

# rank&file

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See "Winter cheer returns more than a decade later" p.8

GEORGIA STREETT/RANK&FILE

# rank&file

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## Letter from the Editor

For Rank&File, the new year is not a fresh start but a reminder to pursue our goals. This issue, we share perspectives on New Year's traditions. Our resolution is to continue to represent the Marshall community. Whether that be midyear stress and the winter cheer team, or Stanley cups and Wingstop, we are dedicated to our readers.

This issue, Rank&Style returns with holiday trends and—by popular demand—a crossword puzzle.

In terms of academic change, to the delight of my staff, Journalism 3-4 is now an Honors course. This recognition of our effort comes with a GPA boost and a fancy title in SIS. For our readers, the end of the first semester means course selection and college decisions. During this stressful time, my advice is to cozy up by the fire and pray for more snow days.

Melanie George  
Editor-in-Chief  
Rank&File

# A Letter from Adviser Shane Short

**D**ear Rank&File Readers,  
We want to take a moment to address an opinion piece published recently regarding a school policy on student protests. We understand that the article caused some confusion and concern among our readers, particularly in regards to its reference to the Israel-Hamas conflict.

We want to clarify that the opinions expressed in the article are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of our publication. We also want to acknowledge that the reference to the conflict may have been uncomfortable given the gravity of the situation.

The purpose of this article is not to take a stance on the war or the polarization of people in certain categories. Instead, it aims to shed light on the concerns of a group of students about anti-Jewish rhetoric and protest signs expressed at a school rally. The article examines the Fairfax County Public Schools Policy and how it allows students to determine what

is appropriate for school demonstrations. It emphasizes the need for policies that protect students' First Amendment rights while also recognizing that certain requirements to exercise these rights on school grounds should be approved by appropriate school staff.

Rank&File acknowledges that in addition to the written content, certain images included in the article also caused extreme discomfort for some individuals. The purpose of these images was to highlight the issue with the current policy that allowed certain signs to appear during demonstrations that can be perceived by some as anti-Jewish. The individuals holding these signs were never the intended subjects of our article, and they should not be subjugated to hate or labeled as terrorists. We regret any person or group of people who felt they were being labeled or targeted as such. This was never the intention and should never happen in our, or any, school community as our diversity is our strength.

The aim of this article is to provide guidance on how students of diverse backgrounds, including various races, genders, sexual orientations, and religions, can exercise their right to peaceful protest while ensuring that their freedom of speech is protected. Additionally, it highlights the importance of recognizing that certain symbols and language can create a hostile environment for some students, thus compromising the safety and openness of the learning institution.

As a news organization, we consider it important to encourage open discussions, diverse viewpoints, and constructive feedback on various topics. It is our responsibility to report the truth and present accurate facts on any subject of relevance to our community and country. The opinion piece in question expressed the genuine sentiments of the author regarding a policy that might require reevaluation.

-Adviser Shane Short

news

## DeSantis Drops the Ballot Box

by **zoe jones and rhea newnaha**

**O**n Jan. 21, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis withdrew from his campaign for the 2024 presidential election.

DeSantis' departure from the race is leaving some voters, like social studies teacher Samantha Phelps, concerned about how voters will react to the remaining elections.

"I think the Republican Party is going through a bit of a crisis right now when it comes to who's going to lead them," Phelps said.

She said having fewer candidates to choose from is not a good outcome for any

voter, regardless of their party.

"Voters have less variety and choice among who's going to get the Republican nomination, and in my opinion, less choice is never good," Phelps said.

She also said she thinks that if former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley gets the Republican nomination over former president Donald Trump, more young voters will be enticed to vote and even join the Republican Party.

"Trump doesn't have a lot of young folks in his base, so it could really make a difference," Phelps said.

Phelps believes the lack

of having multiple candidates to vote for, and not having a good grasp of what goes on behind the scenes at elections will affect how people vote in the future.

"I'm really worried about young voters, mainly because I see a lot of young voters who are not well educated in the complexities of election and policy," she said.

Trump won his second primary, after DeSantis' withdrawal, during the New Hampshire primary on Jan. 23. He surpassed Haley by 10.9% percent of the state's votes. The next presidential primary will be held on Feb. 3 in South Carolina for the Democratic Party.

Scan the QR code below to watch a video where we talk to Statesmen about midyear coursework!



# Changing Landscapes: Capitals and Wizards to move from Washington to VA

by **juline salahi and rishi vanka**

On Dec. 13, Washington Capitals and Wizards owner Ted Leonsis and Virginia governor Glenn Youngkin announced that the district's hockey and basketball teams will move to a new stadium in Alexandria, VA, by 2028.

Washington, D.C.'s crime rate and financial gain are credited as Leonsis' main reasons for the move. However, his decision was met with controversy, because some fans were left unhappy that the move would take Washington's hockey and basketball teams out of the city.

Sophomore Erin Fuchs said that the move could be beneficial for the city.

"D.C. has a high crime rate," she said. "Moving could lower dangerous situations."

This claim is supported by the district police department's annual crime data, which reports that total crime at the end of 2023 increased by 26% compared to the previous year. However, according to a USA Today article by Mike D. Sykes II, Leonsis is using the city's increased crime rate as an excuse to leave.

"Don't get it twisted, crime would just be a convenient excuse," he wrote. "Cash is the reason Leonsis is leaving the city."

In a Washingtonian article, writer Luke Mullins agreed with this sentiment.

"You can see the real Ted Leonsis: a typical team owner, mostly concerned with maximizing the financial

windfall he can squeeze out of taxpayers," Mullins wrote.

Junior Rohan Desai said he has mixed feelings about the move.

"As someone that lives in the state of Virginia, I think it's cool to have these two teams situated in the state, but I also see that it could bring some problems," he said. "It would bring a lot of traffic to the Northern Virginia area on game day."

Senior Joey Dierbeck agreed, but said that moving stadiums may be the change that both the Capitals and the Wizards need. Currently, the Capitals are in the middle of the pack for NHL standings, and are unlikely to make the playoffs. Meanwhile, the Wizards are worse off, as they are in the bottom five teams in the NBA standings. Dierbeck said that a change in location could lead to a change in both teams' performances in future years.

"I think it could end up being that fresh start, like when Nationals Park opened up in 2008," he said. "That was a new start for the Nationals. They got the number one draft pick for back-to-back years because they were so bad, but it felt like that fresh start."

The Washington Nationals won the MLB World Series in 2019, over a decade after moving to Nationals Park, but through that period in their new stadium, they significantly improved to become a regular contender in the MLB playoffs.

Desai said that although the teams' future performances are uncertain, physically moving them to

Alexandria could have other effects, especially negative ones.

"Ted Leonsis owns both of those teams and I think it's going to cause a lot of the fan base in the D.C. area to sour on him for essentially selling out and moving the team from a prominent location in downtown D.C. all the way to northern Virginia, which is far less successful," he said. "This is a complaint that a lot of people have with the Commanders as well, them being in Maryland, which is a decent bit away from downtown D.C."

The Washington Commanders, the city's professional football team, moved to what is now FedEx Field in Landover, Maryland, in 1997. The team moved from RFK Stadium, located in the city, where the Commanders played for over 30 years, including their three Super Bowl-winning seasons. In recent years, the Commanders have consistently been ranked in the bottom ten of the NFL in average

attendance. Desai said that moving the Capitals and Wizards out of their city could cause a similar decrease in fan attendance.

"It's going to be harder for a lot of fans to get to the games if they're not in D.C.," he said. "The proposed location was Alexandria, and that's a lot less accessible than downtown D.C. I think it's going to affect attendance for games and it's going to affect the fan bases' perceptions of the teams."

////////////////////////////////////  
*"I think it's going to cause a lot of the fan-base to sour on [owner Ted Leonsis] for essentially selling out and moving the team from a prominent location in downtown DC all the way to northern Virginia."*

- Junior Rohan Desai

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COURTESY OF DAVID ACKERMAN

Capital One Arena in Washington, D.C. is the current home of the Washington Capitals and Wizards until the teams move into a new facility in 2028 located in Alexandria, Virginia.

# Theatre and Orchestra collaborate to produce play “It Doesn’t End in Nebraska”

by melanie george

Playwright and junior Han Nguyen’s drama-comedy one-act, “It Doesn’t End in Nebraska,” features a student pit orchestra fit with an original composition.

The one-act was chosen to be Statesmen Theatre’s submission for the Virginia High School League Theatre Festival. The play follows Liz, a classical music lover struggling with her mental health.

“After a suicide attempt, Liz goes through therapy and hospitalization, where she realizes she still has feelings of low self worth,” Nguyen said. “Through the help of her therapist and really eccentric family, she begins to push through and develop dreams to keep her going.”

Nguyen said she wrote the play in her Theatre 2 class, and later, theatre director Bernie DeLeo asked what she thought about it becoming a VHSL piece.

“It was really exciting,” she said. “After that, I met with him for weeks after school, plotting out different scenes and expanding it for our competition piece.”

This plotting resulted in an idea for a pit orchestra to mirror the main

character’s love of classical music.

“Well, it all started with me writing in my play about classical music [playing] in certain scenes, especially when the main character Liz is writing,” she said. “I always connected classical music with elegance and dreaming, so I really thought it fit.”

Co-composer and sophomore Hayven Marin was first approached by their orchestra director Tanya Ratner about the idea of a live orchestra pit.

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*“I always connected classical music with elegance and dreaming, so I really thought it fit.”*

- playwright and junior  
Han Nguyen

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

“I got together with some of the people, and we brainstormed what we might like to see happen with the quartet as well as trying to set some rehearsals,” they said.

Marin said the composing process entailed taking notes at rehearsals to confirm timing and imagining how their compositions would fit with the scene.

“A single melody line usually comes to me when trying to set the mood [and] theme for a certain scene, and I build off of that by starting with the chord progression, and adding the harmonies later on,” Marin said.

To simplify the process for busy schedules, the quartet will be recorded, but Marin said they are hoping to perform live for one show.

“A challenge for me was writing all of the music in time so that I could send it to everyone to practice,” they said.

Marin said their favorite part of the composing process is when the whole score is complete.

“My favorite part is seeing the music



ART BY RHEA NEWNAHA

come to life, [and] getting to listen to the playback and not feeling the need to change anything,” they said.

“It Doesn’t End in Nebraska,” debuts on January 25 as part of Statesmen Theatre’s “Right Here, Write Now!” performance.

“It’s semi autobiographical, so I was a little nervous about seeing it on stage and having everyone watch it,” Nguyen said. “Now, with the music and movements we just added, I’m super excited to see this all come together with lights and sounds and everything.”

The play centers around adolescence and mental health.

“I really tried to encapsulate the idea of not knowing how you’re feeling and why you’re feeling the way you do,” she said.

Nguyen said she hopes the audience can feel connected to the story and sympathy for the main character.

“It would be really nice for the audience to come out of the show feeling a sense of understanding,” she said. “The play also really captures the ideas of dreaming big, and the reasons to be alive. I hope the play also gives the audience a sense of hope and belonging.”



CAMILA CONTRERAS/RANK&FILE

The Pit Orchestra rehearses for “It Doesn’t End in Nebraska.”

# Chaudhuri on a new track, new team

by simon barnes

On Dec. 2, Junior Kanuux Chaudhuri ran a 6.84 second 55 meter, qualifying for the State Championship and nearly setting a school record at his first meet for Marshall.

Since then, he has placed second overall in school history in the 300 meter with a time of 36:46 seconds and in the 55 meter with a time of 6.84 seconds. He also participated in the 4x200 ranking second in school history and beat his previous record with a time of 6.77 seconds.

Chaudhuri transferred from Langley and quickly found success and a place on the track team.

"It felt great running under new colors," he said. "I didn't think I was progressing the way I wanted to, at my previous school, which is one of the reasons I transferred to Marshall. I had no idea I would get so close to shattering the school records."



EVVAN LEE / COLUMBIAN

Chaudhuri described his experience when he started competing at Marshall.

"As most sprints are, the races themselves were adrenaline packed and short," he said. "Being an outsider, I was fueled by my determination to prove to my team who I was."

Chaudhuri has competed at several high level meets, including the VA Showcase on Jan. 12, the Grant Holloway

invitational on Dec.17 and will compete at the Regional level following the conclusion of the regular season.

"Since then, I have qualified in the 300 meter and 500 meter dashes which has made it an excellent season," he said. "If everything goes well, I'm confident that the school records will be broken within the season."

Beyond these races, Chaudhuri seeks not only the best for himself but for his team, encouraging them to do the best they can.

"I want to see the team succeed," Chaudhuri said. "I've seen some amazing PRs from my teammates and wish for that to continue."

As for the rest of the season, Chaudhuri said he hopes to encourage a positive team environment.

"My goal is not only to pursue my own achievements, but to also support my teammates in achieving theirs," Chaudhuri said.

## Athletes of the Month: January

These athletes were selected by the Rank&File staff for their outstanding performances this month.

### Ethan Moore, 12 Track & Field



COURTESY OF ETHAN MOORE

At the Virginia Showcase senior Ethan Moore placed first in the 300 meter dash on January 12th with a time of 38.57 seconds.

As a multi-sport athlete, Moore said he can apply the skills from track.

"Track helps me improve on my athleticism while running the bases and my ability to help the baseball team on offense," Moore said.

Moore reflects on his track accomplishments so far.

"My greatest accomplishment in track is qualifying for districts in the 500 meter on my third time ever running the event," Moore said.

As district races turn the corner, Moore said he wants to continue to advance in his sport.

"My hopes for the rest of the season are to place at districts in the 500 meter and move onto regionals and possibly states," Moore said.

### Talia Krasner, 12 Gymnastics



ZOE JONES/RANK&FILE

As a gymnastics team captain, senior Talia Krasner said she has had a successful season so far.

"My greatest accomplishment was probably when I qualified for states," Krasner said. "I was really

shocked and happy with myself."

Aside from her individual success, Krasner said she also wants the team to advance.

"I hope we perform a season high as a team during districts, and qualify as a team for regionals," Krasner said.

In order for her team to succeed, Krasner said she assists her teammates in reaching their personal goals.

"I usually help direct people on how to set up and I try to help out when [working on] new skills whenever they need," Krasner said.

# Winter cheer returns more than a decade later

by sophie hauber and georgia streett

Winter cheer is back for the first time since 2010. Head coach Dominic Borello spearheaded the push for FCPS to bring back winter cheer.

"I was President of The Northern Virginia Cheer Coaches Association from 2018-2023," Borello said. "It was my goal to bring awareness to the county of the benefits of providing additional athletic opportunities to athletes throughout the county."

The return of winter cheer has drawn in both new and returning athletes.

"I decided to join [winter cheer] because it sounded like a fun thing to do, and it seemed like a good opportunity to meet new friends," Freshman Sienna Tearne said.

As a returning cheerleader, junior Eliina Seaman said she believes that winter cheer also provides a good chance to help athletes in solidifying their basic cheerleading abilities.

"I thought it was a really good opportunity to try and further strengthen our cheerleading skills for the next



GEORGIA STREETT/RANK&FILE

Junior Eliina Seaman completes a coed stunt with Senior Nathan Estep.

season," Seaman said.

The winter cheer team attends varsity basketball games to cheer on the teams as they play.

"We cheer for both girls and boys varsity basketball, It's a really unique experience to cheer on the sidelines of other Marshall teams' games," Seaman said.

Tearne mentioned the support she received from the whole team in learning the new sport.

"I've learned all the basic skills I need and it's been fun," Tearne said.

Sophomore Amani Eskender said she believes her experience with fall cheer has helped with winter cheer. However, participation in fall cheer is not a requirement to be on the winter cheer team.

"You just have to be aware of what you're doing," Eskender said. "Stunting is not easy the first time you do it, you need some practice, and fall cheer really helped me with that."

Many athletes who participate in winter cheer are also on the gymnastics team. Seaman mentioned that she believes pairing the two sports can be helpful.

"Doing gymnastics can definitely help you with certain skills like tumbling," Seaman said.

Winter cheer is only one team, whereas fall cheer has varsity, JV and freshman teams. Seaman noted the positive impact this has had on the Marshall cheer community.

"I wanted to try and strengthen my bond with the people who were on the fall competitive cheer team," Seaman said. "I also wanted to get to know some of the people who are on the JV and freshman cheer teams. I think it has made our cheer program stronger."

However, the return of winter cheer has not come without its fair share of struggles.

"The biggest challenge so far has been adjusting to a sideline only mentality," Borello said. "Winter cheer is quite different from Fall cheer, as winter is sideline only and fall is competition and sideline."

Seaman agreed that the switch



GEORGIA STREETT/RANK&FILE

Freshman Sienna Tearne practices with her stunt group to prepare for the upcoming girls basketball game.

from fall cheer to winter cheer has been a difficult adjustment and believes the commitment required for winter cheer has been a challenge.

"One of the biggest issues has been the commitment you have to make," she said. "Despite the fact that we don't have practice as constantly as we did in the fall season, it's still a commitment to have to show up for a two hour practice and then stay for usually around two hour games."

Tearne noted the impact that participating in winter cheer has had on her future.

"I am definitely planning on doing fall cheer next year, I've actually developed an interest to do cheer," she said.

The readdition of winter cheer into FCPS athletics has furthered Eskender's love for the sport.

"I love everything, I will definitely be doing cheer for the rest of my years, it's awesome," she said.

Go to the URL below  
to watch a video on  
winter cheer!  
[tinyurl.com/rnfwinter-  
cheer](https://tinyurl.com/rnfwinter-cheer)



# “We press”: Boys basketball’s defensive mentality leads to success

by maddie bishop and sophie hauber

As the Marshall Varsity Boys Basketball team wraps up the regular season with a 13-5 record, they attribute this success to their defensive skillset.

On Dec. 15, Varsity Boys Basketball beat the Madison Warhawks, Marshall’s historical crosstown rival, after coming back from a point deficit.

“It was an emotional and wild game,” Boys Varsity Basketball Head Coach, Jerry Lin, said. “There were a lot of ups and downs.”

Lin credits the efforts made by the team for the important win.



NADINE DRACHENKO/RANK&FILE

Junior Anderson Krisko reaches for the ball during the tip-off in the Washington-Liberty game on Jan. 23.

“I’m really proud of the boys because there was a lot of adversity that we faced in the game,” Lin said. “We came back [from a deficit] and I think that goes a long way for our team.”

Freshman Trey Lonardo described beating Madison as a “one of a kind” experience.

“The environment of Marshall’s gym when the clock hit zero on the scoreboard and all of the fans rushed the court was something I’ve never been a part of,” he said. “It was probably one of the most exciting things I’ve ever experienced.”

With the competitive nature of

basketball in the Liberty district, Lin said the team has met his expectations so far this season.

“I have no idea how the conclusion of the season is going to go, but so far, so good,” Lin said.

Lonardo believes the team has a chance to go far into playoffs because of their defensive strength.

“The goal that the team has had since the start of the season was to repeat in districts, then win regions, then win states,” he said. “I believe our team’s defense is the best in the district and can propel us deep into the playoffs.”

The team wore warm-up shirts with the words “We press”, which serve as a mantra to represent their defensive focus, according to junior Osteen Suguru.

“We always play 94 feet, we guard everybody full court,” Suguru said. “Our identity is defense, so I feel like that’s the reason why ‘we press’ means a lot to our team.”

Lin said the shirt symbolizes the mindset he wants his players to embody on the court.

“We lead the region in scoring defense, and a shirt like that is about developing a mentality to our players that we’re going to play defense first and foremost,” Lin said.

Aside from their defensive focus, character is another big aspect of the game according to Lin.

“The thing that I try to emphasize with our players is building character,” he said. “I mentioned having an expectation and a standard for our players, not just on the basketball court, but also more importantly, in school and the community.”

Lonardo said he believes that the standards set on and off the court differentiate the program from others.

“The thing that sets Marshall basketball [apart] from other programs is definitely the culture that has been built by Coach Lin and other coaches on our staff,” Lonardo said. “The 2019 and 2023 sportsmanship award banners in the

gym can back up what Coach Lin and his staff have accomplished here at Marshall.”

Lin said he places importance on positive energy on the court as well.



NADINE DRACHEKNO/RANK&FILE

Varsity Basketball team huddles up before the game starts.

“We always try to act like a team, we support each other, and we give each other a lot of high-fives and acknowledge each other for the effort,” Lin said.

Lin said he believes the team is underestimated due to some of the seniority they lost from last year’s very successful team.

“I think a lot of teams around the district are probably counting us out a little bit just because we lost a lot of guys from last year, but this year’s group of seniors have been very strong in terms of their leadership, skill and experience,” Lin said.

With the success of last season still lingering in the air, Lin said he hopes it will remain as the team progresses in the district tournament.

“I think we still have a bit of a championship residue from last year as they continue to carry that winning tradition into the season so far,” Lin said.

As the regular season comes to a close, Suguru said the team has their eyes on the prize.

“Our goals are obviously going back to back district champions and then also go for our regionals and State [champions],” he said.



Art by Eleanor Liang  
Original Sources: wingstop.com  
(Adapted via Fair Use)



The Original Hot was our overall favorite wing—drenched in a cayenne pepper blend sauce with a spicy vinegar base. Although the flavor was well-rounded, the wing didn't have much of a kick. As a spice lover, this wing left me looking for more. Wingstop rated this wing a 3/5 on their spice scale, but I think they may have confused spicy with sour. The tang of the sauce overpowers the heat of the wing. Though I love a crispy wing, unfortunately, the OG wing wasn't giving me that satisfaction. Still, if you're a first-time Wingstop customer, I would definitely recommend trying this classic red-peppered wing!

by: MAHA JIWANI

Out of all the wings we tried, this one was definitely the hottest—clocking in as a 4/5 on the Wingstop spice scale. Despite the spice, it wasn't unpleasant or unbearable. Their iconic ranch had a nice coolness that balanced out the heat. The Cajun flavor consists of two components: the Original Hot sauce and Cajun seasoning. In terms of flavor profile, it was very similar to the Original Hot, somewhat with a little zesty kick at the end. However, if you had asked me to taste this wing without telling me what flavor it was, I wouldn't have guessed Cajun. The balance of flavors is slightly off. The OG Hot sauce, rather than complementing the seasoning, instead overpowers it. But even though this wing isn't the best show of Cajun flavor, it's still good. If you're looking for something on the hotter side, these are worth a try.

by: ELEANOR LIANG

7/10



GARLIC PARM



6/10

From all the wings we tried, the Garlic Parmesan was our least favorite. The golden crispy wings, doused in garlic sauce, looked very appealing to the eye, but I was a bit disappointed with the flavor. The chicken had a kick of garlic with just a hint of parmesan, unfortunately, the greasy sauce drowned out the flavor with its oil. After combining it with the ranch, we discovered it was better off on its own. However, we did give it points for its crunchy fried shell, which was satisfying. This popular flavor was not what I expected, and if you're looking for strong flavor, you're better off trying a different wing.

by: MONA FARAH

# Rank&Style: Keeping Up With the Trends



**1 down:** A brand originally created for construction workers that sells this viral tumbler

**2 down:** Hair tool that gained fame on TikTok

**3 down:** A rice grain's Jacuzzi

**4 down:** \$400 Noise cancellation

**5 across:** Shoe brand named after a former basketball player

**6 across:** Keeps your feet warm in the winter

**7 across:** Instead of spotify, in the 30s

**8 across:** Baymax looking jacket

**9 across:** "Essentials \_\_ ." "White fox \_\_ ."

**10 across:** McIntosh Apple product

See page 19  
for answers

## Xavier Williams, 10

*Rice cooker*

### What was your reaction when you got the rice cooker?

"I was smiling because my mom said that since I love rice so much she was going to get me one. I was laughing."

### What made you want a rice cooker?

"My aunt has one, and everytime I go to her house I want rice. I always use it, so I felt like it would be very useful. One of my favorite meals is chicken and rice, and now it will be easier to make."

## Laya Kalavapudi, 11

*Chamoy pickle kit*

### What made you want to buy the Chamoy Pickles?

"I saw it on TikTok, and I thought it looked really cool, and it persuaded me to buy it."

### What were your initial thoughts when you tasted it?

"I really like spicy stuff, but it ended up being sour, sweet and spicy. The pickle was sweet, and it tasted like a normal bread and butter pickle, but then you added a bunch of sweets and then spices on it. I was expecting it to be a really good mixture of things but it ended up tasting really awful."

### Would you recommend it to someone?

"Well, the kit was like \$16, and I feel like that's really expensive for how it tasted. I learned in the past that I shouldn't listen to TikTok when it comes to food, but I did, and it ended up being really awful."

## Rylie Morris, 10

*Stanley Tumbler*

### What made you want to get a Stanley?

"I loved the color that I got, and I thought it was going to help me drink more water."

### What color of Stanley do you think is the best/worst?

"The best Stanley color is the light light pink [Rose Quartz], and the worst is yellow [Yarrow]."

### What features do you like about your Stanley?

"I like the handle and how it's easy to cart around. Also, I like how it keeps my water very cold. It helps me drink more water because it's always with me."

## Ellie Baldwin, 11

*Apple AirPods Max*

### What made you want the Apple AirPods Max?

"I wanted them because my normal AirPods always fall out of my ears and after a while they give me earaches and headaches. I heard that the headphones were more comfortable, and I like how they are over the head."

### Would you recommend them to someone?

"I would definitely recommend these headphones to other people, the noise cancellation is really good, and they are very comfortable. I could wear them all day and not feel any pain, like I do with my normal AirPods."

# MEAN GIRLS

Reviewed by:  
**Sophie Hauber**

This movie was not what I expected it to be. I thought that the concept of turning a musical into a movie was interesting, but a flaw in this was that the musical was already an adaption of the original movie. Because of this, I expected that this movie would be like the original movie: witty, and iconic. However, some of the most iconic parts of the first movie were missing. I understand that some of the changes were to make it more socially acceptable for the times we live in, but they consequently made the movie less funny and the jokes flat.

One thing I did enjoy was the casting. I thought René Rapp as Regina George was excellent in all her scenes, along with Avantika Vandanapu as Karen Shetty and Auli'i Cravalho as Janis 'Imi'ike. Though the cast was great, some were not good at acting while singing, making a lot of the scenes awkward. The whole movie felt very "Gen Z", and some of the cinematography choices were not my favorite. An example of this is how TikTok was incorporated in attempt to adapt to the current trends, but it made for more awkward scenes.

Another weird choice was the camera angle of Cady during "Revenge Party," it was odd and it caught me off guard. I also noticed that there were some major plot changes from the first movie and the musical that didn't make sense. For example, why was Cady's dad nonexistent? Additionally, some of my favorite songs from the musical were missing in the movie. This significantly reduced my enjoyment of the movie as I was waiting for the songs to appear. Overall, I rate this movie a...

**6.5/10**

# Ben's Top Five Albums of the Year

Staffer Ben Pyatt ranks his top five albums of 2023

Travis Scott  
UTOPIA



Travis Scott delivered with his fourth studio album, "UTOPIA." The album has star-studded features including Beyoncé, Playboi Carti, The Weeknd and Drake, but also features more undiscovered artists such as Rob49, and Teezo

Touchdown. The album blends exotic psychedelic beats with Scott's signature Houston trap flow. Scott expresses his battles with loss of relationships, escapism, and life in the spotlight. After five years of waiting since his Grammy nominated album, "ASTROWORLD," and somehow creating a more complete project, puts Travis Scott as my number one artist for 2023.

Lucki  
s\*x m\*ney  
dr\*gs



On his twelfth album since 2013, Lucki utilizes ethereal beats, depictive storytelling and his signature melodic delivery. Lucki only brought on one feature for his project, a name that is mentioned later in my rankings: Veeze. "s\*x

m\*ney dr\*gs" showcases Lucki's artistic growth and ability to plant himself in mainstream rap, after previously being prominently underground in his early years.

Ken Carson  
A Great  
Chaos



A never ending moshpit of rage is the best way to describe "A Great Chaos," as implied in the name. Ken Carson takes heavy influence from his record label, Opium, their signature new-wave modern trap and more specifical-

ly, Playboi Carti's high-intensity beats seen on his own album, "Whole Lotta Red." This album takes Carson out of the shadow of Playboi Carti, and into the spotlight. With hits like "Fighting My Demons," "Jennifer's Body" and "Paranoid," Carson perfects his sound, lyricism and persona within the Opium label.

Veeze  
Ganger



Detroit rapper Veeze vocalizes on quirky beats without seeming to try, creating lyrically pleasing punchlines and rhyme schemes. "Ganger" has a very Detroit-influenced sound, featuring heavy bass and funky beats with a melodic

sound that carries the track from one song to the next. Fellow Detroit star Lil Yachty flows effortlessly with Veeze on "Boat Interlude," nonchalantly lyricizing as a heavy beat fills the song.

Brent Faiyaz  
larger than  
life



Calm, cool and collected. The mysterious persona of Brent Faiyaz is larger than life, and he continues this way in his album. Brent uses his angelic voice and mesmerizing beats to tell stories of short-term relationships, toxic exes and being the

villain. Faiyaz doesn't hide the player in him, and even admits, "I'm leavin' at some point whether there's a reason or not." My personal favorite part of the album is the inclusion of many DMV-area artists such as Lil Gray, Missy Elliott and Tommy Richman, paying homage to the area in which he started his music-making career.

ART BY RHEA NEWNAHA

# Statesmen Soar into 2024

Students share how they rang in the new year and their views on new year's resolutions

## Beyond the Ball Drop

• compiled by zoe jones, rhea newnaha and natalia wells

While some chose to ring in the new year watching the ball drop in Times Square, others participate in different traditions.

Senior Kia Oyao spent her New Year's Eve embracing her family's old customs.

"Every year my mom has this tradition of putting 12 round fruits out to represent good and plentiful months for the new year," she said. "She would also put this glass bowl in the center of the dinner table full of rice and circled it with 12 eggs, 12 gold coins, and money that has been tied with a red ribbon."

Oyao said her traditions help clean out bad luck and bring prosperity to her home in the new year.

Junior Toni Oluwehinmi entered the year with her family by attending Church to celebrate as they do most years.

"I think it sets a good, positive tone for the start of the year," she said.

Oluwehinmi also said this tradition gives her confidence for good fortunes in the coming year.

"[It] helped me enter the year with a lot of anticipation and hope," she said. "While it's fun to spend time with family and friends from church, it also gives me faith and courage that this year will be really good."

Sophomore Sophia Georgieva started the New Year with a Spanish tradition of eating twelve grapes under a table at the stroke of midnight with four of her closest friends.

"I learned about it in my Spanish class this year and saw it on TikTok, but the tradition came from Spain and each grape represents each month of the new year," she said.

Georgieva also said that she believed the tradition creates a good mindset for the new year and she plans to continue this tradition with her friends in the following years.

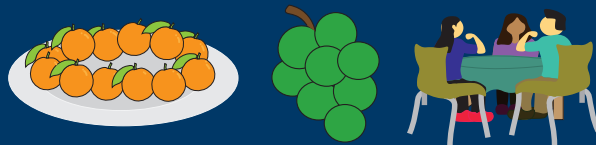
"It was a fun way for us to start the new year because all five of us had to get together under the table and eat them all in the first minute of the new year," she said.

Unlike Georgieva, Alden first saw the trend of the Spanish twelve grapes tradition for good fortune from TikTok.

"I know groceries are making business from it, and it's hilarious, but you can never go wrong with wishing the best for the new year," she said.

Alden, instead, began the new year by going to the restaurant TGI Fridays, a tradition her family has been doing for years.

"The tradition my family and I partake in is so simple yet meaningful," she said. "We can sit and talk together while enjoying a good old meal, and it never gets old."



## Are Resolutions the Solution?

New Year's resolutions are a common way for people to set new goals for themselves as they open a new chapter of their lives.

Some students have said that there are more factors that contribute to making resolutions than simply writing them down. One of these factors is time.

"People with long hours, and stressful jobs and schoolwork get caught up trying to stay afloat and cannot make immediate changes," junior Emerson Karimi said.

Agreeing with Karimi, Senior Yegi Noroozi said that resolutions shouldn't wait until the beginning of a new year.

"New Year's day is the same day as yesterday," she said. "It's just a new year, but you have to be mentally ready for that change."

Sophomore Tamara Alden said that while consistency is important, persevering after setbacks is crucial to following through with her resolutions.

"You got people who are gonna say, 'new year, new me,' and make up

all these goals but either stop after a short period of time or just never commit," she said.

Freshman Kai Perley said that while they enjoy making New Year's resolutions, their resolutions are typically things they have been working on already.

"New Year's resolutions are helpful as long as you don't beat yourself up for not doing them," they said. "If you look at it as just regular goal setting, it's less intimidating."

# Behind Bars to Freedom: Gypsy Rose Blanchard's prison release

by natalia wells

After being involved in the murder of her mother Claudine, “Dee Dee”, Blanchard in June 2015, Gypsy Rose Blanchard was charged with second-degree murder and convicted in 2016. After eight years, Gypsy Blanchard was released from Chillicothe Correctional Center in Missouri on parole on Dec. 28, 2023.

Gypsy Blanchard claimed that she committed second-degree murder to escape severe child abuse from her mother, who had a mental illness called Munchausen syndrome by proxy. This condition causes a caretaker to create symptoms to fabricate their child's illness.

“It was not because I hated her,” Blanchard told *ABC News*. “It was because I wanted to escape her.”

Dee Dee Blanchard lied to family and friends convincing them that Gypsy Blanchard had numerous extreme illnesses such as cancer, asthma and muscular dystrophy.

“In those early years, Dee Dee Blanchard had already begun spinning a dangerous web of lies about her daughter's health,” *People magazine* editor Janine Rubenstein said. “She convinced doctors that Gypsy Blanchard couldn't walk and made her use a wheelchair by age seven.”

Blanchard explained to *People magazine* that she knew how to walk and could ingest foods properly, but she couldn't tell if she had the other illnesses that Dee Dee Blanchard claimed she had.

Following Blanchard's story, students and teachers shared various opinions on the morals of the situation.

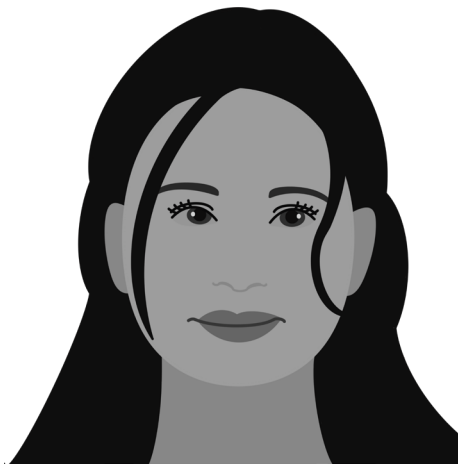
Geography and Government teacher Lucas Kline said that his knowledge about the situation came from watching the Gypsy Blanchard HBO documentary.

“I recall watching the documentary and feeling as though it helped to

inform me, but also you could tell that it was also being done to entertain,” he said. “I was pretty convinced that the mom was completely crazy and really was making her do all this medical treatment for stuff she didn't need.”

Kline also mentioned his viewpoint on Gypsy Blanchard's sentencing.

“Part of the point of jail is to lock people up who are at risk of doing the same thing,” he said. “Yes, it was this one particular situation with her crazy mother, she killed her. But she's not going to go kill other people. So you got to punish her a little bit but she's not a threat to society. So yeah, I think it was fair.”



ART BY ELEANOR LIANG

Illustration of Gypsy Rose Blanchard

Sophomore Darius Barrus believes that what Dee Dee Blanchard did was wrong and what Gypsy Blanchard did to her mother as a result of her actions, was reasonable considering the way she was treated by her.

“No matter how you put it, I feel like she was being manipulated and being taken advantage of,” Barrus said. “I think it's terrible to treat your own child in that manner and I think what [Gypsy] did was totally justified.”

Barrus said that Gypsy Blanchard's boyfriend, Nicolas Godejohn, was more at fault for the murder than Blanchard because he influenced her decision.

“Nicolas Godejohn was the one who pushed it, obviously, and Gypsy has been tricked into thinking she's suffering from these illnesses her whole life when it was all entirely placebo,” Barrus said. “It's only expected that she would listen to him.”

Junior Shelby Tearne said that she was excited about Blanchard's release.

“I'm glad she's out because she seems like a great person and I like her Instagram posts,” she said. “Also, she was abused over the years and she only wanted her mom dead because she wanted out of the bad situation.”

Sophomore Lauren Olson disagreed.

“I think that any murder is bad,” she said. “Even though her mom was abusing her and it might have been her only option, she still shouldn't have gone to that extent. I feel like there had to be other options.”

Olson also said she doubted that Gypsy Blanchard tried hard enough to get help.

“I think if she was able to get into contact with an online boyfriend she possibly could have called the police,” she said.

Blanchard, viewed by some as a worldwide sensation, gained fame quickly after she was released from prison, making controversial posts on Instagram.

“So, when I came out of prison I didn't expect this giant wave of social media,” Gypsy Blanchard told *Entertainment*. “I'm posting selfies just like the next person would, not thinking anything of it and before [you know it], it has 2 million views.”

Gypsy Blanchard said that she has gained millions of followers, but doesn't see social media as a job, and only finds it as something to do for fun.

“It's an adjustment, but I'm having fun with the selfies and the Snapchats and all this kind of stuff,” Blanchard said in an *Entertainment* article. “I'm just having fun with it.”



# Dance team prepares for upcoming competition season with new coaches

by rachel ackerman and rebecca paz

The 2024 dance season brought new beginnings as the Marshall Dance team introduced new head coach Soma Kalb and assistant coach Ramsey Wheeler after the departure of former head coach Maggie Foarde and former assistant coach Lindsay Iandolo. With the team's first competition approaching, the coaches shared their journey to this point.

Kalb said that her passion for dance began in her childhood when she did gymnastics, cheer, Indian classical dance and folk dance.

"I didn't expect to be doing this a year ago," Kalb said. "I stepped up to coach this team for fear that there might not be a team otherwise."

Despite this abrupt change in plans, Kalb said the adjustment was smooth.

"We have really learned together and I could not have hoped for a more welcoming and professional group of girls," she said. "One of my priorities was to minimize disruption and for the team to feel supported and secure in the future."

Similarly, Wheeler said that she began her dance journey when she was six years old in Maryland. She later earned titles such as Junior Miss Dance, Teen Miss Dance and Miss Dance of the Mid-Atlantic region with Dance Masters of America.

"The team has been wonderful," Wheeler said. "The adjustment has been easy, and our head coach, Coach K, has been extremely accommodating."

Senior Ava Mentzer said that the new coaching was a change for the better.

"They're both really nice, but I think they're different from our old coaches," she said. "They're a lot stricter on us."

Although Mentzer said she has noticed a decrease in team bonding from last year, she feels their increased productivity during practice time will benefit the team during their upcoming competition.

"One of our new coaches is really focused on our competition season, whereas last year we split up a lot of our time between basketball games and competition dances," Mentzer said.

Mentzer said there are differences in their weekly practices, such as less time warming up and more time rehearsing the dances and drills. However, the dance team started learning their competition number much later than other schools.

"A lot of schools start preparing over the summer, but we didn't start until December, so I'm a little bit scared," Mentzer said. "But, with how much practice we're doing, I think we'll be ready by the time the competition is here."

Despite the late start to the season, Wheeler shared her hopes for the upcoming competition.



MAHA JIWANI/RANK&FILE

Dance team performs their dance "Mix 3-4" from Universal Dance Association.

"I hope the team feels confident and excited to perform the competition routine at the upcoming competitions," she said. "To bring home a trophy or to place in the top three amongst their competitors would be the icing on the cake after a wonderful season. I am continuously impressed by their work ethic."

Junior Captain Sofia Liskey said the dance team learned the dance in one five-and-a-half-hour practice.

"It was a little intense since normally you take two or three days to learn a dance," Liskey said. "We were so crunched on time. We were just renting the space,

and didn't learn it in our normal practice room. It was a little challenging, but I think we all pulled through very well."

She recognizes the role everyone on the team has to help practices run smoothly.

"Throughout practice, everyone does a good job of communicating with people around them to figure out the choreography and pick up the little details in case anybody misses them," Liskey said.

Although the team won't be attending Nationals, Liskey is excited about the competition number, a pom routine.

"It's going to be a fun, new challenge," she said.

The dance team will have their first competition on Feb. 10 and their last competition on Feb. 18.

"When you get to the competition, there are so many other dance teams," she said. "We normally put our stuff in a classroom. After finishing getting ready, we'll go and watch some of the other performances."

After regrouping and eating a snack, the team prepares for their performance.

"We'll start running the dance over and over again until we get on stage," Liskey said. "On the way to the stage, you're moved through different rooms to run it on different types of flooring and different types of music just to prepare for anything that could happen."

Although at first skeptical of the coaching staff change, Mentzer feels ready for the upcoming competition.

"At the beginning of the year, I was kind of scared, especially because I felt like our old coaches were my friends," she said. "I was scared of losing that relationship with my coaches. As the year has progressed, I feel like I've started to build a good relationship with both of my new coaches because they're both really nice."

Pleased with the season and excited for the future, Kalb shared her goal.

"My goal at the outset was just to keep the dance team alive and get through football season," she said. "It's exciting to feel like we not only kept it alive, but it has thrived."

# A sophomore's take on midyear stress: *It's not just the juniors*

by nadine drachenko

As the end of the first semester approaches and midterms, projects and other miscellaneous assignments pile up, the sirens of stress begin to sound.

For some, their worries are higher on the scale of stress than others such as juniors and seniors with the dreaded Historical Investigation (HI) and other Internal Assessments (IA) that are all the talk amongst students cramming to reach deadlines. For others, specifically underclassmen, the stress is painted as non-existent, as year after year the struggles of the new freshmen and the forgotten sophomores go unaccounted for.

The transition from eighth grade to freshman year is like a slap in the face, with high school creeping up on students and leaving them in the dust. On the other hand, freshman year is the year of denial. The first couple of weeks start off slow as teachers begin to ease students into the high school commotion. Mised students start to think that this slow pace stays constant until that glorious last day of school, but no.

As a sophomore, it can be difficult to grasp where you stand amongst the sea of high schoolers that, similarly to you, want the success story that you dream of. Though many attempt to constantly apply themselves in the classroom, there are many mixed emotions that come as side effects of striving for success.

Junior and senior year, you have already experienced two to three years of high school, so, how bad can several more slaps in the face get? However, as a sophomore, I learned that everything you think you know about high school changes when sophomore year

hits. You lose that last tie to freedom you had as a freshman and are then hit by mountains of work that appear your second year. As if that couldn't get worse, you know that there are two years left ahead. Two brutal years jam-packed with SAT and ACT prep, IAs, HIs and even IB exams and college applications to name a few.



ART BY NADINE DRACHENKO

Even upperclassmen were sophomores at one point in their high school career, and they know best of all that although that second year of high school is not nearly as trying as the coming years, it is a vital component to how you build your awareness around the importance of education. It is the year that AEC paragraphs suddenly fully step out of the picture and full-length essays take over for good. Over the course of January, that first quarter confidence loses its strong grip on you and you're left with your neglect like a deer caught in headlights. As if that wasn't enough already, there are binders overflowing, caffeine working overtime and a social life dry as The Sahara, serving as the cherries on top.

Along with the many struggles in a sophomore's January, course selection makes its yearly appearance. By the time the semester has ended, the word 'rigorous' has been permanently ingrained into every sophomore's vocabulary as it is dropped in nearly every sentence of teachers and counselors discussing the following school year. Suddenly, the infamous course selection sheet is heavily crowded with IBs, making this second year of high school look better than ever. This time of the year is a complete confusion in that way. The broad array of class options seems refreshing at first when considering the many paths you may consider going into your junior year. Though when listening in on conversations of, "But that class has IAs," or, "But I don't take all honors right now," that has a toll on your academic confidence and may leave you wondering what you're truly capable of.

Taking this all into consideration, sometimes the stress levels of a sophomore are ignored due to the focus placed on upperclassmen. We don't give ourselves enough credit. It's typical of us to forget how much effort we put in each day, especially in times where the planner isn't doing the amount of work assigned justice, like in the month of January. Awarding our accomplishments can be difficult with not only this mid-year month on our plate, but a whole school year as the forgotten middle child of high school. It's tiring, and upsetting, but it's no reason to sulk if we make a change to the narrative. Greater mention should be brought to the stress of the mid-year, and of being a sophomore just trying their best amidst the assortment of emotions this grade may bring.

**Bottom Line:** *Sophomores are the forgotten middle child of highschool*

# Insensitive host makes bad jokes: Jo Koy

by camila contreras and juline salahi

The Golden Globes Awards, which took place on Jan. 7, allowed many actors, singers and producers a chance to win once-in-a-lifetime recognition for their work. Host Jo Koy however, an American comedian of 29 years, was unable to win the crowd.

His distasteful joke about Barbie, the 2023 movie of the year, left the crowd speechless. “Oppenheimer,’ is based on the 721-page Pulitzer

Prize-winning book about the Manhattan Project—and ‘Barbie’ is about a plastic doll with big boobies,” He joked, as the audience responded with nothing but blank stares and sighs of disappointment.

Barbie focuses on the overall discrimination and societal phenomenon that pressures women to make unjust sacrifices. Koy’s comment completely counteracted the entire purpose of the movie and displayed a total lack of character on his part.

Koy justified his actions by blaming it on his writers and his lack of preparation. Fans of Koy and Golden Globes viewers watching from home took it upon themselves to express how they felt. Koy’s misogynistic and disrespectful comments are, rightfully so, facing negative criticism over all social media platforms. The criticism, however, is not limited to “Barbie” fans as a variety of people spread their opinions. It is still unsure if Koy’s reputation will recover anytime soon, or even at all.

## Cross-word answers

- 1 Down: STANLEY
- 2 Down: RICE COOKER
- 3 Down: DYSON AIRWRAP
- 4 Down: AIRPODS MAX
  
- 5 Across: JORDANS
- 6 Across: TASMAN UGGS
- 7 Across: VINYL
- 8 Across: PUFFER COAT
- 9 Across: HOODIE
- 10 Across: MACBOOK

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