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Letter from the Editor

The month of October said quite a bit about the current dynamics between students, staff and school. In times when controversy becomes a focal point of school discussion, we want to reaffirm our commitment to impartial, but also complete, coverage. Our intent will always be to inform our readership and tell stories affecting Marshall through the voices of the most central figures.

One of the things I am proud of with this publication is the relationship we maintain with both the school administration and student body. Unfortunately, not every school can say

that, particularly with the increasing emphasis on opinion and commentary in journalism. Without either of these key relationships, Rank&File would not be possible.

Finally, this magazine exists as a public forum. If you feel that Rank&File's coverage of a story overlooks or omits key perspectives, I want to personally encourage you to reach out to us, especially in the form of a letter to the editor.

Theo Schmidt
Editor-in-Chief
Rank&File

Statesmen Theatre returns to auditorium

by melanie george

Despite date changes and complications, the theater program's production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" is underway.

A year away from the physical stage still affects the preparation for November's fall play, not only for the actors, but especially what goes on behind the scenes.

"There have been many changes while preparing for the performance, but our directors, actors and tech crew have been working very hard to adapt," senior and actress Nina Southern said. "I think we are all used to having obstacles leading up to the show after working on four virtual performances our previous year."

Southern said performing in person has been a big adjustment for many students.

"Personally, I struggled at first taking on a role that requires a lot of stage combat and memorization," she said. "After spending a year online with little social interaction, taking on scenes that required a lot of trust and communication with my scene partners was challenging."

However, Southern said directors have supported the actors when adapting to the change.

"I also have spent a lot of time getting to know my scene partners, and the trust and friendship we have built has made the work we put into the show a lot more enjoyable," she said.

Initially, the theatre program planned for the show to take place in the senior courtyard so that the actors did not have to wear masks, but it would have required building

a whole stage outside.

"[We were going to] do it outside until we realized that with masks or not, we would be able to perform better inside," senior and stage manager Sohani Agarwal said.

The change prompted the performance to be pushed back two weeks, since they now needed to reserve the auditorium around choir, band and orchestra concerts. Even so, not all problems were solved.

"It's been crazy coming back to school after virtual learning, and there's so much to catch up on," lighting head and senior Alex Thrasher said. "With lights, it takes a lot of practice: you can't get enough training on the lighting board."

With canceled shows two years ago and virtual ones last year, there was no need for lighting skills in a virtual setting.

"Traditionally, we have a junior train a freshman to take over because it allows for two years of training and then two years of running things," Thrasher said. "I am currently a senior, and I need to impart all of my knowledge in half that time."

As the only veteran on



MELANIE GEORGE/RANK&FILE

Junior Anna Klimenko alters a costume in Tech Theatre.

the lighting team, Thrasher said this year hasn't been a smooth ride.

"Teaching is incredible. It is really hard doing it in such a condensed amount of time, but it really is a lot of fun," she said. "It's especially fun to teach something that I and the person I'm teaching both love."

Costumes head and senior Cassidy Dorman agreed with Thrasher.

"It is difficult being the only senior," Dorman said. "I have to be the leader most of the time, which is not exactly my favorite part. I love being friends, not the boss."

Despite the challenges, Dorman said the community is her favorite part of theater.

Agarwal agreed. "I feel like theater is exactly where I fit in," she said. "The bonds I have made with everyone in the department make it all the better. I love that I am able to be my most creative self in that class."

To share that sense of community, Agarwal said she always tries to get to know anyone who's new to the theater program.

"I ended up working with a lot of people during productions, and I try to be as welcoming as I can," she said.

With the rollercoaster of changes in preparation for this play, the theater program is finally scheduled to perform from Nov. 11 through Nov. 13.



MELANIE GEORGE/RANK&FILE

Crew members decorate the set for the fall play, which opens on Nov. 11 at 7:30 p.m.

Federal grant delivers help to students

by rhea newnaha and
kirtana sathishkumar

Pandemic-induced learning gaps, particularly for vulnerable student populations, have become an issue on the radar of school administration.

In response, administrators plan to address the concerns with a sum of money from the federal government. The Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund is a federal grant to support schools during the COVID-19 pandemic.

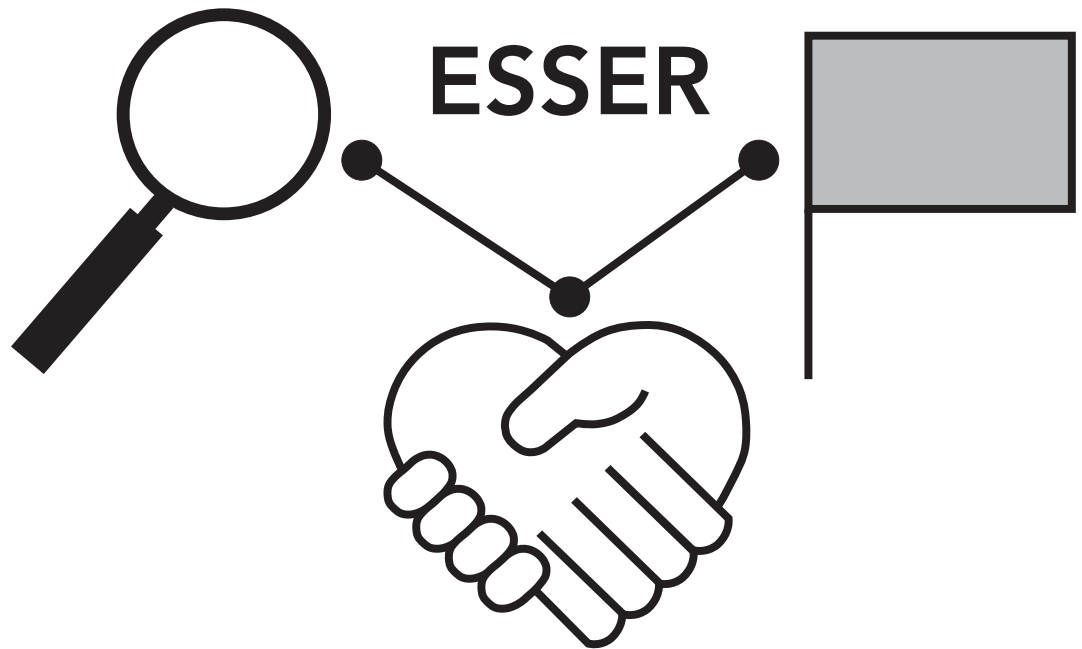
"Each school is creating a plan to identify students who may have fallen behind so that we can work with them and get them the support they need to catch up," assistant principal Paula Meoli said. "Money through the ESSER Grant is going to support that."

Principal Jefferey Litz said teachers have been looking at data from assessments to identify the students with academic gaps.

"You may have noticed, if you're in Algebra 1, Geometry or Algebra 2, that we've been doing pre-assessments," Litz said. "We're going to do those quarterly to see what skills students remember and which ones they didn't, and then try to fill those [gaps] as we go."

English department chair Martha Noone said English classes have employed the same method.

"We have done different diagnostics, and students who are reading two grade levels below their current grade or who show weaknesses in basic composition will have a range of different supports provided to them,



depending upon their need," Noone said.

Litz said the stark differences between the rigor of academic classes in 10th and 11th grade are leaving him particularly concerned for juniors since their sophomore year was mostly virtual.

"Students who are reading two grade levels below their current grade or who show weaknesses in basic composition will have a range of different supports provided to them, depending upon their need."

- English department chair Martha Noone

"Some students found that they learn better [remotely], and then there are students who did poorly in terms of their own mental health and in their ability to organize themselves in a way that perhaps teachers [could have] helped them more with in school," Litz said.

Social Studies department chair Dean Wood said

students have been handling the transition back to in-person learning well.

"We might have some students with deficits this year because we weren't in the building last year," Wood said, "but I feel like the students are doing a great job at

trying to fill in those gaps this year.

Science department chair Michael Osborn agreed.

"I think just having physical labs where we're actually able to manipulate things physically has been a nice push for kids this year," Osborn said.

Litz said he plans to use Saturday school, after-school

sessions and even a tutoring company to help some students get back on track academically.

To address the social-emotional aspect of school, Litz's agenda includes using the funding for advisory supplies, social events and helping parents support their children in school.

"We certainly have a population of parents who either didn't finish school, are afraid to come into the school or don't know how to support their kids in school," Litz said. "So we could potentially have some parenting classes and some family engagement opportunities to get more of our families involved and know what's going on in school, how they can support their kids."

Though the money from the grant will be spent over the course of the next few years, Litz said Marshall could start seeing the effects of the ESSER Fund as soon as the beginning of the second semester.

Sophia Welch: The road to singing, acting

by kirtana sathishkumar

“Through the air there’s a calling / From far away / There’s a voice I can hear / That will lead me home”—these are sophomore Sophia Welch’s favorite lines from “The Road Home,” one of the songs she sang at the first in-person choir concert on Oct. 7.

“It felt really amazing to be back on stage, singing for other people again,” Welch said. “I had forgotten how much excitement being on stage gives me.”

Welch said she loved her solo in the concert for the song “The Road Home.” For her, the song’s message was about finding the way back together after the pandemic.

“It felt really empowering to be able to express [that] message,” Welch said. “I remember all through the pandemic being told that the end is coming and we

will all be together again, and sometimes I felt that that may never happen. But choir, and that promise of singing, really became my voice in the dark.”

////////////////////////////////////

“I loved my solo so much. It’s really beautiful.”

- sophomore Sophia Welch

////////////////////////////////////

Welch began taking voice lessons at seven, but she had been singing for her family even before that. Her fondest memory of singing is her first voice recital.

“I was eight and really nervous. All I remember was the applause that came after I’d finished and the pride I had for myself and what I had accomplished,” Welch said.

At the age of eight, Welch began

acting, and today is in multiple theater programs, including Statesmen Theatre. She said musical theater initially prompted her to try acting.

“It was a way for me to sing, which I loved, so I started acting as well,” Welch said.

Welch said both acting and singing are personal to her.

“With singing, I can express myself in ways I can’t in everyday life, [but] acting is also very personal because when you perform, you have to incorporate pieces of yourself into the character and how you interpret the text,” Welch said. “But both singing and acting give me a lot of excitement and I try my best to put my full effort into both.”

For Welch, her next challenge will be playing the character Peaseblossom in Marshall Theatre’s November production of “A Midsummer Night’s Dream.”

Junior featured in CNN article works to curb artificial intelligence abuse

by marie kah

For the past three years, junior Adrian Klaitis has worked to make a positive impact in his local community through political activism, but now he is focused on a different goal: fighting prejudice in artificial intelligence.

Klaitis’ work with the group Encode Justice led him and the other leaders to be featured in a CNN article detailing their work.

“You know, most days you see your news updates, but then seeing your name and seeing your face, all your friends’ faces and the cause that you’ve been working for all these years getting the coverage that it needs was extremely heartwarming,” Klaitis said. “I think that it’s an important step in the right direction for uplifting youth voices and the artificial intelligence and human rights movement.”

The group, which was founded in 2020, consists of around 250 members and seeks to fight unethical artificial intelligence use.

“Encode Justice is a coalition of youth activists fighting for human rights and accountability, and justice under AI,” Klaitis said. “The leader reached out to me over social media and asked me to apply to be to a lower position. [The position] was super interesting and something I thought was really important. Eventually as I got to know the leadership team, a position opened up. I applied to be deputy director of advocacy and later got promoted to co-director of advocacy.”

Klaitis said he hopes the publicity from the CNN article leads Encode Justice into future success.

“It’s changed a lot for our organization,” he said. “We’ve gotten a lot more coverage and a lot more attention from experts in the field, which I think is going to really aid our battle against AI.”

In the future, Klaitis is looking to possibly pursue a political career.

“In the future I’m going to see where I can make the biggest difference,” Klaitis said. “In politics, I can make the biggest impact on people’s lives in a positive way.”



PHOTO BY GULCHIN GULMAMADOVA

Junior Adrian Klaitis prepares to attend a bill signing ceremony in Richmond.

Golf captain continues sports, music

by aitana wells

Growing up in Panama, junior Leo Perez chose his path at an early age.

Alongside becoming a golfer at age seven, Perez added guitar to his list of talents.

"I lived in Panama for around seven years," Perez said. "I was born in Venezuela, and we moved [to Panama] when I was about three."

As Perez grew up in a golf centered society, it started to become an integral part of his life.

"[Golf] was really big in Panama. Soccer and golf are super competitive there," Perez said. "I would always go to other soccer events or golf tournaments with my parents."

Golf wasn't the only

influence he brought with him.

"I started playing acoustic [guitar] in elementary school back in Panama," Perez said. "I took some lessons with my friends. We'd stay after school and play guitar. I feel like that's the time I stepped up to another level and started playing a much better guitar now that I had an actual teacher."

After learning the acoustic guitar, Perez wanted a more personal reason to play. His love for rock music took over.

"My dad used to play the guitar all the time and I always picked it up with him because we played classical music all the time. But it got to a point where I started getting into rock music and jazz to the point where I actually

got an electric guitar, and I was able to play all those songs."

Though he spends his free time playing guitar, he takes golf more competitively. Perez said over the years, he has become more serious about his commitment to golf.

"For next year, I'm hoping to compete at an even higher level in hopes of playing in

college now that I set some good scores during both districts and regionals my junior year," Perez said.

Perez hopes to improve his skills in the sport and score even lower during his senior year. He's aiming to attract attention from colleges and he is excited to see where his golf journey takes him in the coming years.



COURTESY OF LEO PEREZ

Junior Leo Perez watches his shot after putting the ball.

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STEM Academy:

Marshall's Hidden Gem

● compiled by reyna berry and melanie george

CULINARY ARTS

Culinary Arts class provides a crucial foundation for the food industry, Chef Ciaran Devlin said. But you have to work for it.

"If you come here, I will teach you how to do really cool things, which will benefit you for the rest of your life," Devlin said.

CULINARY ARTS
F105

ENTREPRENEURSHIP
M19, M22

ARABIC
M20

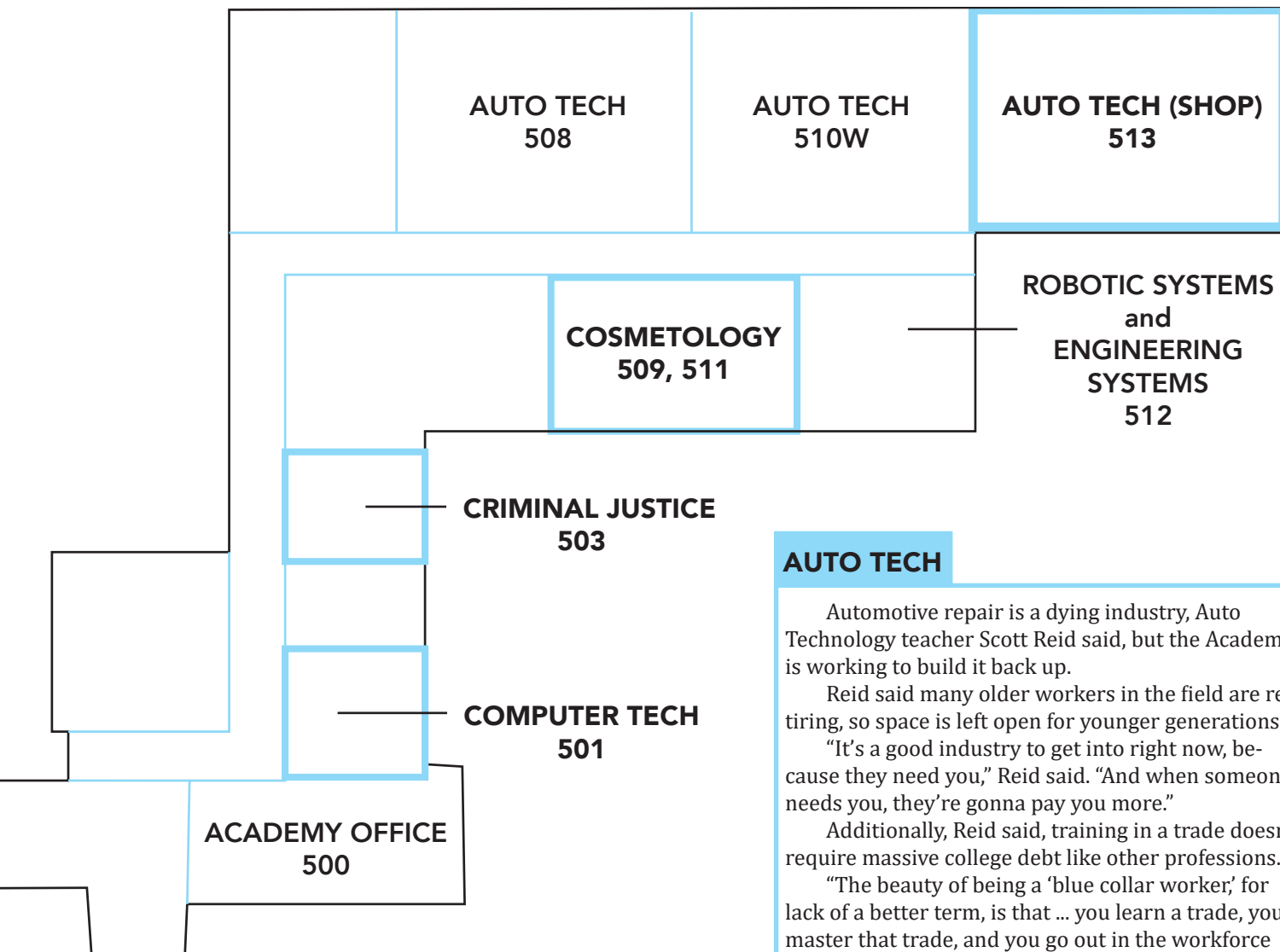
CHINESE
M23

MAIN GYM
400



MELANIE GEORGE/RANK&FILE

Junior Nicole Moyano practices curling a mannequin's hair in Cosmetology. In addition to polishing their makeup, hair and nail skills, Cosmetology students learn about infection control and sanitation to set a foundation for work in salons.



AUTO TECH

Automotive repair is a dying industry, Auto Technology teacher Scott Reid said, but the Academy is working to build it back up.

Reid said many older workers in the field are retiring, so space is left open for younger generations.

"It's a good industry to get into right now, because they need you," Reid said. "And when someone needs you, they're gonna pay you more."

Additionally, Reid said, training in a trade doesn't require massive college debt like other professions.

"The beauty of being a 'blue collar worker,' for lack of a better term, is that ... you learn a trade, you master that trade, and you go out in the workforce and immediately start making money," he said.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Taking Criminal Justice 2 helped junior Ellen Shpetishvili realize she wanted to become an intelligence officer.

"It has been one of the best decisions I've made in my academic career," Shpetishvili said. "[The class] introduced me to law and it helped me develop my love for law."

She said she hopes to be an agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation or Central Intelligence Agency.

COMPUTER SYSTEMS

"The best way to learn Information Technology is hands-on," said Computer Systems Tech teacher Mark Nagurny.

Nagurny said the Academy's Information Technology faculty agree that at least 50% of every class should be for a lab, to better prepare students for their future careers.

"One of my jokes I tell the students -- it's actually true, though -- I say, the less I speak, the more they're going to learn," he said.



MELANIE GEORGE/RANK&FILE

Auto Technology teacher Scott Reid said his students work on donated cars to gain real world experience.

Editorial: Faculty, students must work together and communicate to ensure school year success

Between conflicting spirit week schedules and an uproar over changed traditions, Homecoming Week escalated into controversy that disrupted our community.

The poor discourse between administrative groups and students is all the more frustrating because every person involved has the same goal in mind: bring together the community and increase school spirit.

That goal is particularly important this year because half the student body had not attended in-person school at Marshall going into this year, and the things those students see early in the year set a foundation for the rest of their high school experience. Between older students and longtime teachers, it is often recognized that school spirit has declined over the past five years, which made getting this year right imperative.

Unfortunately, we took ourselves too seriously. Spirit week is supposed to be about being silly and having fun at your own expense without caring about how

ridiculous you look. This year, we got the immaturity that goes with spirit week, but it didn't bring us closer to our goal.

Disregarding the opinions of students, especially those with a grasp on how to improve participation, is unhelpful. At the same time, completely shunning authority and being unwilling to work with administrators is automatically going to result in an outcome lower than the potential ceiling.

Ultimately, isn't that what we all want? To reach the ceiling? To have the closest community and the highest spirit?

To get back to those goals that unite the school, it will take cooperation from the whole school.

As students, we need to use the resources available to us, particularly our student representatives. They are obliged to listen and present proposals to issues to staff. Whether those proposals get enacted or not, it is unfair to complain about situations before using the institutions already available to us.



"Let us remember that we should never become so polarized that we forget how to politely disagree and still celebrate who we are."

- Principal Jeffrey Litz in an email about Spirit Week on Oct. 5.

Table Talk with Chef Devlin

● compiled by melanie george

● How is culinary arts beneficial for a student with cooking as a hobby rather than a career?

"It teaches you how to work in a group and to ask questions. And, it teaches you a good skill that you will use all your life, because you will eat all your life."

● How does Culinary Arts instill leadership skills?

"It's the typical 911 scenario. There's a crash, we all come by, everybody's waiting for someone else to call and no one does anything. When you're in a kitchen, or in any job or any environment, someone needs to take charge. And if you do, 95% of the people will follow."



WILL SHIN/RANK&FILE

● How can this class prepare students for the future?

"School is like the entrance exam. When you graduate, you just passed. Now you have to go out and take everything that you learned and master it."



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REYNA BERRY/RANK&FILE

Safety or Security: Outdoor courtyard expansion

by reyna berry and melanie george

As social distancing issues have resurfaced, the amount of outdoor seating open during lunch has waned.

The rise in outdoor eating and frustration over underclassmen in the Senior Courtyard have raised questions of whether to open up other outdoor spaces.

"We want to give individuals enough space to properly distance, but we can't let students congregate without supervision," Safety and Security Assistant Scott Devine said.

Devine said only two of the school's four courtyards are open to students during lunch because there are not enough security personnel to supervise additional spaces.

Sophomore Ivanna Stefanova said she sees the open

courtyards as an escape for some students.

"On certain days it's just good to take a break and chill outside," Stefanova said. "It's also way calmer and more relaxing."

For sophomore Zoe Jones, eating outside is a matter of safety as well as comfort.

"I want to do as much as I can to protect myself and my family from COVID," Jones said. "Eating outside at lunch is just another way of lowering my risk for getting myself and others sick."

However, Jones said she recognizes the school's security concerns.

"I think it's unfortunate that we aren't allowed to go to other courtyards to eat outside, where it's safer," Jones said, "but I understand it from an administrative perspective, since we are understaffed."

Safety and Security Specialist Steve Williams said these courtyards are also used by teachers during class, so they aren't viable options for lunch. Additionally, students said the additional courtyards are inconveniently far from the cafeteria.

"If people were to eat out there, they'd have to bring their food that way, which could [make] a bigger mess," junior Tia Aloizos said. "People [would] definitely go there, but it's not going to be a lot of people."

Standing at the crossroads of school security and student safety, Williams said his team is working on ways to open up more spaces for students during lunch.

"[You want to spread students] out as much as you can," Williams said. "Any time you can put them outside, I

think it's a better situation."

Williams said there is a new option for lunch in the works: the "Marshall Pit," a shaded area beside the tennis courts.

In the past, it has been used for gatherings during football and tennis games, but now, it may serve as a COVID-safe space for students to eat.

"We don't really have anybody to [monitor the Pit], but we're pushing that way," Williams said. "It's going to happen eventually."

Aloizos said she would consider using the Pit for lunch if it becomes available, while Devine agreed new options are beneficial, as long as students remain safe.

"Security is number one," Devine said. "At the end of the day, everybody has to be safe and everyone has to go home and come to school safe."



The C-Hall Courtyard and Native Species Garden are currently closed to students eating lunch because teachers use the locations for instruction. Among the proposed alternate outdoor locations is the Marshall Pit, located next to the modulares and tennis courts. Staffing constraints have prevented the pit from being used for lunches to this point.

MELANIE GEORGE/RANK&FILE

Guitar Ensemble back from behind the screen



RHEA NEWNAHA/RANK&FILE

Junior Sam Peden plays his instrument in the beginning of fifth period guitar class on Oct. 22.

by rhea newnaha

With his classes back in person, guitar instructor Mathew Kulikosky said it's time to get out of the bedroom and onto a stage.

After playing behind a screen for a year, guitar ensembles are back in the classroom.

"Being by yourself and playing the guitar isn't necessarily a disaster, but not being able to be together, collaborate and do the things that we're used to doing definitely was a shame," Kulikosky said.

Guitar ensemble member and junior Sam Peden said being back in person has helped him get better acquainted with his classmates and find his crowd, as far as his musical interests go.

"This year, [class is] really good, especially now that we can do shows again, we can all sit down, and we're all forced to play together," Peden said. "People I didn't even know existed turned out to be in my class this year, so we've collaborated outside of guitar too," Peden said.

Kulikovsky said it was difficult to assess if students needed help in class while teaching to black boxes rather than faces.

"It was hard to see, especially [with] the less experienced players, what they're doing," Kulikosky said. "[To] see if they're doing anything wrong and to try to fix it."

But with students in person, the ensemble is back to playing, listening, and learning beside each other once again.

Volleyball team raises over \$6,000 for breast cancer research, new equipment

by josie hamilton and ben pyatt

In support of October's Breast Cancer Awareness month, the volleyball team played their annual Dig Pink game on Oct. 22 against Langley.

Players wore an array of pink jerseys and tutus to school as well as creating social media posts to raise awareness and encourage friends and family to show support at the game on Thursday.

"[The Dig Pink game] is definitely more hype," said volleyball captain and junior Maddie Curcio. "There's more school spirit."

A Dig Pink tradition, Serve-a-Thon is a fundraiser where friends and families of players pledge a certain amount of money for each serve in the game. This year, volleyball raised over \$6,000 towards new equipment and cancer research.

"Dig pink was a huge success," varsity player and sophomore Brooke Bundy said. "We raised money and awareness for the cause. Even though the game

didn't end the way we wanted it to, the large energy of the night overwhelmed that."

Pink-out shirts were sold throughout the week in the cafeteria. Out of the 500 shirts ordered by the 2022 PTA senior class representatives, all were sold out before Friday. In total, these shirts raised \$5,000 dollars. While 40% went to the senior's graduation celebration, 10% went to the Susan G. Komen Foundation for breast cancer research.

"As a freshman, all the seniors were wearing a lot of pink, and it just raises awareness because I don't think we really talk about it enough," Curcio said.

Despite a loss from the varsity team, both the freshman and JV volleyball teams celebrated wins in their last game of the season, including a JV victory over Langley's previously undefeated squad.

"Freshmen and JV's exciting wins ended their season the best possible way. Varsity's loss was unfortunate, but we all put our hearts into the game for the night and it was still a success," Bundy said.



JOSIE HAMILTON/RANK&FILE

Members of the JV volleyball team celebrate their end-of-season home win over previously undefeated Langley on Oct. 21's Dig Pink Night.

Inaugural boys volleyball team fights to gain official recognition, student support

by marie kah and rishi vanka

A boys volleyball team consisting of Marshall students has seen early success but struggled to get support from the student body in its first season.

Players said the lack of student interest and game attendance has been an ongoing issue for the team, which they blame on the lack of recognition from the Virginia High School League (VHSL) for boys volleyball.

"I think it is quite difficult to gain some recognition from the student body as a whole, simply because we aren't an official team in the VHSL," libero and junior Nawfal Elwannas said, adding that

the team could reach a whole new audience "if we were to be a part of the league, have home games, play in front of a home crowd and get support from Marshall Athletics."

The lack of student interest results in high schools forming clubs rather than an established sport with JV and varsity teams.

"[Boys volleyball] is a good experience, but I wish it was more popular in America, so it would be a more competitive area," Yavuz said.

In an effort to increase student support, the team has taken to social media to promote their games.

"We have an Instagram account,

which is @gcmboysvolley where all posts about games and results are shared. Besides that, we've been spreading the word about games and the team as a whole to our friends and peers," Elwannas said.

The team had tryouts on Sept. 13 and a week later competed in their first games. Now a month out from tryouts, they hold a record of 14-2.

"It feels amazing to be able to have this much success, considering the fact that we only started playing with each other as a team nearly a month ago," Elwannas said. "To look back and see how far we have all come [as] individuals and as one team just shows the [team's] determination and commitment."



AMY YAM

Sophomore Jacob Ayers gets ready to serve against West Potomac.

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Senior cheer captains lead team to fourth consecutive district title

by emma mobley

For senior cheer captains Whitney Booth and Iyesha Souiri, taking home the title of district champions once again marks a satisfying conclusion to their cheer careers.

Despite a change in districts this past year, the varsity cheer team won their fourth consecutive title.

"The most special thing about being on varsity all four years at Marshall [has been] creating memorable bonds with the people in the grades above and below me as the years go by," Booth said.

Experience gave Booth and Souiri the opportunity to lead the team to another championship season.

"The [previous] seniors definitely left us with a lot of life lessons," Souiri said. "Since the seniors are the older kids, I always looked up to them. They were great role models and they inspired me with their great energy and tight form."

When Marshall athletics switched districts ahead of this season, the team faced a new challenge.

"The district change this year was nerve-racking because some of the new teams in the district have had a lot of talent in the past, but this was good for Marshall cheer because it made us work harder now that we had harder competition," Booth said.

Despite the situation, the team has not let it phase them.

"Every year is different with expectations, but I do think that the returning members always really emphasize hard work and adaptability to ensure the squad will be strong," varsity head coach Dominic Borello said. "It's very humbling to be part of four consecutive district titles and to be named coach of the year again."

For the cheer squad, team dynamics is a key to success. Borello said it requires trust to get you up in the air.

"Being confident in yourself and your teammates is what makes this program successful," Borello said. "The kids believe in themselves and are each other's biggest cheerleaders. The athletes hold themselves and their teammates to high standards."

Being able to have a successful season four years in a row is an impressive accomplishment for any athletic team.

"Winning as a freshman was surprising because that's the year we first got our title back," Souiri said. "As a senior, it's such an amazing feeling. It's satisfying."

Cheerleader and junior Samantha Nicole Lagman said changes will come with the departure of their captains.

"It's going to be a difficult transition, but our coach knows we can adapt," Lagman said. "There are a lot of athletes that have been cheering on varsity for a few years, especially with the experienced cheer captains, so we know what is expected of us."



EMMA MOBLEY/RANK&FILE

The cheer team celebrates their win with a group photo.

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"Being confident in yourself and your teammates is what makes this program successful. The kids believe in themselves and are each other's biggest cheerleaders."

- head coach Dominic Borello

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"The most special thing about being on varsity all four years at Marshall [has been] creating memorable bonds with the people in the grades above and below me as years go by."

- senior cheer captain Whitney Booth

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Librarians address locally challenged books

by justin sun, will blackburn & eleanor mcaden

At a school board meeting on Sep. 23, FCPS suspended two books following complaints from parents.

The books, "Lawn Boy" by Jonathan Evison and "Gender Queer" by Maia Kobabe, were temporarily removed from shelves days before Banned Books week.

For librarians Krissy Ronan and Elizabeth Toledo, Banned Books week is a time to expand students' world view, but only if they have access to different books and learn different things because everyone's different.

"The whole thing is about freedom of information," Toledo said. "Everybody should have access to whatever information they need or want to read, so banning books doesn't make sense."

The two books have come under scrutiny due to a parent complaint about their sexual content. Toledo and Ronan said they believe a book's audience should also be considered.

"Some kinds of books are appropriate for some audiences, and some aren't," Ronan said. "For example, a book you may read as a teenager may have content that's a little too much for a younger person, but it's not so much that it should be banned. I think it should be used thoughtfully."

Ronan said the change of viewpoints over time is another reason to censor with caution.

"At different times, different ideas are considered more dangerous or more inappropriate, so books that may be banned or considered to be challenged at one point

would not be either 20 years before or 20 years later," she said.

The two challenged books contain LGBTQ+ themes, and critics of the ban say it is an attempt to silence the community. Ronan said she has noticed a pattern regarding which books are censored.

"The experiences that are othered are often experiences

of people who identify in ways that are marginalized in our community and in our society, and I think that is really problematic," Ronan said.

As election week approaches, the books have sparked a larger debate about parent involvement in school decisions, while students, teachers and families still await a decision.



WILL BLACKBURN/RANK&FILE

Parents challenged two books at a meeting on Sept. 23.

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