message, weird. Swift’s references to typical, Gen Z internet terms such as “girlboss,” “savage,” and “trolling and memes” sound unnatural and forced.

The song’s later parts (which are much better), however, can be compared to “seven” from “folklore” as Swift recalls moments from when she was a kid. She longs to return to those days, reminiscing about a light that shimmers every now and then “like when we were young.”

RUIN THE FRIENDSHIP

A steady guitar and soft vocals transport us to a September in Swift’s high school years, where she sings about being in love with one of her close friends. Recalling that period of her life, Swift admits that “[I] should’ve kissed you anyways.”

When in the holds of complex feelings with those we admire, we often take the safest route to ensure that we don’t lose them.

Here, Swift gives a personal account of a time when she had feelings for her friend, but admits that she didn’t make a move in order to prevent herself from hindering the relationship she already had with him.

During the bridge of this track, this idea is emphasized when Swift reveals that the guy she’s singing about died a few years ago, and encapsulates the regret she now feels, as she won’t ever get to talk to him again. Ending the song with a big vocal moment and a change in the melody, Swift concludes by advising those listening to take chances and ask the questions they have: “My advice is always ruin the friendship, better that than regret it for all time.”

ACTUALLY ROMANTIC

This track finds Swift speaking to a person obsessed with her, flirting with them and sarcastically acknowledging how “romantic” this obsession is. Though Swift knows that the person this song is about, which fans theorize may be Charli XCX, doesn’t have good thoughts and feelings towards her, this comedic reply to the obsession is what creates this track’s satirical motif. Swift also seems to take digs at Charli’s husband’s band, The 1975, which features member Matty Healy, who was rumored to be in a relationship with Swift and inspired some of the tracks on Swift’s last record, “THE TORTURED PO-

ETS DEPARTMENT.”

As a fan of both Charli and Swift, I must say that this has been a very interesting song to unpack. Fans have been deciphering the clues and easter eggs Swift has left behind in the lyrics, and it has been so much fun to watch all the theories come alive.

WISH LIST

Since the second I heard this song in the theater at The Life of a Showgirl listening party, I fell in love. When the chorus first began, I found myself singing the following lyrics in my head: “Five seconds later, I’m fastening myself to you with a stitch.” Though those weren’t the actual lyrics of this track, I later realized that the similarities between this song and “Glitch” from “Midnights” are undeniable, as the lyrics I had sung were from that song.

With almost the same melodic progression of the chorus to the way she delivers her lines, this seems like a full circle moment for Swift, as on “Midnights,” she spoke about not believing in the love she was receiving, to now wanting to settle down with Kelce and starting a family, as portrayed by the lyrics: “Got me dreamin’ ‘bout a driveway with a basketball hoop. Boss up, settle down... I just want you.” •

Read the full album review on our website.



“You can read a book about someone discussing their experiences... and then still relate to them.”

Podcast: “An analysis of how literature is defined, what it consists of, and its value”

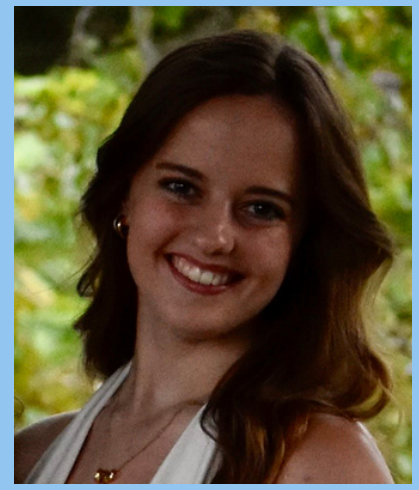
Scarlett Ashford, Abigail Cunnington, Karan Singh, & Ashleigh Whitlock



“Modern authors are writing books with the same tropes... it’s not good writing anymore, it’s just a marketing tactic.”



“When I think of literature, as a whole, it is just anything that has been written and is out there: any form of writing, published book, essay.”



“Literature is the highest caliber of writing... as a rule, you can’t take that high bar and say that everything is literature then.”

