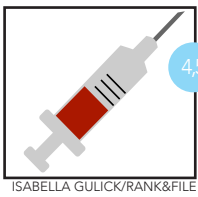




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George C. Marshall High School
7731 Leesburg Pike
Falls Church, VA 22043
(703) 714-5511
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Student voters participate in midterm elections

WILL SHIN/RANK&FILE

by will shin

Midterm elections took place on Nov. 6, garnering the highest midterm voter turnout in 50 years.

The midterm elections are general elections that take place halfway through a president's four-year term, which give voters the chance to elect members of Congress.

More than 47 percent of the voting-eligible population cast a ballot, compared to the 36.7 percent that did in 2014. Additionally, early turnout in Virginia more than doubled since 2014, according to *TIME* Magazine.

Senior Olivia Koshute said she voted during midterms because she wanted to use her voting power in a meaningful way.

"[I decided to vote] because I want my voice to be heard about what I want to happen in our government," Koshute said. "Unless we go out there and use our civic responsibilities to decide who is going to represent us, then what we want won't happen."

Koshute said she was excited to be able to cast a ballot.

"I was just happy to finally get to [vote]," Koshute said. "It is a really awesome responsibility we have as citizens and as adults."

A voter's designated polling place depends on their house address. Several county schools, including Marshall, serve as voting locations.

In order to be eligible to vote, one must be of legal age and have United States citizenship.

Senior Laila Yun, who moved to the U.S. last year, was unable to vote despite meeting the age requirement.

"Obviously, I think it is important for people to be involved and vote," Yun said. "I have a lot of friends who voted [at midterms] and were really excited about it. But because I'm not a citizen, I can't be involved in that yet."

Senior Jade Stevers said voting is important because it helps younger generations have a say in political decisions.

"If we want change, the only way to achieve that is by doing something," Stevers said. "Nowadays, it is so easy to be educated [...] so [eligible youth voters] have no excuse not to vote."

GCM fails to celebrate psychology awareness *Counselor Cara Engel: mental issues 'hard to handle right'*

by sahar jiwani

School Psychology Awareness Week, a nationally celebrated initiative that focuses on bringing recognition to student mental health, was just another regular week for the Marshall community.

Marshall held no events in celebration of National School Psychology Awareness Week, which took place from Nov. 12 to 16. According to the National Association of School Psychologists, this week also aims to highlight the work school psychologists and other educators do to help students thrive.

School counselor Cara Engel said learning how to deal with mental health struggles is important, but at the same time, a big challenge to raise awareness about.

"I don't think people know what [mental struggles] look like from student to student, and they do look really different," Engel said. "Kids are dealing with [a lot] and I think there is still shame associated with [mental health struggles], so the best thing is for people to talk about them in order to raise a better understanding."

Sophomore Rachel Rudy said mental health awareness can be helpful and successful if others treat it with respect, but most people do not take it seriously.

"I feel as though [here] at Marshall we do mental health awareness just to tick a box to say we've done it,"

Rudy said. "I have a lot of friends that suffer from mental health issues, and yet teachers rarely understand that they're just as serious as [physical conditions]."

Engel said even though mental disorders are a serious issue, there have been instances where students use them as an excuse, which makes it difficult for her to distinguish those genuinely suffering from those that are just pretending.

"There are some students who

"I feel as though [here] at Marshall, we do mental health awareness just to tick a box."

Rachel Rudy
sophomore

don't want to keep it together and they might be using [mental disorders] as an excuse," Engel said. "If you have a broken leg, it is apparent to everyone, so it is easier to be like 'I have a broken leg and this is how I will deal with it,' and I think mental [struggles] are just so invisible."

For those going through stress and anxiety, Engel said she notices a common tactic of avoidance, which she said is not the best coping mechanism.

"My biggest piece of advice is

to face [whatever you are going through], because the longer you avoid it, the worse it gets," Engel said.

According to the Center for Disease Control, one in five children shows symptoms of a mental disorder. Experts also agree teenagers' stress levels today are significantly higher than in previous generations.

Sophomore Karissa Keehan said she would change the way the administration handles student mental health if she could, since those in a poor state would not benefit solely from more awareness.

"I think I would give students one school day every two weeks where they can have the afternoon free from schoolwork," Keehan said.

Keehan said a number of factors can contribute to someone's increased stress levels.

"It depends on the person, but homework, family or social conflicts and out of school activities can all contribute to stress," Keehan said.

Despite Marshall's lack of acknowledgment for National School Psychology Awareness Week, Engel said the community is sensitive to issues of mental health.

"I feel fortunate I get to see students individually," Engel said. "It is difficult to work hard when you have a mental health issue, so I always wonder how to make people more aware of [psychological wellbeing], but they are sensitive to it [here] at Marshall, which is great."

newsbriefs

SGA honors Veterans Day by planting flags for fallen soldiers

The Student Government Association placed flags in front of the school for Veterans Day, in remembrance of soldiers who lost their lives.

Veterans Day is an annual U.S. holiday which fell on Nov. 12 this year, to honor those that served in the armed forces.

"The flags show we are a community that supports our veterans," senior Corynn Farrand said.

Vietnam War veteran and Marshall grandparent Thomas Norwood said remembrance of those who lost their lives is important.

"I feel young people [should] understand the importance of Veterans Day," Norwood said. "It is not just an excuse to skip school, and as a Vietnam vet myself [I] feel honored to have served my country and brought pride to my family."

by brynn norwood



BRYNN NORWOOD/RANK&FILE

Junior Ruhi Mehta plants flags in the school's front courtyard on Nov. 8 in honor of fallen war soldiers.

Family members' absences make for a melancholy Thanksgiving

by amelia gee

Thanksgiving is an opportunity for people to gather and celebrate, but for those missing family members, the occasion can feel incomplete.

Though the holiday offers a chance to spend time with family and reconnect, unfortunate circumstances that are out of their control can affect the celebration.

Sophomore Emily Halverson said her father's responsibilities as a policeman require him to serve the public that day.

"My dad is a police officer in D.C. [for the Metropolitan Police Department] and he has skipped Thanksgiving before," Halverson said. "Thanksgiving Day is [different] without him because he

is usually there making us laugh. [My family] feels empty when he has to work for long periods on holidays."

Even when both parents are present, memories of absent relatives can have an equally large effect at the dinner table.

Sophomore Deki Gonsar said she would like to see her cousins for the holidays because they live in Canada and do not visit often.

"I miss my cousins because of their [personalities] and because they remind me of how I was [at their age]," Gonsar said. "When I visit them, they make me think about how [my life] would have ended up if my parents had stayed in Toronto and when we do get together, [we enjoy] go-

ing to the park and watching Bollywood movies."

Freshman Nhi Nguyen said she has not seen her family that lives in Vietnam for a long time, so spending upcoming Thanksgivings with them would be special.

"Many of my family members in Vietnam I barely know because I was so young and I hope that in the future they can come to Virginia for Thanksgiving," Nguyen said. "I miss and think about my family in Vietnam sometimes because I only have four family members here in the United States."

Though Nguyen's family resides in Vietnam, she said she would still like to connect with them.

"I would love to spend [Thanksgiving] with my



COURTESY OF DEKI GONSAR

Sophomore Deki Gonsar and her family pose together after a reunion at Sakura Japanese Steak House.

"I was excited and looking forward to spending time with [my family]," Gonsar said. "We hadn't seen each other in five years [at the time]. They came all the way from India."

whole family and share that experience with everyone since I don't know them well enough," Nguyen

said. "Thanksgiving would be a great opportunity for me to get to know them better. I haven't seen

them since I was a baby. So I would love to reconnect during a time to give thanks."



HANNAH LEVITAN/RANK&FILE

A leaking pipe drips water onto a stained ceiling tile located in second floor D hall. The pipe has been faulty for months, and the last time a custodian changed the tile was four weeks ago.

Principal forced to address broken appliances himself to conserve money

by hannah levitan

The slow process to fix items around the school seems to be a common complaint, but students actually reporting maintenance issues is a rarity, and so they resort to just sticking signs on broken lights or toilets.

Principal Jeff Litz said that as a result of the economy crash in 2007, the maintenance department's size has decreased significantly. One of the facility supervisors even said he used to manage 18 people, but he now only manages six.

"The county has significantly less plumbers and technicians than they

used to, and so it takes longer to get stuff fixed," Litz said.

Though this factor does contribute to how extensive the fixing process is, the county can only fix items once they receive a report.

Technically, it is not a part of a custodian's job description to walk around the school looking for things to fix.

According to a poll of 100 students, only four percent said they have reported a maintenance issue to a custodian or administrator.

If a student were to see a broken toilet or sink, operating engineer Jaime Bagtas said it is more

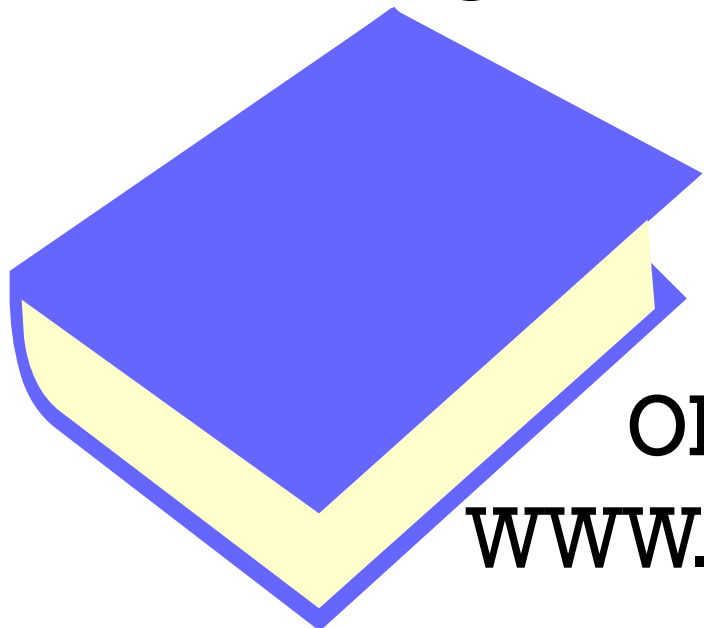
efficient to immediately report the issue to a custodian or administrator for inspection. But the report can take several months to even reach FCPS maintenance.

"In the back of my classroom, there is a light that does not turn on, and there are two signs on it," English teacher Matthew Horne said. "One that says 'this light does not working', and then there's a second one that says 'doesn't not work, it's a bad.' The date on it is '1/17/2014', which is almost as long as I've been in this room, and it hasn't been fixed. It's been identified as a problem, but hasn't been changed."

Hiring a professional to come and fix items around the school is not only a long process, but is also quite costly. Instead of paying someone to fix or hang something up, Litz said he will often repair items or complete tasks around the school himself in order to save money.

"If I want to get a SMART Board hung up in the building, the normal process is, there's a way that I put in a form to get an estimate for someone to come out and do that, and it's usually a couple hundred dollars," Litz said. "Rather than spending money to do that, I'll just hang it myself because it saves money."

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Criminal Justice increases prop security following graphic video

by ben harper

The Criminal Justice department has increased protection of prop weapons after a student stole one from the class and posted an online video with it.

A Criminal Justice student filmed and posted the video on Oct. 16 in a school bathroom. The video shows the student waving the stolen prop gun before aiming it at their head and pretending to shoot it. The video caused a temporary increase in school security, and police officers interviewed both the student and their parents.

According to Fairfax County Public School policy, staff must lock prop weapons away after use. But those enrolled in Criminal Justice classes said teachers placed the weapons inside of a box on a rack next to a locker, which they did not always lock. Students also said their classmates would often play with the prop weapons during class, unbeknownst to their instructors.

“At the beginning of the year there was a rack with basketballs and the fake weapons, and the kids kept picking up those fake guns and knives when the

teacher wasn’t looking,” sophomore Regina Honigford said.

While the guns are only props, sophomore Declan Doyle said he feels staff should keep the fake weapons more protected.

“I think they should make it a lot harder to obtain these prop guns,” Doyle said. “I think it’s kind of stupid that they’re just laying around. I understand their use in the class, but no kid should be able to steal one of those guns and be able to post a video online with the gun. The school resource officer has to treat it like a real gun.”

Principal Jeff Litz said following the video’s posting, the Criminal Justice teachers have locked the prop guns in a school-provided cabinet; they are not to use them until further notice, and FCPS will help all Criminal Justice teachers by teaching proper handling.

“There will be a training [session] done for all Criminal Justice teachers held by FCPS just so everyone is on the same page on how the weapons are supposed to be stored,” Litz said.

Sophomore Danny O’Connor said it has become more difficult to gain access



BEN HARPER/RANK&FILE

to one of the prop weapons in the class. “It used to be pretty easy, because you could just take one,” O’Connor said. “It’s a lot harder now due to the guns being locked away. [The teachers] don’t want another one of those incidents to happen again.”

Criminal Justice teachers Timothy Gill and Michelle Humphries declined to comment.



AMELIA GEE/RANK&FILE

Custodian Myriam Amado clears a tray off of a table between lunch periods. She said she has to throw away a large amount of garbage before the next lunch starts. “I wish kids would clean up after themselves more,” building supervisor Jesse O’Neill said.

Not all heroes wear capes

Custodians receive minimal recognition for maximum effort

by amelia gee

The custodial staff garners little recognition for the task of keeping the school building functioning.

Among this culturally diverse group are cafeteria workers, who receive a level of gratitude that is not proportional to the amount of work they put in.

Custodian Myriam Amado, from Colombia, works throughout all lunch shifts, and has been with the school for the past seven years.

“My favorite part of [the job here] is that I can

talk to the students [while I] clean,” Amado said. “I want to make sure the students are happy, and I see them as my [own] children.”

Amado was a former business administrator before coming to the United States. Currently, in her spare time, Amado said she stays active with hobbies and family.

“Apart from work, I like to paint, read, dance and [spend time] with my 16-year-old son,” Amado said.

Maintenance worker Miguel Morillo, who is from Peru, has been working in this position for 13

years and said he is looking forward to retirement next year. Morillo also said he is proud of his grounds maintenance work, from which he said he derives personal satisfaction.

“I like working outside [even if] the weather is hot or cold,” Morillo said. “In the winter there is more trash because of heavy winds [...] and when there is a lot of snow I come in early.”

Back in Peru, Morillo served in the army after high school and later became an architect.

“I am not scared of anything because of my [military training],”

Morillo said.

When Morillo retires, he said he would like to travel the world and work on improving his English-speaking skills.

Building supervisor Jesse O’Neill grew up in Arlington, Virginia and has worked at the school for nearly three years. O’Neill said his interests outside of work are more dynamic and unconventional.

“I build and race cars, and have been doing it since I was a teenager,” O’Neill said. “I also like to ride my Harley, and sometimes I ride it to work. When I retire, I would like to travel around Europe.”

National Novel Writing Month diverts self-criticism and fosters camaraderie

by jay kosumi

National Novel Writing Month is an annual challenge that authors, whether published or aspiring, commit to every November. Their goal is to use the entire month to write a 50,000 word novel, which may either be a complete piece of work or the first 50,000 words of a novel that they can later continue.

The rules, according to the NaNoWriMo website, allow writers to plan and use extensive notes, so long as they do not incorporate any material they wrote before Nov. 1 into the body of the novel. The rules also state novels can be in any language and on any theme, from fanfiction, which is fiction that uses trademarked characters or settings, to novels in poetry format.

“This is my sixth year [participating in NaNoWriMo],”

senior and Creative Writing Club president Emma Skinner said. “In middle school, my creative writing teacher introduced me to it, and it was the thing that taught me how to pace myself, work under deadlines and not self-edit so much, or even judge things I’m writing.”

First-time participants use the month of October to prepare for the challenge, which the internet writing community calls “Preptober.” During this month, NaNoWriMo.org provides resources under their “NaNo Resource Prep Library,” such as writing prompts, character planning sheets and how-to guides to help prepare writers for their upcoming project.

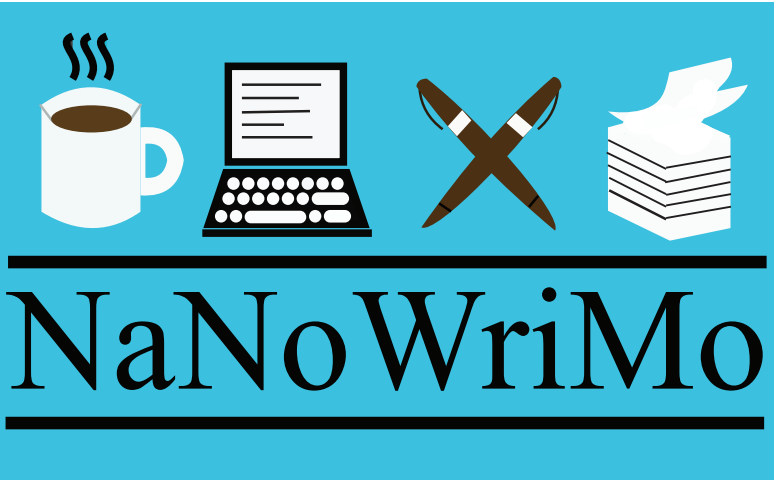
“I have a hard time working up the energy to actually write and not just plan, so I’m using NaNoWriMo as a way to push me into writing,” sophomore and

first-time participant Clara Peyt said. “I’m happy but also a little nervous.”

Skinner said the most important part of NaNoWriMo is helping her create a foundation for her novels she can later build off of.

“The past two or three years I’ve done sequential fantasy novels that were connected to each other,” Skinner said. “So now I can go back and look at this whole anthology of work I’ve created, and it may not be good but it’s out there now, so I have something to work with.”

The goal of the writing challenge is not for writers to finish a full-fledged novel by the end of the month, but rather to commit to writing approximately 1,667 words a day to reach their word count. Skinner said NaNoWriMo is more about getting a novel done than getting it done well.



“You get better every year at not editing yourself and learning to roll with how wild of a month it is,” Skinner said.

Participants can also find designated regions on the NaNoWriMo website based on their location. Each region has two assigned municipal liaisons who lead a series of write-ins at local bookstores, coffee shops or fast food restaurants, with the aim of building a local community of writers that can come together to support each other and socialize.

Senior and Poetry Club president Alex Hedda is participating in NaNoWriMo for his second year. He said he enjoys the challenge because it gives him a reason to work on writing.

“The best thing NaNoWriMo [helps someone with] is just getting them to write,” Hedda said. “I think a lot of writers fall into this trap of infinite planning and thinking of the perfect story, but I think the best [way] to improve your writing is to just write, which is something NaNoWriMo helps you with.”

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George C. Marshall HS
7731 Leesburg Pike,
Falls Church, VA 22043
info@rank-n-file.com
(703) 714-5511

editor-in-chief
gwyneth murphy

managing editor
sophie tedesco

social media manager
opinion editor
hannah levitan

business manager
ben harper

website manager
dmitry butylev

news editor
jay kosumi

features editor
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arts & style editor
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staff writers
nikita athawale
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isabella gulick
sahar jiwani
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adviser
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Public blames Trump for pipe bomb incident

Press' role in portraying Trump in negative light influences violent actions

by hannah levitan

Typically, a strong leader with an active agenda brings out extremists, which is why it is very easy for the public to blame the pipe bombs the MAGA bomber sent to Democratic figures, as well as CNN, on President Donald Trump. The public is looking for a scapegoat, and Trump is a perfect candidate.

Trump's term significantly contrasts with Obama's previous two terms, as Trump's leadership style as a businessman is to continuously push for change, a much different approach from one of a professional politician.

Such a big shift to more aggressive and active leadership leads to more extreme reactions from the public.

Trump's controversial, reckless statements are likely to provoke both positive and negative reactions from the country.

Trump's specific comments about the press happened to produce a potentially tragic event.

Luckily, authorities were able to intercept all pipe bombs before Cesar Sayoc could deliver them to the intended targets.

Trump has a variety of new plans for change, from altering abortion laws to strictly limiting immigration.

It is no surprise his contentious plans lead to an increase in radical supporters. But most mass movements tend to generate large groups of followers and sometimes, extremists.

To the public, it seems as if Trump directly incited the violence, but no matter the movement or leader, there will

always be mentally unstable individuals who misinterpret messages, resulting in one person taking an idea or message too far.

Though Trump talks negatively about his political opponents just like every other political figure, there is no proof that his ultimate goal was to truly physically harm his competitors.

To make a claim that Trump directly caused Sayoc, the mail bombing suspect, to mail 14 explosive packages addressed to multiple Democratic figures, is simply irrational.

Blaming Trump is just another political tactic: guilt by association.

Today's media is taking this event as an opportunity to further bash Trump both as a person and a president.

His difficult relationship with the press causes him to have a negative and distorted public image which can also influence extremists to take action, as news platforms often caricature his views to produce more captivating headlines.

During a rally, Trump said "the media also has a responsibility to set a civil tone and to stop the endless hostility and constant negative and oftentimes false attacks and stories."

So rather than simply blaming Trump for this potential tragedy, it is also important to assess the press' role in politics.

The MAGA bomber reveals a pervasive, harmful Republican idea

by ben harper

President Donald Trump is responsible for the MAGA bomber. While he did not directly tell Caesar Sayoc to send 14 pipe bombs to prominent Democrats and journalists, his overall rhetoric at speeches and rallies shows that these bombings were inevitable.

Since he announced his candidacy for president, Trump has used rallies around the country to incite violence against those who disagree with him.

Trump showed this intensity numerous times throughout the campaign trial when he encouraged aggression against protestors and his political opponents. Trump has continued this violent rhetoric since his election.

A more recent example of his speech encouraging violence was his statements about Greg Gianforte, a Republican congressman from Montana, who made headlines for body slamming reporter Ben Jacobs.

While most people would condemn the assault of a journalist, Trump applauded Gianforte and proclaimed "he's my kind of guy" to the laughter of his supporters.

While Caesar Sayoc and others like him were always going to commit these acts of violence, Trump should still face consequences for these bombings and other crimes like it.

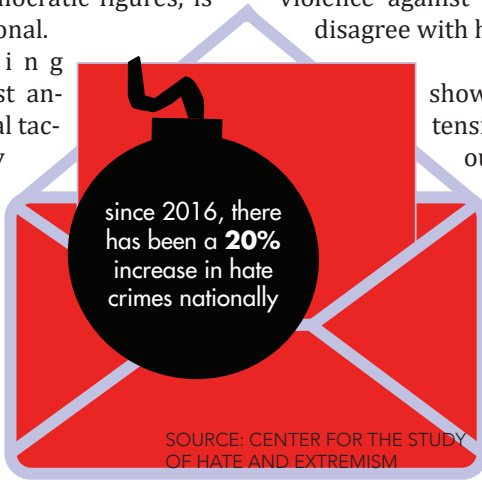
Trump has unleashed what Forbes contributor Todd Essig calls "a trifecta of hate that ferments terrorism." At rallies he calls Democrats and journalists that criticize him "enemies of the people" and endorses hatred and hostility against his opponents.

He and plenty of his supporters have created an "us versus them" mentality. It is no longer a debate on different ideas regarding how to run the government, but a battle of good versus evil, with no middle ground.

Republicans frequently show a lack of bipartisanship in Congress. Republican congresspeople often do whatever they can to make sure Democrats do not get the legislation they want passed, no matter how much their constituents support it.

This "good versus evil" mentality the Republicans seem to possess is harmful and will influence extremists, like Caesar Sayoc, to commit crimes like the acts of terrorism shown weeks ago.

While Caesar Sayoc does not represent the large majority of Trump supporters, and there are extremists on both sides of the political spectrum, this black and white philosophy is damaging and hurts forward progress in our political system.



Three hour early releases lead to inefficiency

FCPS creates new dates for early releases and changes length to three hours; policy leaves students and faculty without necessary work time at the end of the quarter

by ema baca

The Fairfax County Public School system introduced new three hour early releases with the intent to give teachers more time to plan and complete work.

Though FCPS has good intentions, the new early release timeline does not benefit teachers or students because there is no opportunity to learn any new material or be productive.

With new schedule changes, there are fewer early releases this year in comparison to last year.

Additionally, contrary to previous years, students no longer receive an early release on the last day of each quarter, which is very inconvenient.

I found this change

disappointing because the last week of the quarter is extremely stressful.

Before this year, I have always looked forward to getting out of school early after a week filled with assignments and tests.

Although FCPS added new early releases in order to give teachers more time to grade, it is not helpful if they do not schedule them for the end of a quarter.

As students receive more school work, teachers require additional time to grade.

But with new early release policies, teachers do not receive nearly enough time at the end of the quarter to finish grading assignments.

During a three hour early release day, FCPS limits each class to only 30 minutes.

With less time for learning, I do not find myself completing a lot of assignments, and most of my teachers do not introduce any new material.

During early release days, teachers often do not have any lesson plans and allow the class to go on their phones or do homework for other subjects.

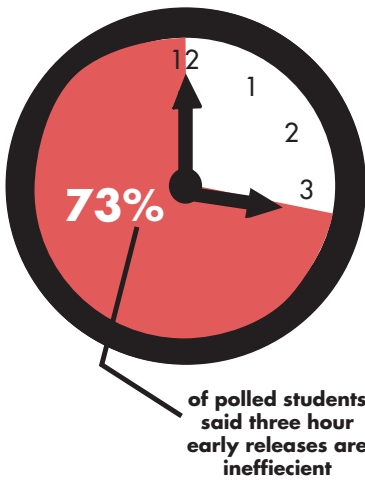
I think it is completely pointless to come to school if you are not going to learn anything new.

Furthermore, during a three hour early release day there is no Learn for students to receive additional help from teachers or complete their unfinished assignments.

In my opinion, Learn is crucial to student success, especially towards the end of the quarter when school work piles up.

Students would benefit more from staying at home and getting the whole day off instead of coming to school for only four hours.

FCPS should either switch back to two hour early releases, or replace them with fewer days off.



Low vaccination rates risk return of deadly diseases

jay kosumi

According to the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, more than three million people die from vaccine-preventable diseases each year. The World Health Organization reports that an improvement in the global vaccination coverage, which has remained at 85 percent for the past few years, would help avoid an additional 1.5 million deaths. Years of research can testify vaccines are effective and safe, the circulation of misunderstandings has led more and more parents to refrain from vaccinating their kids. Common concerns are vaccines may give kids autism, overload their


immune systems or that kids will benefit more from natural immunity to contagious diseases. These same people also believe immunization is not necessary because infection rates in the United States are already low. Doctors recommend children receive vaccines at a young age after immunity from their mother subsides. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, a healthy baby's immune system accommodates multiple vaccines, and can respond to approximately 100,000 organisms at once. Therefore, parents should not worry about overloading their child's immune system, as they run a greater

risk by delaying vaccination. The longer they wait to vaccinate their children, the longer the child risks exposure to a serious and potentially life-threatening disease. Some parents mistakenly link autism to vaccines, since doctors often diagnose the mental condition at the age children receive most of their vaccinations. But according to a 2001 article by The Journal of American Medical Association, autism appears to be rising even among unvaccinated children. A vaccine is just a tool that helps enhance the body's natural immunity to infectious diseases. The decline in immunization rate is responsible for the recent reappearances of


vaccine-preventable diseases, like the whooping cough or measles. The Public Health Organization recorded 9,120 cases of whooping cough in California in 2010, more than any year since the introduction of the vaccine in the 1940s. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention reported a total of 125 measles cases occurred from December of 2014 to February of 2015. Vaccines save approximately 2.5 million lives each year, and the introduction of a vaccine in 1980 eradicated smallpox worldwide. It is unreasonable to reject the progress scientists have made in terms of saving people from fatal

infections. Whatever concerns parents have regarding vaccination do not carry any weight to the risk of their child dying. Children who are too young to receive certain vaccines can die prematurely if they come into contact with transmittable diseases. Vaccination is neither a political issue, nor one that should be in any way controversial. Vaccine-preventable infections are dangerous, and at times, life-threatening. As individuals, we all have a responsibility to the communities we live in to protect both ourselves and each other by preventing the spread of such diseases through vaccination.


benefits of vaccination



vaccines save approximately 2.5 million lives a year



more than three million people die from vaccine-preventable diseases each year



there were 9,120 cases of whooping cough in 2010, a disease preventable with vaccination

SOURCES: CDC, PUBLIC HEALTH

Distraction of strange school smells limits productivity

by wade devinney

In theory, odor makes up 20 percent of one's senses, which is why it would seem to be a priority to ensure a school has one pleasant odor throughout the entire building. But the smell factor seems to have taken a backseat in maintaining the school and, as a result, I can detect multiple odd smells. One problem contributing to foul odors is the frequency with which custodians take the trash out.

Ideally, custodians empty each trash can some time at the end of the day, but this is not the case. Two to three times a week, new trash bags replace full, used bags. Presumably, the time it takes for a trash can to become full dictates the frequency that someone empties it. While this may be convenient and cost effective, it has a negative effect on the overall smell of the building. Another contributing factor to unpleasant odors is ventilation cleanliness. Fully cleaning a ventilation system is a costly and difficult process that finances cannot reasonably allow for more than once a year.

Expensive or not, dirty vents carry scents of old dust and bacteria. While none of these smells are inherently dangerous, they are unwanted and contribute a negative sensory element to the entire building. The least controllable aspect of smells in the building are the people in it. By far, the most prevalent source of odor in general are the odors students carry with them. Clothing, hair and personal belongings all have unique scents. The combination of all three in one room can create one very unpleasant fragrance. While most ideal solutions for undesirable smells in school are not feasible due to cost and

time constraints, it is still possible to take preventative measures against creating bad odors. For instance, by limiting the amount of trash one generates during the day, they reduce the scent garbage cans give off by keeping them relatively empty. One should also be sure to shower frequently and do what they can to wear clean clothes daily, so as not to produce any unwanted smells. If even half of the school population did these simple things every day, the building would have an exponentially better aroma, and school would be a much more pleasant place to be.

Sip on this: should restaurants ban plastic straws?

by isabella gulick

Straws are currently under fire for being a main contributor to ocean pollution. But, straws only make up four percent of the ocean's pollution, based on space, not weight. This misconception has lead to an entire movement that has caused disabled people, who rely on straws to suffer the most. Milo Cress, a nine-year-old who created the straw movement, discovered that most people remove their straws from their cups and waste them. Cress suggested servers should offer straws, rather than automatically putting them in cups. The "offer first" policy not only saves money, but also increases environmental awareness without completely diminishing straws. But straws are vital necessities for people with disabilities,

a factor the public tends to overlook as they choose to support the movement. Those living with disabilities have trouble functioning without straws, an item they use everyday. They should not lose straws for the sake of a movement with no real impact. Instead, we should focus on bigger ocean pollutants, such as cigarettes, which are the largest source of ocean pollution. Not only are cigarettes a major source of pollution, but they are also a detriment to the user's health. The straw ban movement provides a false sense of helping the environment, when in reality, the straw movement has not even made a dent in decreasing ocean pollution.

by ema baca

Most restaurants and coffee shops serve a beverage with a straw. Since people use straws on a daily basis, more businesses like Starbucks are trying to ban or reduce straw use due to the increase in pollution. In July, Starbucks announced they will eliminate single-use plastic straws from all of their stores by 2020. Strawless lids or alternative-material straw options will replace straws. Most people use straws carelessly without acknowledging the true impact they have on the environment. Plastic straws are among the top ten items found during beach cleanups. This issue might not seem serious because disposable

straws only make up about four percent of worldwide plastic trash, but eliminating any plastic waste is extraordinarily beneficial. One of the easiest ways people can get involved with reducing pollution is to limit the amount of plastic straws they use. Banning disposable straws will help spark discussions about reducing other plastic waste. Once people realize how easy it is to stop using straws, they are more likely to begin eliminating other forms of plastic. For people with disabilities that rely on straws, there are other alternatives such as compostable paper straws and reusable stainless steel straws. People should eliminate the use of straws from their daily life in order to help preserve the environment.

tweets

Please make sure you vote beginning tomorrow!! Coach General deserves our thanks! A great coach and even better human being! #marshallpride #VoteCoachG

Jeffrey Liz principal @GCMPrincipal

@GCMPrincipal Last hours! Rock the vote @MarshallMob @MStatesmen Easy online one click to help FCPS coach-- only FCPS finalist! Help #DarrellGeneral be THANKED & HONORED! flotrack.org/articles/62610... Please retweet & DO! So proud! SO PROUD of our community effort!

Marshall Athletics @VoteCoach

ATTN ALL RUNNERS!! VOTE GCM'S COACH G AS THE 2018 HOMETOWN HERO!!! SPREAD THE WORD!!! VOTE AS MANY TIMES AS POSSIBLE!!! THERE IS NO LIMIT!!! WE LOVE COACH G!!! VIDEO AND VOTING LINK: TINYURL.COM/COACHGVOTE THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING COACH G!! #VOTECOACHG

Sarah Tadlock senior @sarah__tadlock

letters


IB leads to personal growth in academics

Doing the IB diploma is a very challenging and encouraging experience that teaches me how to balance my academics and extra-curriculars effectively. I am glad that I chose to go this route for my diploma because I am extremely academically challenged in my courses but also stimulated creatively through my potential CAS project. Junior year has been difficult due to the academic challenges, but I have enjoyed being able to learn in an internationally acclaimed program alongside many of my friends who also chose the same path. While the diploma is not to everyone's taste, I believe that high school is the time to challenge my academic capabilities but also be able to develop myself in terms of doing more community and leadership service.

Shams Al Jassar junior

Send your signed letters (50 to 125 words) to room D211. Letters can also be submitted to letters@gcmnews.net, but will only be considered upon in-person verification. Letters will be published at the editors' discretion. Published letters do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the paper.

No Means No

 by will shin, gwyneth murphy,
sophie tedesco & nikita athawale

Rank&File writers investigate sexual misconduct at the national and local level, in response to FCPS' new resolution

Recent allegations garner national attention

Sexual harassment and assault have been at the forefront of political consciousness on both the local and national level, sparking mass campaigns like the Me Too and Time's Up movements, which became increasingly relevant in 2016 following the presidential election and the numerous misconduct allegations against people in power.

According to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC), sexual assault is the least reported crime in the United States, with approximately 63 percent of incidents remaining undisclosed to authorities. The Me Too movement emerged in recent years as an attempt to encourage victims of sexual assault to speak out, which sophomore Emma Greene said is a much-needed acknowledgment of their suffering.

"The Me Too movement is important because it allows survivors to be able to share their stories and know that they are not alone," Greene said. "For too long victims have been told to keep silent, but [this] movement acknowledge[s] [their] struggles and provide[s] healing and support for them."

The NSVRC states one in three women and one in six men experiences sexual abuse nationally, and the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN) reports approximately 0.6 percent of perpetrators will receive a sentence. Senior Audrey Fauvel said the current political climate is a chance for the public to shed light on major systemic problems.

"Not only do these movements provide support to those victims, but [they] also expose the issues we have in our society and justice and political system[s] for punishing those guilty of sexual misconduct," Fauvel said.

Protests regarding violence against women and women's rights, as well as other social issues, have also garnered

more attention in the United States and across the globe. The 2017 Women's March had approximately half a million participants in Washington D.C. alone, with similar marches occurring around the country and the world.

"Both [the Me Too and Time's Up] movements encourage people to speak up and to focus on women's issues around the world," Greene said.

During the conformation hearings for newly appointed Associate Justice Brett Kavanaugh, the Federal Bureau of Investigation investigated him for sexual assault regarding accusations from Dr. Christine Blasey Ford, as well as several other women that followed soon after. Sophomore Michaela Wacht said awareness about the severity of sexual assault

from the allegations against him, plenty of legislators continued to support him. The Senate vote for his confirmation was 50 to 48 in favor of Kavanaugh, allowing him to replace former Justice Anthony Kennedy.

"Even with several sexual assault allegations, Republican judge Brett Kavanaugh was still appointed," Greene said. "This act basically told victims of sexual assault around the world their voices and their stories don't matter."

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawed all forms of sexual discrimination, including sexual harassment. But states reserve the right to handle sexual assault cases individually, resulting in the application of different legislature all across America.

"There should be cohesive laws nationally [which] can be considered a base that states build off of," Wacht said. "Victims really just need to be heard [...] and officials should take their accusations seriously [by] investigat[ing] the allegations and the person accused thoroughly."

According to RAINN, police receive reports of one out of every three sexual harassment incidents, with an estimated 20 percent of victims stating they did not report their experience because they feared retaliation from others. According to Our Resilience, a non-profit organization created to aid sexual assault victims, false reporting of sexual abuse is between two and eight percent as of this past September.

"It can be scary and very difficult to speak up about what one has faced in fear of the responses they will receive [...] because there is an issue in our country on how we deal with these topics," Fauvel said. "But if enough people come out and talk about their story, maybe the mindset of victim blaming that we have in our society will change for the better."



Senior Erin McDonald poses with a homemade sign in Washington D.C., in protest of the mistreatment of women.

resurfaced among the American public during his confirmation, due in part to the efforts of these national movements.

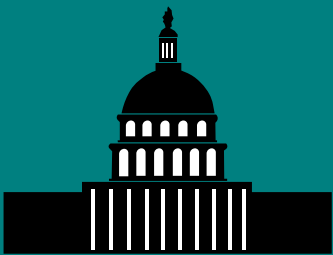
"A long time ago, people in power would have discarded Ford's allegations on the basis that she is a woman, and Kavanaugh is a respectable judge," Wacht said. "Just having the hearing showed how the Me Too and Time's Up movements impacted [the country's progress]."

Although Kavanaugh faced backlash

resources



if you are ever in need of immediate support, call the National Sexual Assault Hotline at 1-800-656-4673



reach out to your local representatives to ensure they are aware of your stance on the issue of sexual misconduct



counselors said nearby medical facilities offer services to aid in the physical and psychological healing process



counselors recommend talking with a counselor, teacher or other trusted adult if you have any concerns about yourself or others

definitions

sexual misconduct

a range of behavior used to obtain sexual gratification against another's will or at the expense of another [and it] includes sexual harassment, sexual assault and any conduct of a sexual nature that is without consent, or has the effect of threatening or intimidating the person against whom such conduct is directed

sexual harassment

when a person is subject to unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature to such an extent that it alters the conditions of the person's [...] environment

catcalling

a form of verbal sexual harassment in which the perpetrator whistles at or makes a suggestive comment of sexual nature to the victim

SOURCE: USLEGAL.COM

Female runners face pervasive catcalling

I started being catcalled when I was in my early teens. Maybe 15 to 16 years old. I was able to ignore it pretty well until this year, when it started happening almost every time I went on a run. During the summer, the cross country team runs long runs on the [Washington and Old Dominion] trail and we are also asked to run by ourselves. Usually I try to run with someone, but it doesn't always work out that way. I usually start my run and am running at a decent pace. I start getting tired, sweaty, and nobody looks pretty while running, but suddenly I hear things like "hello beautiful" or I hear someone whistle from a passing car. There was one time where I was running in front of Marshall High School and a man literally was hanging out of the car window and he yelled something to me and gave me a super creepy look. This happens all the time, from creepy hellos to more personal comments, and it angers me to no end. What do these men think they are going to achieve? I have told others about this and they say "maybe they're just shooting their shot." Really? They're shooting their shot to see if a sweaty teen will react to them? Some would argue that the comments relating to my appearance are compliments, but they are obviously not because I look terrible while running. No one looks attractive while running and it is just not the appropriate setting to talk to someone like that. It is never the appropriate setting to talk like that. It is gross and scary. After men say things like that to me, I feel almost guilty for having gone on runs by myself. I sometimes even had to ask my mom or sister to bike alongside me so that I could get my runs in. I get a terrible feeling inside me and I know my running performance becomes worse after I hear those things. It is not fair for them to mess up my life. Catcalling will never get anyone anywhere. It is completely unnecessary and disturbing.

—Nina Orozco, senior

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October 2016

a tape of Trump using vulgar words to describe his experiences with women surfaces, which he later explains as being “locker room” talk

October 5, 2017

the New York Times publishes an article detailing the experiences of women like Ashley Judd and Rose McGowan, prompting Harvey Weinstein’s firing and others to speak out

December 18, 2017

Time announces the Person of the Year is “Silence Breakers,” or those who stood up against sexual harassment, with a spread featuring women ranging from actresses and musicians to software engineers and strawberry pickers

September 27, 2017

the FCPS Board adopts a resolution to address sexual misconduct issues within the county

September 18, 2015

football player for Lake Braddock High School files a formal complaint against the girls varsity basketball coach for sexual harassment, who resigns three months later

January 21, 2017

the Women’s March becomes the largest single-day protest in U.S. history

November 2, 2017

the U.S. Department of Education opens investigation of FCPS over a parent’s complaint that the county enabled the basketball coach to harass girls on the team

May 2018

an Oakton High School graduate files a lawsuit against FCPS for allegedly mishandling and unreasonably dismissing her report of sexual assault

October 6, 2018

Brett Kavanaugh is sworn in to the Supreme Court, just after the FBI investigation over his sexual harassment allegations ended

Introduction

Wake of increased public concern over sexual assault at a local level, as well as a series of lawsuits against Fairfax County Public Schools itself for mishandling complaints, the School Board passed a new resolution on sexual misconduct. The proposal outlined the responsibility of schools to confront sexual harassment head-on and educate students on “the generation of leaders” to understand the impact sexual harassment can have. The resolution also addressed the health and Family Life (FLE) curriculum, the implementation of investigations, enforcement of appropriate disciplinary actions, and regular administering of surveys and properly trained staff.

Board member and author of the resolution Ryan Peters said the county’s sexual misconduct issues have become more apparent after examining the 2017 to 2018 Fairfax Youth Survey. “After reviewing these findings along with several school investigations of sexual misconduct, the School Board has adopted a resolution I drafted with the goal of changing the institutional culture in Fairfax,” McElveen said.

Peters just portraying the administrative and county school resource officer said the policy also gives more agency, allowing them to address potential misconduct is faster.

“The new policy [the new policy] gives the system more authority to address inappropriate behaviors that used to be inappropriate,” Allen said. “If you have a coach that does something bizarre [the school says] ‘whoa this is out of the line’ they can immediately act on it.”

In the past, FCPS has come under criticism for its handling of inappropriate behavior, particularly sexual harassment. But McElveen said recent sexual misconduct complaints at schools ultimately incited the re-examination of county policies.

School system leadership has entered issues at various levels where individual students and teachers have been involved in incidents of sexual misconduct, whether in the classroom, on the field or on field trips,” Peters said. “While the issues are systemic, there were enough incidents coming to light in the past year or so that the board knew that it needed to take action, both in word and practice to change the institutional cul-

McElveen said the reaction from FCPS residents has been favorable, speaking to both the policy’s success and to the community’s connection to the topic.

Moving forward, McElveen said he recognizes that the public critiquing FCPS’ handling of these issues is inevitable, but the board will continue refining the resolution.

“As always, there are people in the community who say the school system still isn’t doing enough,” McElveen said. “We fully recognize that our policies and procedures will never be perfect, and we continue to take feedback and work toward continuous improvement on this and all other issues.”

Consequences

The punishment for sexual harassment and assault ranges from the Regional Assistant Superintendent reviewing records to a possible suspension for up to 10 days, as well as a required referral to the Division Superintendent.

The Student Rights and Responsibilities document (SR&R) outlines progressive levels of consequences labeled from A to C, A being the least serious and C being the most. The SR&R lists sexual harassment as a B-level offense, while it lists sexual assault as C-level. Other B-level offenses include arson and gang-related activity, and other C-level offenses include use of weapons and explosive devices.

Allen said the nature of an investigation changes depending on what one reports about a particular incident regarding sexual misconduct, as well as how one gives that report.

“If [a report] went to the counselor first, they would probably go to the assistant principal, and then the assistant principal would let me know,” Allen said. “We would be conducting simultaneous investigations, because they don’t want the police interviews to be skewed with the school interviews. It takes two separate courses of action if it’s anything criminal.”

If an incident did not occur on school property and a student reported it in the community, Allen said he would still be involved in the case eventually.

“I would most likely be involved [if it didn’t occur on school property],” Allen said. “The report would be taken by a patrol officer in the community, and then they forward the report to me. Then I am assigned it to follow up with students and figure out what happened, [because] it is much easier for me to interview students versus the guy [patrol officer], who does not have access to the kids like [I do].”

Policy Implementation

The resolution discusses what schools will do moving forward to combat sexual misconduct.

“In the most formative years of students’ lives, we teach the value of respecting others and the difference between right and wrong,” McElveen said. “As described in the resolution, the School Board is committed to doing everything possible—through surveying, training, and enforcing procedures—to prevent incidents of sexual misconduct from occurring.”

Principal Jeff Litz addressed what sort of standard he and the county would be holding staff members to during a faculty meeting after the adoption of the policy.

“I explained to teachers what FCPS’ and my expectations were around [the resolution], what to do if they felt a colleague or a coworker was violating that regulation and to be vigilant with regard to monitoring the students’ behavior as well,” Litz said. “[I also said] if they hear anything that is, or could be construed as sexual, to report it to either a school counselor or an administrator to deal with.”

according to the Fairfax County Youth Survey, 14.2 percent of FCPS students reported experiencing sexual harassment in the last year

In addition to relaying the county’s expectations, Litz said he also feels strongly about the subject on a personal level.

“I have zero tolerance for that type of behavior [sexual misconduct], and students who are sexually harassed, or harassed in any manner,” Litz said.

But Allen said he has not heard of any sort of sexual misconduct during his time at Marshall.

“I’ve yet to see any physical sexual assault or anything like that [at Marshall] that’s been brought to my attention,” Allen said.

Staff Misconduct

If there were to be a complaint involving a faculty member, it would go to the assistant principal who supervises that teacher, the school resource officer, or both.

“The teacher would be given their due process, just like any student who gets in trouble,” Litz said. “[The incident] would be thoroughly

investigated. If I find that the student made a false claim, we deal with that. If it turns out the adult really did something then that becomes a human resource issue, which is mostly dealt with outside of the building.”

If an accusation regarding a staff member claims an incident occurred on school grounds, Allen would then be involved in the ensuing investigation. But the procedure is different if the incident occurred off school grounds.

“If it is an adult on a child or student [off school property] that sort of gets swiped out of my hands and goes immediately to a detective,” Allen said. “FCPS does not like to make the *Washington Post*, so CPS [Child Protective Services] would most likely get involved if it was an adult [with] someone under the age of 18.”

In the case of a misunderstanding, Litz said he tries to clear the air by facilitating a discussion between the two parties.

“Sometimes it is just a matter of miscommunication; an adult didn’t mean any harm and said something they didn’t mean to say, or said something out of ignorance, in which

case we put those two folks together and facilitate a conversation,” Litz said. “We are all human beings, and I find that a lot of times people say hurtful things not because they mean to, but out of a lack of education or ignorance.”

Litz said he expects students to behave the same way as adults in regards to their treatment of others, but he also said he believes staff members should be more knowledgeable and thoughtful about their actions than a student might be.

“Should an adult act in a manner that is inappropriate, I am going to have even less tolerance for that than I would for a student, because I am not necessarily going to give that adult the education piece as much as I would the student,” Litz said.

Emotional and Academic Toll

School counselor James Rixse said the effects of sexual misconduct reverberates through all areas of the victim’s life and may affect their general well-being, relationships and school performance.

“A victim of sexual assault is a trauma victim,” Rixse said. “Any sort of trauma can have lasting effects.”

School counselor Josh Peters said any experience with sexual assault or harassment impacts a student’s familial relationships, friendships and social interactions.

“Trust issues become real prevalent,” Peters said. “Being violated like that, regardless of the severity or

degree of it, is going to make it very hard to want to engage in a relationship, let alone be imitate in any way with someone.”

Peters also said sexual assault or harassment can drastically effect a victim’s mentality.

“It makes them withdraw from their lives,” Peters said. “It’s [...] just profound, the domino effect when something like this happens.”

Victims can become less engaged in their normal activities, such as school, and their performance can suffer.

“If something is off or wrong, [...] the odds are it’s going to impact the school as well,” Peters said. “If they’re becoming withdrawn from friends and family, they’re also becoming withdrawn and less engaged in class. When the learning stops or is impacted, then your level of performance [is] impacted.”

Peters said the common victim mindset of shame and self blame is incredibly damaging to their psyche.

“Blaming themselves just eats away at them and it can just degrade their self confidence,” Peters said. “I think victims of sexual assault [feel] deprived of control. They [experience] feelings of hopelessness and helplessness and I think people become desperate to find something they can control. So they think [about their] own actions, and then people start to blame themselves. It’s unfortunate because these are victims. They’ve done nothing wrong. But they blame themselves and it just adds to that emotional toll and psychological toll that sexual assault can have on victims.”

Educating Harassers

Though Litz said his immediate job is to shut inappropriate behavior down, he said there is a second component to handling a harasser, and that is education.

“There’s obviously a consequence involved, but I think we also have a responsibility to educate the harasser as well, to help ensure that [it] doesn’t happen again,” Litz said. “Although I think kids who sexually harass other kids know that it is wrong to do, I think sometimes they don’t realize their behavior or what they are saying constitutes sexual harassment.”

Litz said, in certain cases, students who are harassers have no sense of the impact their behaviors may have on others.

“They don’t often think about [...] the person they’re harassing and the effect it can have on them, not only just short term but long term,” Litz said.

Anyone receiving or observing others receive unwelcome sexual advances should report it to a trusted adult within their school or to the Title IX coordinator.

steps to practice mindfulness

Mindfulness is a therapeutic technique in which someone tries to focus entirely on awareness of the present moment, with the intent to kindly recognize and accept their thoughts and emotions. According to the Garrison Institute, here are five steps to practice mindfulness:



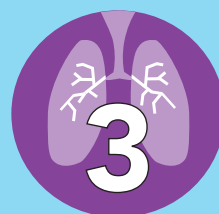
1 find a quiet place

Think of a spot where you can be alone and feel comfortable. Make sure it is somewhere you can go every day.



2 time yourself

Try practicing mindfulness for just 5 to 10 minutes, and work your way up to 15 to 45 minutes.



3 breathe deep

Breathe in for four seconds, hold for seven seconds and release for eight seconds, in order to feel grounded.



4 show self love

Be patient with yourself. If your mind drifts, refocus it as best you can, rather than becoming frustrated.



5 close your eyes

When the time is up, keep your eyes closed long enough to think about how you feel and what you are thankful for.

GWYNETH MURPHY/RANK&FILE

Calm: mental health mobile app review

by gwyneth murphy

A team of application developers have attempted to tackle public mental health issues using an innovative, holistic app called *Calm*.

Calm focuses on a variety of techniques and tools meant to aid a user in the process of improving their sleep, stress level and overall mood.

I was initially skeptical, as the full subscription is 60 dollars per year. Some of the worst apps I have downloaded were on the pricier side, despite the expectation that higher cost means higher quality. But every free, mental health-focused app I have tried of late, like *eMoods* and *Calm Harm*, left me disappointed and desiring more versatility. I decided it was time to give a more all-inclusive app a try, so I downloaded the full subscription of *Calm*.

When I first clicked on the app, the phrase “take a deep breath” appeared across the phone screen, before transitioning to a homepage that reminded me of an iPhone background. I was able to select a moving image to be the backdrop of the app, so each time I open it the visual that is most calming to me pops up. I chose a fireplace, and seeing my screen shift to warm tones and hearing the crackling sounds synched with the video had a significant impact on my stress level pretty instantly.

The primary buttons on the main page are “sleep,” “meditate” and “music,” with an additional features section containing “calm masterclasses,” “calm body,” “breathe” and “scenes.”

My initial attraction to the app was the “sleep” section, as it focuses on improving length and quality of sleep through the use of 15 to 70 minute audio clips tailored to assist the mind in a peaceful rapid eye movement (REM) cycle. The user chooses an audiobook based on what they believe will best suit their needs, with genres like fairytales, fables, Shakespearean plays and even

children’s stories.

The app creators’ professionalism in designing the novels’ graphics and hiring the voice actors impressed me, and I have seen a noticeable difference in my ability to both fall asleep and enjoy my sleep since I started using this feature. Although people tend to think storytelling at bedtime is childish, I think that quality is why it is such an effective tool for comfort and sound sleep, and people should not shy away from its utility.

Much like the “sleep” button, the “meditate” button has distinct categories the user can choose from, including anxiety, beginners, stress, self-care, inner peace, focus, sleep, emotions, less guidance, relationships, personal growth and kids. But unlike “sleep,” the tools are more long term, with almost all of the meditation programs lasting at least a week, if not a month.

The sheer number of options to pick from makes this section of the app impressive, but it was actually the range and individualization of those options that wowed me.

Although they featured traditional meditation sessions like “7 Days of Managing Stress” and “Breaking Habits,” they also had more playful, surprising sessions like the “World Cup Penalty Series,” which the app describes as being a tool “to help World Cup fans ease the anxiety of watching penalty shoot-outs.” By tailoring to audiences which may otherwise find meditation uninviting, the app is setting itself apart from more elitist meditation programs.

The final button on the main page is music, which contains both short, five minute nature melodies and longer, 60 minute soundscapes. Though this section had a lot less to offer in terms of varied content, the enormity of the “sleep” and “meditate” tools made up for it.

The last component of the app is what, in my opinion, constitutes its hefty price tag.

Exclusive only to full subscribers,

there is an additional toolbar of features users can explore, two of which are “calm body,” which is a collection of yoga video courses, and “breathe,” which is a small round circle that grows and shrinks to the proper beats of deep breathing. But what really sells me on the app is the final feature, hidden away in the “more” tab.

“Calm masterclasses” are, as the app describes, “exclusive classes from world-renowned mindfulness experts.” Mindfulness is a therapeutic technique that has gained significant popularity in the last two years. In essence, it is about focusing on the present moment, and it is especially common in dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) to help struggling patients with emotion regulation, distress tolerance and addiction.

The masterclasses are much like Netflix shows, as each one contains a trailer and episodes with short, summarized descriptions. Certified doctors and mental health experts teach their subject-specific course, which I found allows them to be incredibly specific, thus being most-effective for treatment of mental health issues besides just depression or anxiety. The episode I found most useful, “Breaking Bad Habits,” actually has Dr. Judson Brewer, co-founder of *Calm*, as the teacher.

I have scoured the app store looking for programs that are cost-efficient and effective at addressing a wide variety of mental health issues without losing out on the specificity and expertise.

I think *Calm* manages to prioritize both, and even though the full subscription is expensive, there is a free version available for those who are unable to afford it.

But I would also argue the sheer magnitude of content the app provides warrants the 60 dollars a year, and even if someone is not struggling with serious mental health issues, I urge them to try it out and see what mindfulness and therapeutic tools have to offer.

Classics prevail in comparison to current music

by nikita athawale

Today’s music, specifically rap and hip hop, is overplayed, repetitive and uncultured due to the lack of creativity and musical ability of current artists.

Classic rock and pop musicians deserve more recognition than they receive.

The recent cinematic release of *Bohemian Rhapsody* is an example of the entertainment industry trying to showcase relatively older musicians by making movies about their experiences. The film is a biopic of the band Queen, specifically their lead singer Freddie Mercury.

Other classic bands have films depicting them, such as *The Wall* featuring Pink Floyd, *The Beatles: Eight Days a Week* about the Beatles and the upcoming movie *Rocketman*, which depicts the life of Elton John.

But I doubt the artists of today’s world will ever earn the distinct reputation these musicians achieved.

As of Nov. 3, the Billboard Hot 100 song list is filled with hip hop and rap artists such as Travis Scott, Post Malone, 6ix9ine and Cardi B, with the occasional song by Taylor Swift or Ariana Grande.

Although people consider such artists

to be unique to some extent, their talent always falls short, especially rappers. Simply mumbling incoherent sentences about drugs, alcohol, cars or money, and paying someone else to apply heavy amounts of auto tune to create some sort of “music” is the embodiment of pure laziness.

In addition, today’s rap artists have numerous other rappers featured on their songs, proving they not only come up with underwhelming music, but also that they need a minimum of three other famous, but equally ungifted, celebrities to boost their popularity and profit as much as possible.

Kanye West is a perfect example of a mainstream rapper who is famous for virtually no reason. The most recognizable aspects of his career are that he married Kim Kardashian and that he tweets nonsense on a regular basis. Yet his “songs” top the charts for weeks on end, especially when he collaborates with other artists, validating the fact that rappers in the spotlight who include other artists on their songs gain the most recognition regardless of quality.

SoundCloud rappers, such as Lil Pump, do not deserve the attention they attract. In essence, they all won the

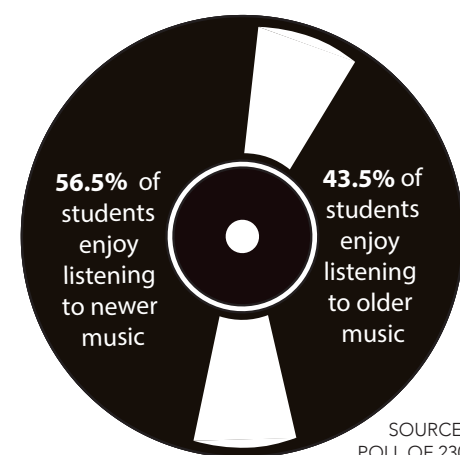
lottery; they did the bare minimum to create something that could potentially resemble music and selected a full track at random to record and somehow make millions. Their success is not talent; it is luck.

This method of doing virtually nothing and just being famous extends further than rap.

Take the number one song on the charts: “Girls Like You” by Maroon 5, featuring Cardi B, which spent 22 weeks on the charts and six weeks at number one. For a song that needed seven people to write, it shows minimal effort with its lyrics. Of the 387 words, 17 percent were simply “yeah.”

People consider Maroon 5 a pop-rock band, placing them in the same category as music legends like Fleetwood Mac and Led Zeppelin. But a major distinction between these bands and Maroon 5 is Fleetwood Mac and Led Zeppelin both had meaningful songs with lyrics that had value. They did not repeat the same dull word for almost a fifth of their songs.

Another difference is the disconnect between the members of these bands. The musicians of most classic rock and pop bands were recognizable from the lead



SOURCE:
POLL OF 230
MARSHALL STUDENTS

singer to the guitarist. Maroon 5 is practically Adam Levine and four unknown people who somehow work together to create songs that sound identical to each other. They feature Adam Levine’s high pitched vocals and the music videos star only him.

According to a New York Times article, the reason a vast majority of today’s songs have the same, tedious sound is because they all have essentially identical “sonic fingerprints.” Unlike relatively older music, present-day songs have interchangeable fingerprints.

Modern musicians make replicas of songs that have already topped the charts, making them less authentic than classic artists.

Choir department aims to establish a more friendly class environment

by sahar jiwani

In a departure from the previous hierarchical and competitive choir system, the Charmer All Girls Choir became an Intermediate Mixed Choir, with the hopes of creating a more positive environment in the department.

Choir director Kelli Pierson is in her third year as the full-time choir teacher. Walking into someone else's program, she said she was still trying to figure out how to put her own personal spin on things.

"Now that it is my third year, I have finally felt the freedom to change some things and make [the department] a different culture," Pierson said.

Senior Emma Flye has been participating in choir for all four years of high school.

"I have definitely noticed a difference [in the class], but that

is what I expect to come when a new teacher joins the department," Flye said.

One of the things Pierson changed is the language she uses when talking about certain subjects, like the different choirs or end-of-year auditions.

"I do not call them auditions anymore," Pierson said. "I try to call them placements because it's really about placing them in the choir they are going to be the most successful in."

Pierson said once the students caught on to this, they realized the class had a more positive environment as a result of the change. They could see each other as equals and not as their competition.

"It is more about [how] we are all a part of this music-making family together," Pierson said.

Flye said during the first few years there was not much

interaction between higher and lower choirs, so she felt scared of the prominent split between the levels of singers.

"I felt like I was so far away in status and skill from the seniors that were in Statesmen [Singers], the highest choir that the school has to offer," Flye said.

But now that she is in her senior year and there is more unity between the choirs, she said she feels more connected to the younger students.

"The choir department is much more accepting of younger, less experienced musicians," Flye said. "I believe that [...] the environment is much more open to people who want to join."

Flye said she was not happy with all of these changes because choir lost some traditions they used to love, but she soon realized change was for the best.

"Though we lost some of the



SAHAR JIWANI/RANK&FILE

The Statesmen Singers warm up at the beginning of class.

"Nothing really changed regarding music," sophomore Amani Akoub said. "But [choir] just started learning [its] annual Christmas music, which we are always excited for. I still like to sing and choir is much like a family where we do social activities. I still like to sing, and choir is much like a family where we do social activities."

things that made me interested in Statesmen choir to begin with, the new things that we've adapted are so much more fun than I ever imagined," Flye said.

Pierson said choir has always been a positive environment, but now the words she

thinks of are family, inclusivity, togetherness and unity.

"I can say firsthand that the choir I joined this year is very inclusive and welcoming," senior Dillon Green said. "People are still proud to be in their specific choir."



BRYNN NORWOOD/RANK&FILE

Left to right: Sophomores Adriano Moran and Sarina Bell and seniors Carolyn Nee and Cristina Beltran act in a slow motion fight scene. "Geek!" is the first show of the year for Marshall theater, and they will perform three more productions throughout the school year. Cast members said "Geek!" has more performances and fight scenes than past years, as well as scenes that include actions in slow motion.

"Geek!" play incorporates new fight scenes

by brynn norwood

The theater department's production of "Geek!" took place from Nov. 8 to 10 after the student holidays.

This year's fall play surrounds two outcast teenagers who seek out their comic book idol at a convention in Ohio. During their journey, Dayna and Honey come to realize no quest can hide the tragedy they have suffered.

The play includes fight scenes which required special choreography in order to perfect the moves for the stage.

"An expert from Synetic Theater has been coming to help us with fight [choreography] and other physicalities," junior Rachel Lipetz said.

Lipetz has participated in six plays and three musicals before "Geek!" during her time at Marshall. She played the role as one of the Steampunk Leuts in the last-est play.

"I like participating in plays because I love theater in general," Lipetz said. "It is one of my favorite things in the world."

Junior Haley Long, who plays the lead role, said learning the fight scenes added to the stress that comes with memorizing lines and stage directions.

"[I have been] learning stage fights for the majority of the fight scenes," Long said. "It's been a successful but exciting process being the lead, but I wouldn't trade it for anything."

Long said the cast works extremely

hard. Her fellow cast members can be serious when necessary, but also fun when trying to accomplish a goal.

"Most kids take the show pretty seriously as well, so while we do have fun I also know that there are people to back me up if doesn't go as planned."

"I think ["Geek!"] is definitely different from past shows that I've seen," principal Jeff Litz said. "But I like it. I like that it's different."

Litz said the technical aspects in the show, such as the projections, set the production apart from past plays. Litz also said he favors the multiple combat scenes.

Even though "Geek!" is not the most traditional, the performance could shed light on the play.

Red Dead Redemption 2 game revives the wild west franchise

by wade devinney

Gamers had Oct. 26 circled on their calendars for months leading up to the release to *Red Dead Redemption 2*.

Eight years prior, Rockstar Games released the prequel. They produced the first trailer in 2016 on Oct. 20, and proceeded with two-year radio silence about the game and its progress.

Rockstar Games finally broke the vigil during the 2018 E3 gaming convention, where they announced the release date of Oct. 23.

Since its release, reviewers have been crowing about the game's graphics, plot and overall gameplay. Imagine Game Network (IGN) gave the game a 10 out of 10, citing its rich content.

"The ability of [Red Dead Redemption 2] to keep itself fresh after so many hours is extraordinary," IGN staff writer Luke Reilly said in his review of *Red Dead Redemption 2*.

The game received glowing ratings from other game review sites such as GamesRadar, who gave the game a 5 out of 5, Metacritic, who gave the game a 97 percent and Destructoid, who awarded it a 9.5 out of 10.

Red Dead Redemption 2 masters the rustic Wild West tone with its stunning

graphics. The developers introduce painstaking detail in all elements of the game, including wildlife, foliage and humans the player may encounter.

The quality of such graphics are groundbreaking, and has never appeared before in any other Wild West-themed game.

It also allows for a wide array of interactions with different players and NPCs, differentiating it from its modern counterpart, the *Grand Theft Auto* series.

The attention to detail has made it a candidate for game of the year, and sets it apart from other games of its likeness, transporting the player back to the days of Clint Eastwood, John Wayne and Don Knotts.

The plot of *Red Dead Redemption 2* is similar to that of a movie. The progression of the plot is based more on the characters than gameplay.

Compare this to the first *Red Dead Redemption* game, which mostly advanced its plot based on who and what the player shot. Rockstar Games took the shallow, underdeveloped characters from the first game of the series and transformed them into complex, realistic outlaws with deep personalities and traits.

Red Dead Redemption 2 is up for the Best Narrative, Best Direction, Best Score,



COURTESY OF BUSINESS INSIDER/REPRODUCED UNDER FAIR USE

Left to right: Dutch van der Linde, Arthur Morgan and Abigail Marston ride on horseback in *Red Dead Redemption 2*. The game features Morgan and his adventures with the van der Linde gang from the previous *Red Dead Redemption* game. *Red Dead Redemption 2* is a prequel to the original *Red Dead Redemption*, which follows Morgan's sidekick, John Marston.

Best Audio Design, Best Action Adventure and Game of the Year awards on Dec. 6.

The game could potentially win seven awards while only releasing less than two months before the Game Awards, a feat that no game has previously achieved. The latest a Game of the Year recipient launched their game before the Game Awards ceremony was *Madden NFL 2004*, which released less than three months before the event.

While the graphics and plot of the game are enticing, certain challenges can

be extremely frustrating. For instance, one objection requires the player to win five hands of Blackjack, a type of card game. The challenge involves no skill whatsoever and entails as much as ten minutes of just waiting to win hands.

Card game challenges will even frustrate poker enthusiasts, as the coding prevents the usage of strategy, such as counting cards. Poker challenges, such as the Blackjack challenge, are somewhat frequent throughout the game and detract from the gameplay.



COURTESY OF BEN SMITH

Senior and cross country captain Ben Smith crosses the finish line in the National District Championship at Burke Lake Park. Smith is the first male winner from Marshall since Mayura Bogollagama won in 1989. The championship race was one of Smith's last high school races on the Marshall cross country team.

Smith dashes for District Cross Country title

Senior runner becomes first male individual winner for school since 1989

by jay kosumi

Senior Ben Smith won the individual race at the last cross country conference on Oct. 25, which marked an accomplishment for Smith as the first male winner from Marshall since 1989.

The conference took place at the Burke Lake Park and involved seven local high schools, including Thomas Jefferson and Justice.

"[Winning] is kind of crazy because when I came as a freshman, we had a lot of really good runners and to be on that level is a little surreal," Smith said.

Smith, the boys' cross country team captain, has been a runner since his freshman year.

"The best part of being a team leader is when you see the success of your team," Smith said. "Being able to lead my team to win [the district] is a really special experience to have."

Senior and cross country runner Matthew Capuano-Rizzo said Smith's devotion to the sport motivated him to make the team for the conference at Burke Lake Park.

"Ben is one of the most dedicated runners I've ever seen," Capuano-Rizzo said. "He's one of the reasons I kept running and why I tried to be on the

tenth spot this year, so that I could go to the conference."

Capuano-Rizzo said Smith's performance was his best of the year, and that his victory galvanized his team throughout the rest of the meet.

"Ben had a tough season this year, but he put everything he had in that race and we were so proud of him," Capuano-Rizzo said. "We were screaming so much when he won [...] That's definitely the best race he's had this season."

Smith said the season was tough for him because of the meet cancellations due to inclement weather, as well as personal struggles that prevented him from making time for running.

"So many meets were cancelled due to bad weather and I've had a hard time being able to run with my team," Smith said. "That's why having the support of my team has been important and that's something I definitely used during the race [...] I knew they wanted me to be successful."

Both the boys' and the girls' cross country teams won the titles of National Districts Champions.

Senior Natalie Bardach, who won the female individual race, said she was proud of Smith's victory.

"We've both been working really hard this whole season, and it felt great [to win]," Bardach said. "Ben's an amazing team captain, and he always makes things fun while still having people respect him."

Capuano-Rizzo said he values Smith not only as a team captain, but also as a friend.

"Running is hard and physically degrading, but Ben always encouraged us to put everything we had into it," Capuano-Rizzo said. "He makes jokes and is very supportive of his teammates. He's just an overall wonderful person, and I love being around him."

Although he has no long-term goals regarding running, Smith said running is an activity he wishes to pursue in college.

"Running will definitely be something I'll do in college, but I don't know exactly what form it will take," Smith said.

The boys' and girls' teams proceeded to their final 6A state championship on Nov. 10, with boys placing sixth. This team victory, along with that of the final individual race on Oct. 25 successfully concluded Smith's season as a cross country runner with the Marshall team.

Local schools merge hockey teams

by grady dillon

Due to ice hockey not being a VHSL-approved sport, students interested in playing participate in a separate independent league outside of school.

Ice hockey is the ninth-most popular sport in the world according to Total Sportek, as it is a prominent in 76 countries worldwide. Despite this, the sport itself does not have VHSL approval.

The combined Mason-Edison-Marshall-Hayfield-Annan-dale High School Hockey club has a total of 21 players, four of which attend Marshall.

"I do not care about having other schools on the team," forward and sophomore Daniel Lenshin said. "It would be great if Marshall had some more representation on the team,

though."

Compared to last season, fewer players in the club have been coming to the games.

"In all honesty, I actually hoped to have more players show up to games," Lenshin said. "Last fall season, there was an average of around 20 to 25 players showing up each game. Now the most we have gotten is 14."

Like VHSL, the Capitals Scholastic Hockey League [CSHL] has both junior varsity and varsity teams within the league. The club is classified as a varsity team, but they play both levels.

"JV games have much stricter rules on body contact and no checking is allowed in JV," Lenshin said. "I do not mind playing against JV or varsity teams at all. That way we can gauge our skill in the league. I do take more

importance to varsity games, though."

For forward and sophomore Sam Garver, playing in a VHSL regulated ice hockey league would be better than playing in the CSHL.

"We would play people we already know," Garver said.

But defense and junior Robert Newton said he would rather stay in the CSHL because of the collegiate opportunities club play provides.

"I probably would not [play Ice Hockey in VHSL] because I want to go for college," Newton said. "Usually a lot of private clubs have better teams. I might play for fun, but in terms of serious play, I would just stick to my club team."

The club has won one game so far, but they remain optimistic about the rest of their season.



Left: Junior Robert Newton positions himself alongside his teammate during a stoppage of play.

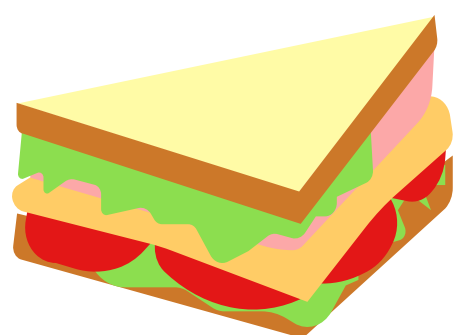
Bottom: Sophomore and forward Daniel Lenshin takes on three defenders in a hockey game against Bishop O'Connell which, unlike Marshall, is made up strictly of Bishop O'Connell varsity athletes.



GRADY DILLON/RANK&FILE

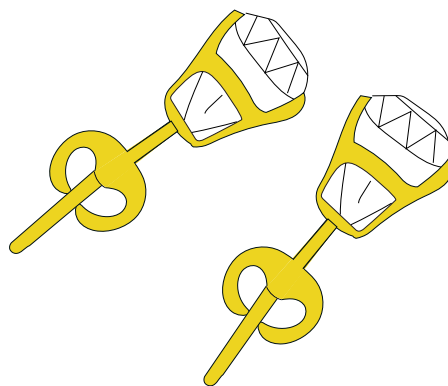
Athlete's pre-game superstitions

Players and coaches discuss rituals and lucky charms



"I eat the same sandwich every day, put my clothes in the exact same order every day. I put on one shoe then tie it then put the other shoe and tie it. I have to put my belt on before I put my pants on."

- Ben Shannon, junior & baseball player



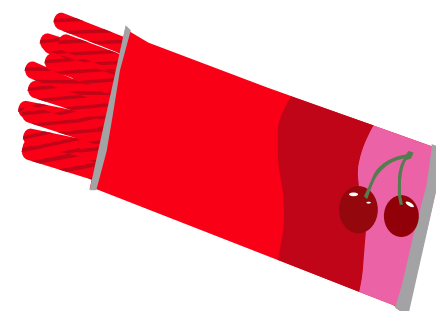
"I rub my earrings before every game. I watch the movie *Rocky 2* the night before every game. I scream in the locker room for five minutes and scream into my glove a lot."

- Hogan Tooke, junior & baseball player



"For 11 years now, for every game I've coached I have worn a shirt, a tie, a sweater vest and slacks and that's just what I wear."

- Josh Peters, junior varsity basketball coach



"I eat Twizzlers before every game."

- Fizza Hussein, junior

by isabella gulick

The anatomy of off-season training

A Rank&File editor breaks down green days, yellow days and blackout periods

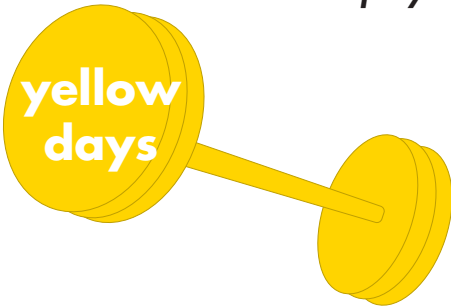
by sophie
tedesco

The most intense elements of every sport take place during competitions and practices during the season. But for every sport that competes for a single season, there are three other seasons left, providing time to train and prepare. Rules and regulations are in place to ensure that no teams have any competitive advantage or are overworking their players. Off-season training consists of three categories: green days, yellow days and blackout periods at Marshall.



"[We] have more time to break skills down and improve them to get ready for the season [during] off-season training. For a typical green day we stretch in the beginning, then run through a lot of drills that help with layups and shooting. We [also] work on defense and competitive drills [and] at the end we scrimmage. I find off-season training super beneficial because you can work on getting stronger without worrying about wearing yourself down or being sore."

- Zoe Soule, junior
basketball player



"Yellow days are weight lift days. At yellow day[s] we [have] stations with different workouts at each station. Stations involved squats, lunges, push ups and some included weights. I don't think they are as helpful as green days because we don't get a chance to get a foot on a ball, but yellow days help players get to know the coaches."

- Abby Han, junior
soccer player



"In Fairfax County, [sports teams] are allowed to train for 34 days in the off season for the year. [Teams] have to track them and they get 34 days and that is the maximum. Very few to no teams max out on [off-season] days because of [lack of] availability of students and coaches. There are two black out periods when [the Virginia High School League] says you can not practice. Teams cannot practice over the week of July 4 or on Sundays."

-Joe Swarm,
director of student activities

2018 fall season recap

varsity football

8-2-0
W-L-T

varsity field hockey

12-7-1
W-L-T

co-ed golf

8-1-0
W-L-T

varsity volleyball

13-4-0
W-L-T

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sportsbrief

Varsity volleyball loses national district championship after five straight years of victories

The varsity volleyball team lost in the district tournament finals for the first time in five years against Falls Church High School on Oct. 20.

Volleyball head coach Michael Carroll attributed the loss to the unfamiliar offense of their opponent.

"It is just the matter of things," Carroll said. "This year we have teams in the district that are a bit tougher than they were in the past couple of years. Falls Church, specifically with the way they ran their offense, was something a little different than we were used to."

Carroll said even though Falls Church used unexpected offensive tactics, the team will take advantage of their experience.

"We will learn from it and take advantage of [this experience] next year," Carroll said.

Outside hitter and junior Isabelle Atkins said the loss was particularly difficult because of how unexpected it was.

"Right after [Falls Church scored] we heard Falls Church start cheering, it was sort of surreal," Atkins said. "When it hit me it was super upsetting."

Atkins said the loss frustrated her because she believes the team could beat Falls Church if they were to play each other again.

"Nothing was that different from the other times we have played [Falls Church] before," Atkins said. "This is the part of what makes it so frustrating that we lost."

Atkins said the loss was especially emotional for the senior players.

"One of the hardest parts of losing that game was the fact that we wouldn't be able to put another number on the [varsity volleyball] banner for our seniors," Atkins said.

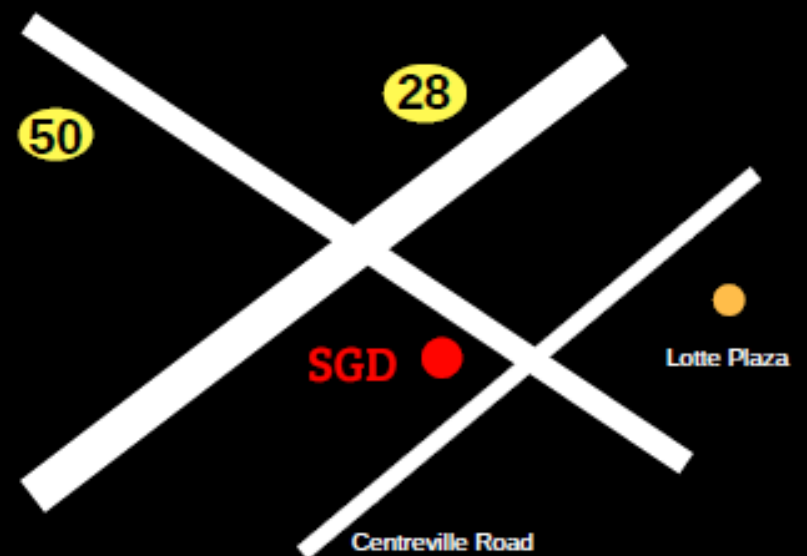
by dmitry butylev



COURTESY OF COLUMBIAN YEARBOOK

Sophomore and middle blocker Valerie Dirkse serves the ball over the net during a game against Madison High School. While the team defeated Madison 3-2, they lost to Falls Church High School by a score of 2-3. This was their first loss at this stage in the tournament in five years.

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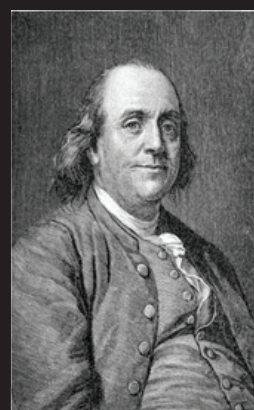
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