

The Commonwealth Times

Free

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Stuart Court Apartments forces students to find new homes

Sports

Why VCU's men's track team has a shot at ending its nine-year CAA championship drought this weekend at George Mason. / **Page 11**

Spectrum

'Tis the season for road trips. / **Page 8**

Editorials & Letters

Earth Day every day:
Reduce, reuse, recycle — words to live by. / **Page 19**

WEIRD NEWS

CALENDAR

APRIL 21 THROUGH APRIL 22

Thursday, April 21	Friday, April 22	Saturday, April 23
Interested in learning how to knit? University Student Commons and Activities sponsors its KnitWits Weekly Gathering from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m. in the University Student Commons Shockoe Room. For more information call Janet Howell at 828-6500.	Learn more about Islam at Jummah Friday Prayers sponsored by the Muslim Student Association. The event takes place from 1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. in the University Student Commons Virginia Rooms C-D. For more information call Ali Faruk at 663-3187.	Ready to get out and enjoy the spring weather? Try a Day Rafting Trip on the James River. This event is open to the public and begins at 8 a.m. For more information call Greg Hawkins at 828-6004.

CAMPUS FORECAST



Thursday
73/45



Friday
67/49



Saturday
64/40



Sunday
62/39

Compiled from wire reports

Cow art

An artist in Santiago, Chile, has put a cow on top of a 10-story building as a piece of performance art. A group of artists kidnapped the cow on its way to a local slaughterhouse. The cow was then lifted by a crane to the top of the building where it will live on a 1,500 sq. ft. rooftop that has been turned into a farm. The cow will live there for one week and it will be cared for daily. The artists plan to release the cow to a nature reserve after its stay on the rooftop.

From keys to the Pope

Mexican citizens were asked to send in old keys to be melted down to make a statue of the late Pope John Paul II. The citizens responded by sending in close to five million keys within nine days.

Woman sued for unwanted redecoration

An Argentinean woman named Eva de Albertengo was given a bill for more than \$3800 by squatters who took over her house and redecorated it while she was gone. After returning home from a three month trip abroad, the woman found a couple that moved into her house. The couple had not only redecorated the woman's home, but had also knocked down walls and put in a few windows. The couple was later arrested and are being sued

by the homeowner for the cost of changing her house back the way it was. After the woman sued them, the couple then launched their counterclaim which contained the \$3800 demand for work they have done on the house. The couple also built a guest house behind the house where they were keeping rabbits as pets.

Criminal captured during hospital stay

A criminal was captured after being admitted to a hospital and put in the same room with the police officer who had been chasing him. The burglar was admitted to the hospital with appendicitis and was put in the bed next to the police officer who was recuperating after gall bladder surgery. The policeman immediately recognized the burglar because he was part of a team that was investigating him for a string of local robberies. The officer had been hunting the man for two months, and the burglar has now been moved to a secure hospital and could spend up to six months in jail after recovering from the appendicitis.

Prisoner sues for lack of rehabilitation

A Romanian man who was caught stealing a week after being released from jail is asking for more than \$383,000 in compensation. The man claims that it is the state's fault that he was arrested again because they did not properly rehabilitate him.

The man said that if the state had done a better job of rehabilitating him, he would not be in the same predicament.

Town celebrates new Pope with free beer

German citizens of newly elected Pope Benedict XVI's hometown are celebrating with free beer that the mayor provided. Mayor Hubert Gschwendtner promised the town free beer if Joseph Ratzinger was elected. The town is also celebrating by visiting the house where the new Pope was born and firing guns with blank shots into the air.

SWAT monkey

An American SWAT team is hoping to train a small monkey to become a member of their team. The monkey would wear a bullet-proof vest, two-way radio and video camera and would be able to get into places that a normal cop could not. The team, which operates out of Phoenix, Arizona, said that they think it is a great idea. They hope the monkey would learn to unlock doors and search buildings. The team has filed for a grant from the Department of Defense. They believe it will cost roughly \$115,000 to go through with their project.

Front cover photo by
Pat Kane.

The Commonwealth TIMES

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NEWS

Parrish secures homeland through education

BENNETT DOWDY

Staff Writer

When Virginia Commonwealth University late last fall added William Parrish to the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government faculty, some faculty and administrators already were preparing for Parrish's arrival to help create an undergraduate degree in homeland security and emergency preparedness.

"William Parrish brings both leadership and many years of experience in this field to help create this program," said Robert Holsworth, interim dean of the College of Humanities and Sciences. "I think that this is going to be a powerful program in the Wilder School of Government."

Parrish will be working closely with two

VCU associate professors William Newmann and Judyth Twigg, experts in national and international relations, who Holsworth said, laid the groundwork for starting the homeland security major.

Parrish, a former U.S. Department of Homeland Security senior official, brings 30 years of experience in anti-terrorism training and emergency operations planning to the school.

"I am excited about the opportunity to help train young men and women to better understand homeland security and emergency preparedness and help prepare them for their futures after VCU," Parrish said.

Students graduating with this degree, he said, will have the credentials to explore career opportunities in local, state or federal government as well as the Justice Department

and the FBI.

"William Parrish brings both leadership and many years of experience in this field to help create this program," said Robert Holsworth, interim dean of the College of Humanities and Sciences. "I think that this is going to be a powerful program in the Wilder School of Government."

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Newman said Parrish is going to be one of the primary teachers in this degree. "He is phenomenal and he has done just about everything, so we are really excited about

having him," Newman said.

Parrish, a retired U.S. Marine colonel, spent 28 years in the U.S. Marine Corps. After retiring in 1999, he went to Washington for training in weapons of mass destruction overseas. He then joined the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection, which was reorganized under the Department of Homeland Security.

Parrish earned his bachelor's degree in criminal justice administration at Central Missouri State University in Warrensburg and his master's degree in international strategic studies from the Naval War College in Newport, R.I. While stationed at Newport, he completed his master's degree in management from Salve Regina University, a Catholic university.

VCU aids in environmental restoration

ALLENE MOODY

Staff Writer

Help save the earth on April 22!

With the 35th anniversary of Earth Day around the corner, the VCU community will gather Friday in the Student Commons Plaza to learn more about saving the environment.

"I think there is a lack of knowledge among the student population in terms of the environment and what they can do to help," said Emily Swinson, a VCU student coordinator for environmental conservation. "This will definitely give people some knowledge if they do come... and see what their actions can do for our environment and community."

Dean Broga, director of VCU's Office of Environmental Health and Safety, said the university's main environmental focus should be on its students.

"We all live on one little blue-green ball. Borders are irrelevant when it comes to destroying the ecosphere," he said. "Our hope lies in them. Future generations have got to come up with the technology and the innovations to resolve these environmental

problems.

"These are things that are not going to be corrected overnight or in 10 years. It's going to take long-term planning."

Earth Day dates back to 1960, when U.S. Sen. Gaylord Nelson, D-Wis., promoted a day to celebrate and promote environmental awareness on the planet.

Greg Garman, director of the Center for Environmental Studies, said VCU plays a major role in the restoration of the state's environmental problems.

"VCU tries to help the problem by providing the agencies that are responsible for improving the environment with technical information and research," Garman said. "We enable them to make informed decisions about what needs to be done."

For instance, by July 1 eight measures totaling \$50 million to help improve Virginia's environment will be effected into state law after being passed by the Virginia General Assembly and signed by Gov. Mark Warner.

The majority of the money will be used to clean up the Chesapeake Bay. Since the District of Columbia and sections of six states, including New York, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland,

Virginia and West Virginia, all drain into the bay, excess algae growth results.

Clifford Fox, interim assistant director of the Center for Environmental Studies, said these funds are much-needed, but they are not adequate.

"It's an important first step. If we want to do it all and do it right. The estimates are clearly in the tens of billions of dollars (for) the bay itself," Fox said. "When you look at the amount of money that was appropriated this past term, it's an important down-payment on what needs to be done."

Some of the \$50 million will be used to buy and conserve lands, to help operate and improve Virginia's state parks and to handle the sewerage overflow in the river cities of Richmond and Lynchburg.

In approving the allocated funds, legislative officials said that Virginia's river cleanup plans and the state's Chesapeake Bay restoration commitments also will help improve the environment.

Warner, who leaves office in January, also signed into law a bill that calls for a nutrient-pollution trading program among sewage-treatment plants and other pollution sources.

Condemned building will send VCU students packing during exams

JESSICA CHAPIN

Staff Writer

"No doubt the City of Richmond has done the right thing in condemning Stuart Court Apartments. A March report highlights the unsafe conditions of the building, including fire-escape problems and the lack of sprinkler and fire-alarm systems."

The apartment building housing 57 occupants at the northwest corner of Lombardy and Monument may not adhere to the city's building code, but why did Richmond officials choose May 2 for tenants to vacate the premises?

Many of those who live at Stuart Court are VCU students. The university begins its exams schedule on May 5, three days after Stuart Court residents would have been given the boot. Exams are chaotic enough. Why add to the students' burden? It's not their fault their landlords failed to meet the expectations of the code.

The city has safety on his mind – and it

should.

But is it too much to ask to change the mandated move-out date to, say, May 16?"

**Editorial Page
Richmond Times-Dispatch
April 18, 2005**

Although these words were written by a Richmond Times-Dispatch editorial writer, many VCU students are asking the same questions.

"I was pretty shocked when I found out the building was being condemned because there's absolutely nothing wrong with my apartment," said Katherine Robinson,

a junior psychology major who lives on the third floor of the Stuart Court Apartments. Like many other students in the 64-apartment building, Robinson must move by May 2, after receiving notice less than a month ago that the building didn't meet the city's code requirements regarding fire safety.

The city cited the 81-year-old building for

having an insufficient fire escape, no smoke alarm or sprinkler system and not enough fire exits. The city condemned the building, which must be vacated until it is can meet the code requirements or demolished.

Richmond Fire Department officials said Tuesday that the owner of the building is appealing the case Thursday, April 21, to the technical review board, which will examine the code.

Robinson said she was upset when she learned she would have to move out so quickly so close to exams. Not only did the city's condemnation surprise her, but she said she did not notice significant damage while moving into the apartment.

"I knew there was water damage in some of them but there wasn't any in ours," Robinson said.

Tom Nickle, a junior undeclared major who lives in the building, said he, too, did not notice anything wrong with the apartment while moving in.

"The things that are wrong are things you

should have noticed but didn't because you'd think the city takes care of these things," he said.

Although Nickle considers the situation inconvenient, he said residents should understand and be compliant.

"I just think the timing is horrible, however, our safety has to come first," he said.

Robinson said she noticed a flier in the elevator of the apartment building notifying students of on-campus housing availabilities at VCU.

Reuben Rodriguez, associate vice provost and dean of student affairs, confirmed Robinson's statement, saying students are being notified of vacancies in the dormitories and can contact the housing office for assistance.

"Certainly it's very difficult on students," Rodriguez said. "We never want students to be in that type of situation at any point in the year, but that's why we try to provide information for students. They need to be aware of safety, security and environmental issues when they're looking for a place to rent."

NEWS

SGA members want students to get involved in upcoming plans

ALYCE ROBINSON
Staff Writer

With their inductions into office next Monday, Eddie O'Leary, Mark Brewster and Katherine Capocelli are working on their plans for next year as SGA president, vice president and executive director of university relations.

O'Leary said he hopes to continue the programs he's already working on while helping to solve such problems as parking issues that directly affect students.

"I want to continue a lot of the programs we started this year, including the book-trading Web site and the small-community initiative," O'Leary said, "and I really want to work heavily on parking issues. I've actually met with city council. They are willing to write a legislation to change the parking signs around campus to fit our needs."

Besides O'Leary, Brewster and Capocelli, 41 other students will be inducted as senators. O'Leary will appoint 15 cabinet members and a new chief of staff, who O'Leary said most likely will be Robert Smith.

"A few things we would like to work on in the next year include student parking around Richmond," Brewster said, agreeing with O'Leary, "along with bringing better known and more edifying speakers to our campus and creating a more personal academic experience for the students within their individual

colleges."

Brewster said he also would like to continue a sense of culture and tradition at VCU.

Another issue high on the trio's list concerns attracting more students to serve on the Monroe Park student government.

"A major obstacle in the student government is getting the students involved," Brewster said. "The only way for us to make the university a higher quality social and educational experience is for students to voice their concerns and suggestions to us and for them to get involved in the SGA to help make those changes."

"We need student input, and we need students who are willing to put in the time to help make those changes."

Capocelli agreed, saying students need to pay attention to voicing their opinions and to get involved. As executive director of university relations, Capocelli plans to organize projects that benefit the VCU community.

"I will hear and communicate the concerns of the student body, and I will be organizing the presidential roundtable for all VCU's organizations so that their activities and concerns are known to all," she said.

O'Leary and his team want to enact changes to the library hours and dormitory-visitation rules, plus push for university officials to add funds to the James Branch Cabell Library budget.

As for library hours, O'Leary said they're working on trial dates now, and he encourages as many students as possible to go to the library during that time period. The administration will measure the use of the library during its 24 open hours.

"Not only that," he said, "but we're really pushing hard to have them add another million dollars to the library budget so we can stay open late."

O'Leary and others are working on a report concerning dormitory-visitation hours, since the administrators require SGA to present a report whenever it proposes something to them.

"So we gather the report," O'Leary said, "and that really shows that students don't want the visitation hours. It's really not normal in a college like this, so we're moving that through the chain of command in the university right now."

O'Leary predicted the 2005-06 SGA will be even more ambitious this year, so he sees more challenges on the leaders' plates.

"I think every year the more ambitious we become as a student government the more challenging it is, because we ask for more and more, and sometimes stop asking and start demanding," O'Leary said. "The city is not always used to it. The administration is not always used to it. But I hope it's something they're going to get used to, because we have a lot more people this year who are a lot more aggressive and really willing to work hard for the student body."



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NEWS

VCU Spring Challenge lets students have grade school fun

CHRISTINE UNDERWOOD*Staff Writer*

Remember when you were a little kid playing tug-of-war, running in relays and throwing water balloons?

With VCU's Second Spring Challenge arriving Saturday, April 23, at Cary Street Field on the Monroe Park Campus, you can let that inner child come out to play and maybe win a prize or two.

"Field day is back – taking people back to when they were in elementary or middle school," said Constantine Alexakos, the program's coordinator. "We have changed the events around for college students."

Students, faculty and staff playing in 12- to 15- member teams pay a \$20 entry fee for the entire competition. In addition, Alexakos said, each team must have five female members.

"I am trying to keep the competition in coed form, but an all-girls team is acceptable," Alexakos said. "Not to say that males are dominating, but I am just trying to keep the competition well-rounded."

Sandra Milositz, a freshman recreation-management major, said she and her Alpha Gamma Delta sorority sisters plan to participate in the challenge.

"I think it will be a great opportunity for students to get together and hopefully have fun," Milositz said. "Hopefully, everyone will not be so competitive but enjoy the day."

The 12 challenges include football and soccer accuracy, tug-of-war, miniature golf, Frisbee disc frenzy, a three-legged race, an obstacle course, a 400-meter relay, a basketball shootout, a wacky relay, a mental challenge and a water-balloon toss.

"This competition should bring the inner child out of the students," Kyron Copeland, assistant coordinator, said.

Last year's challenge had 17 teams, said Alexakos, who expects about the same number or more teams to participate this year.

Alexakos, the program's coordinator the past two years, said the mental challenge event involves a crossword puzzle contest that consists of words relating to VCU as well as people, places and things.

A point-value system will be used for the competition, Alexakos said. The teams' points will be totaled to determine the winners, who will receive a trophy and a T-shirt. All participants will receive team T-shirts.

In case it rains April 23, Alexakos said, the spring challenge will be Sunday, May 1.

List of Challenges:

- Football accuracy
- 3-legged race
- Obstacle course
- 4x400 relay
- Soccer accuracy
- Miniature golf
- Basketball shootout
- Wacky relay
- Mental challenge
- Water balloon toss
- Frisbee Frenzy
- Tug-of-war

Lecture helps students deal with change

ANNIE MCCALLUM*Staff Writer*

"The only thing constant is change," said Christine McGill, University of Virginia assistant dean of students, while speaking to about 15 students at a recent Academic Success program coordinated by the Office of Leadership and Greek Life.

McGill emphasized methods students could use to deal with changes in their lives and in their leadership roles.

McGill, who earned her undergraduate degree in communication disorders at the University of Connecticut, told the group that her passion for emerging leaders and Greek life led to her deanship at U.Va., but her friendship with Britten Blankinship brought her to VCU as a speaker.

Blankinship, VCU's leadership coordinator, and McGill met while Blankinship studied for her master's degree at U.Va.

McGill's presentation focused on the students' changes and their successful transitions in completing the process.

Christine McGill

University of Virginia assistant dean of students

28 years old

Undergraduate degree, communication disorders.
University of Connecticut
Master's degree, higher-education administration, The College of William & Mary

McGill asked the students to share their experiences with changes in their lives and who effected the changes, saying her mother still effects changes and decisions in her life.

"I'm 28 years old and my mom still has veto power over my decisions," said McGill, who completed her master's degree in higher-education administration at The College of William & Mary.

In describing her transition from life in New England to life in Virginia, McGill recalled how she resisted and denied

the change as a new student at William & Mary.

"I don't need to change. These people all need to change. Williamsburg needs to change — like that was going to happen," McGill said of her experience.

Emily Anafia, a junior accounting major who attended the session, said she hoped to gain information that would help her in the business world, so she attended this particular academic success program.

Anafia shared her thoughts when McGill asked the group to discuss their shared experiences.

"I like stability. I like to know what happens," Anafia said, adding that she didn't like change.

McGill also asked the students to consider anticipated change, nonanticipated change and different coping sources and support strategies. The group then individually responded and reflected on the changes in their lives.

After the program ended McGill explained her thoughts on the issue.

"I think that there aren't many things that are for sure in life, but you know change is going to happen," she said. "It's something that will always happen — so it's constant."

Arizona State professor speaks at Visiting Writers Series

STEPHEN PRATT*Staff Writer*

"If you stop writing, I'll die."

Author Ron Carlson, a professor of English at Arizona State University, said writers love to hear this phrase but never do.

Carlson, the most recent author to speak at VCU as part of the Department of English's Visiting Writers Series, read from his works to a crowd of more than 40 people at the 1708 Gallery, a nonprofit art space on West Broad Street.

Carlson discussed his experiences as an author as well as offered advice to aspiring writers, focusing his main point on taking time to write rather than becoming

frustrated.

"A lot of work is, of course, writing and rewriting," Carlson told those who gathered to hear him at the Hibbs Building. "If I don't know where I'm going (with a story), why should I hurry?"

While Carlson spoke for more than an hour and answered the students' questions, he concluded by encouraging writers not to get deterred.

"It's such a personal decision to write," Carlson said. "Survive the draft."

Jeff Lodge, graduate programs coordinator for the department, said VCU has invited writers to give readings since 1980.

"All creative writing programs need to have a visiting writers series," he

said.

The department seeks a mixture of fiction writers, playwrights and poets. Regardless of the writing style an author employs, Lodge said the most important factor concerns the experience between author and students, which should be a positive one.

Still, Lodge said the department faced problems finding a place for Carlson's presentation.

Previous authors have lectured in the Business Building auditorium, but Lodge said that auditorium seems rather large for such an event, while many classrooms seem too small.

"Competing with classes and other

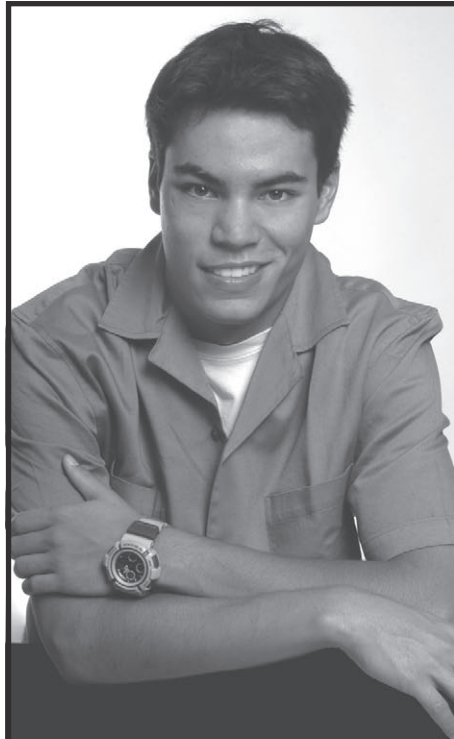
events, it is unnecessarily hard to get space on campus," Lodge said.

Therefore, since the department's relationship with 1708 Gallery remains an amicable one, the downtown gallery once again opened its doors to the readings.

Although Victoria Pitrelli, an English major, could not attend Carlson's reading at the gallery, she has attended other past readings. Nonetheless, Pitrelli and 10 others, including graduate students and faculty, attended Carlson's talk the following day in the Hibbs Building.

"It's a completely different experience to hear a writer read his own work," she said.





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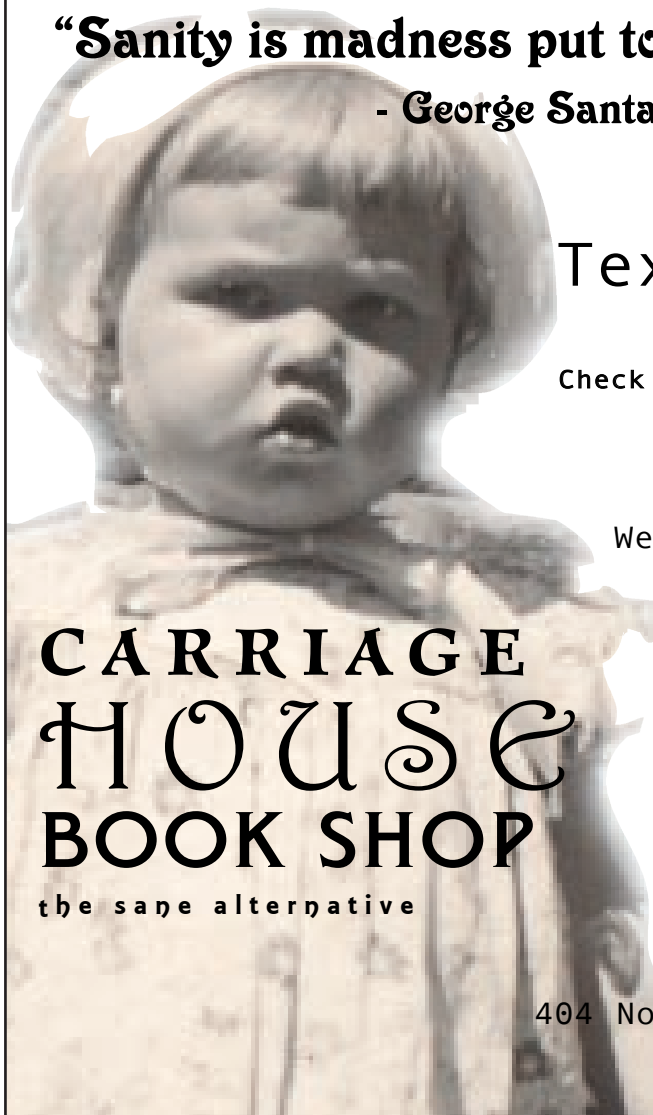
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Evangelist Don Wright
Louisville, KY

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10:00 AM

“The church at Thessalonica”

11:00 AM

“The Parable of the Ten Virgins”

4:00 PM

“Are you Fully Persuaded”

Monday – Friday 7:30 PM

Monday

“The Truth About Homosexuality”

Tuesday

“Why Are You A
Member of That Church?”

Wednesday

“Just Say the Word”

Thursday

“Marriage, Divorce and
Remarriage”

Friday

“The Riches of God”

News

VCU students and faculty discuss African-American Studies degree

CHRIS WILLIAMS
Staff Writer

Donna R. Brodd, vice provost for academic affairs, remembers when the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia approved the African-American Studies degree program.

"I worked at SCHEV in 1997 when the council said no to a degree in the African-American studies program," Brodd said. "I was absolutely delighted to have the program get approved, because I thought it should have been approved back in 1997. But I was delighted when it got approved in late 2002."

That was in 1997. Now this student major serves 13 students. Since its inclusion in 2003 into the university degree curriculum, the number of majors has tripled. Eleven of those students are African-American while the other two represent other nationalities.

Alisha Ward, a junior double majoring in African-American Studies and mass communications, has witnessed the growth in the program since she first majored in African-American Studies.

"I've seen it grow mostly by participation. Last year was the first year of the program -- they just got approval

the year before that," she said. "So this is our real first year and I've seen more people saying I'm an African-American studies major or a minor. And I'm thinking about majoring and I just see that coming ahead."

"I think our creating a study group for African-American studies has helped to create an awareness to the program."

Since 1970, African-American Studies has been a part of the university's curriculum with Rutledge Dennis serving as its first director. In June 1986, W. Avon Drake, now an associate professor in the School of Government and Public Affairs, was appointed director.

"The two goals that I had when I came was to stabilize the program," he said, "and to raise its visibility to help create additional courses, which I did."

Since then, Drake has witnessed the evolution of the program through the years. He said the three most significant developments he's seen since coming to VCU include:

- the increase in the number of the courses of the African-American studies program
- a higher visibility not only on campus but in the community of the African-Americans, and
- the elevation of the African-American studies department to becoming a degree program.

ment to becoming a degree program.

Initially, the African-American Studies Program was offered as a minor, but the university decided to offer it as a major when VCU's student population grew.

Ann Creighton-Zollar, an associate professor of sociology and anthropology with a joint appointment in African-American Studies, was appointed director of the program

in 1993. She was the director when the first degree proposal went to the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia

When the proposal was denied, Creighton-Zollar looked to the bachelor of general studies as a program where students could study for their degrees in the field. Drake said Creighton-Zollar also was instrumental in the program gaining recognition as a department.

"When Dr. Creighton-Zollar became director," he said, "she made a full-fledged push to have the program become a department of the university."

After M. Njeri Jackson became director, she further developed the degree program. As director of the African-American Studies program, Jackson continued developing the degree concept until SCHEV approved it in April 2003.

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Spectrum

Road Tripping the right way

HEATHER ALEXANDER
Spectrum Writer

As the semester comes to an end and the weather heats up, the season for road trips begins. For people with limited funds and other starving-college-student obstacles, road trips may seem impossible. But, for students with a little hope and a lot of patience, a road trip could be one of their best times ever.

Ana Burgess, a Richmond resident, is a believer of the concept of no plans means no disappointments. She said she picks a final destination and hopes to arrive in one piece.

"I never make plans because they always end up falling through," she said.

Her road trips consist of driving to music shows and visiting friends.

"It makes traveling a lot cheaper when you pick places that you know people. Then you don't have to waste money on a place to stay," Burgess said.

She also advised that when traveling, one must expect things to go wrong. For instance, while Burgess was riding at 3 a.m. with a friend back to Richmond from Charlotte, N.C., her friend fell asleep while driving and crashed into a guard rail, totaling his car. The phone call to her sister asking for a ride home from "somewhere in North Carolina" is an example of the unexpected happenings while on the road, she said.

Follow these tips to ensure a good trip:

- Always plan in case something goes wrong
- Keep communication—bring a cell phone; let someone know where you are traveling
- Bring cameras—you want those memories caught on film
- The more the merrier—plus it's a bigger cash pool
- Don't waste money on stupid things—pack lunches when possible, cut down on stopping time
- Bring a map—everyone gets lost

• Be happy and have fun—at least you're not in class

Dixie Alexander, a senior mass communications major said most of her favorite memories happened on the road.

"The destination is only half the fun; it's getting there that usually makes the trip," she said.

On Alexander's road trips to New York City, anywhere from eight to 10 people piled into a minivan and took off. She recalled passengers using the bathroom in open parking lots, stealing random road memorabilia, running tolls by accident, getting lost in bad neighborhoods and mooning other drivers.

"And that was only the first trip," said Alexander, who has pictures of proof at home.

Besides the usual drive to Virginia Beach, Nags Head, or any of the surrounding beaches, the summer months are perfect for other road travel since plenty of unusual attractions exist right here on the East Coast.

Fairmax.com lists all major cities, events and dates for people who drive for fun. Roadsideamerica.com features offbeat tourist attractions all over the country that travelers may never have considered—everything from pet cemeteries to strange museums along with driving directions, prices and maps. Roadfood.com directs travelers to inexpensive places to eat and abnormal cuisine along the way.

When planning a road trip, research places that offer student deals and cheap transportation. Buses provide good travel because there is no need to worry about gas or vehicle maintenance on a, more people can go. Also, road-trippers need not worry about crashing because the music was too loud or someone bumped the driver while mooning another driver. On a bus, travelers risk the possibility of sitting next to the old, smelly person, but they might be down for a good time, too.

Still undecided about where to go, or maybe a little scared on how to do it?

The VCU Bookstore's travel section is a great resource for books on places to visit and how to travel.

Road Tripping on the Net

Independence Air offers dirt-cheap airfare for dirt-poor students. Try the 'Glide' summer travel pass for students only at <http://www.flyi.com/specials/glide/default.aspx>

Are you a freeloader? Does your wallet ache at the prospect of paying for bed with a roof over it? Find a free place to stay here or abroad at www.globalfreeloaders.com

Tired of MacDonald's and Subway? Afraid you might be the next victim to bite into Wendy's less-than-savory manicured-finger chili? Sink your teeth in to some superb road cuisine at www.roadfood.com.

Gas prices forcing you to can the idea of a cross-country road trip? Spending a month in a car with a friend that doesn't shower that often to begin with starting to sound unappetizing? Take advantage of Amtrak's North America Rail Pass. You get 30 days, 2 countries, and 28,000 miles of track to rip up at www.amtrak.com

There's more to Virginia than VCU. Mountains, lakes, gorges, natural bridges and the prettiest ribbons of highway on the east coast await you. For a comprehensive list of hiking, climbing and leisurely walks located within our commonwealth, visit www.virginiatrails.org

TV-Turnoff Week's challenge: Go seven days without the tube

FRAZIER MOORE
AP Television Writer

NEW YORK (AP) - Television is accused of many things, from corrupting our morals and co-opting our republic to undermining our families and making pudges of our children. For all sorts of reasons, TV routinely gets kicked around plenty. And now's a great time to kick it altogether — at least for a week.

That's the idea behind TV-Turnoff Week, which for the 11th year is inviting everyone to "Turn off TV, turn on life." From Monday, April 25 through May 1, as many as eight million viewers will pull the plug on TV, the Internet and video games.

"We want to encourage people, especially parents of young children, to control and limit screen time in the home," said Frank Vespe, executive director of the nonprofit Washington, D.C.-based TV-Turnoff Network.

Raw numbers suggest a little encouragement is needed. A Kaiser Family Foundation survey released in March found third-graders through 12th-graders devoted, on average, nearly six and a half hours per day to TV and videos, music, video games and computers.

Taking no position on what's "good" and "bad" programming, TV-Turnoff Network holds that excessive screen time, whatever the content, displaces healthier activities such as play and exercise, while much TV advertising promotes an excessive and unhealthy diet.

Vespe's organization argues against TV as the culture's default mode, challenging the ever-more-entrenched assumption that illuminated screens should always be within sight.

With that in mind, TV-Turnoff Network fights two different battles: In the home, where TV, whatever the dosage, is self-administered; and in the rest of the world,

TV continued to page 9

Happenings

April 21 through April 24

Thursday, April 21

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts presents Third Thursdays featuring the Marna Bales Band with country pop, an art tour, postcard-making, barbecued beef brisket sandwiches and drinks. 6-9 p.m. 21 & up. Tickets are \$10.

Friday, April 22

Blow the dust off your favorite tux or gown. VCU's first Spring Ball, "Shanghai Nights," serves up live jazz, hors d'oeuvres and fun. 8 p.m.-2 a.m. Tickets are \$5 for VCU Students, \$7 for VCU couples and \$10 for non-VCU guests. Formal attire required. Richmond Omni Hotel. 100 S 12th St. 828-4554.

Saturday, April 23

Celebrate Chop Suey Books' 3rd year anniversary with The 24 Hour Bookman, a full day of fiction and poetry readings, music performances, puppet shows, film screenings and more. Free. Noon Saturday to noon Sunday, April 24. 1317 W. Cary St. Contact 497-4705.

Sunday, April 24

See Richard Wright's "Fire and Cloud," adapted for the stage by VCU's own Reggie Brown. Shafer Street Playhouse's Newdick Theatre. Free. 8 p.m.

Spectrum

Beck gets better with 'Guero'

JAMES APPLEBACH

Spectrum Writer

Beck's eighth record release, "Guero" on Interscope Records, is a testament to his ability to go above and beyond the confines of pop-rock and break ground with songs of unique styles. In his usual manner Beck has successfully taken popular music apart and rebuilt it from the ground up, using Latin, Afro-Cuban, electro-pop and hip-hop styles. Like the original sentences in George Carlin's stand up comedy, this is the first time music has been put together quite this way.

Before putting the album in your player you notice the album art — something you won't be able to enjoy without actually purchasing this album. Artist Marcel Dzama uses a wide variety of figures with disproportionate bodies in sketches with few but rich and bold colors. The art is definitely part of the experience in this album.

Once I started listening I noticed two things: First, from the time I put the disc in, my body could not stop moving. Every song produces a head nod or a gentle rock. The songs that really touched me inspired a full-out embarrassing display of rhythmic expression. Secondly, each song offered a complete surprise. Most albums have a "feel" or general expectation. The best way to experience this one is to expect the unexpected.

Though each song had a somewhat unifying theme, Beck isn't afraid to throw in some delightful surprises. "Guero's" lyrics are pure poetry. Beck crafts each word to express specific ideas and did so beautifully. The calculated sound



samples used from other groups (including The Beastie Boys) and the deliberate timing give one the image of a chess master carefully planning each move and trapping the listener into a checkmate of aural peace and contentment.

There were many great songs on this album; "E-Pro," the album's single, isn't one of them. But, it did grow on me. Many other songs on the album however, were excellent. "Missing," an immediate personal favorite, offers an interesting Afro-Cuban beat paired with romantic lyrics of hurt and loss. "Scarecrow" serves up a relaxed but driving rock beat reminiscent of southern rock.

Overall, Beck hit it right on the mark with this one. Looking for some good experimental music you can groove to with equally expressive lyrics? I highly recommend this album.

★★★★
out of 5

Fragmented Society

By Rolanda Wright, senior psychology major

Broken Bottles and missing pieces that float off the curb — tranquilized by the ordinary satisfying and complacent diaries of the day — cubic zirconia and other things of that nature. Not to mention such a dangerous way to end — without a friend or foe. Such other kinds and types fallen from the sky. Lost dreams in hope of a challenge into much better criteria. If fractioned or even rationalize to utter stereotypical ideologies formed frames of mind and order. Do not function or perform this or that way in constant fear of expectation — much gone and much lost for the price was paid in total amount when the innocent became lost.



To submit your poem, e-mail to gotspectrum@yahoo.com or submit hard copy to the CT office at Temple Building, Room 1149 attn. Spectrum. Include contact information and brief bio.

TV continued from page 8

where TV is a forced-fed intravenous drip.

In public spaces — whether stores or schools, arenas or elevators, airline seatbacks or downtown sidewalks — TV has staked its claim as an electronic overlay, mediating and often competing with the real life that accompanies it.

Declares Vespe: "As much as people like TV, I think you can find lots of them who would say, 'I don't like TV all the time, everywhere.' But almost all the cues in society are encouraging us to spend more time with the screens, and encouraging us to think that watching TV is a consequence-free activity.

"How hard is it to say to your child that TV is not appropriate all the time," he adds, "when everywhere the child goes, there are TVs?"

For anyone troubled by television's growing presence, the issue is one of control or lack of it.

Little wonder, then, that a device called TV-B-Gone got a hearty welcome when it hit the market last October. The size of a keychain fob,

TV-B-Gone is a \$15 counterweapon that works like a universal remote control, turning off any TV within its 20-to-50-foot range.

"TV is appearing more and more in public space, and we're being marketed to in so many ways everywhere we go," marvels Mitch Altman, the San Francisco-based inventor of the gadget. "TV-B-Gone gives people a little bit of control, or a sense of control, over that."

No, it can't dispatch a panoramic video display pulsating over Times Square. But it can quickly extinguish any TV in a bar or airport waiting area.

Altman, a 48-year-old former TV addict who hasn't owned a TV since 1980, said he has sold 40,000 units, primarily through his Web site, despite an advertising budget of zero. If the greatest corrective for TV is the "off" switch, here is an "off" switch that could change the world.

Altman plans to talk about it himself at several Bay Area classrooms during TV-Turnoff Week, an eye-opening initiative whose message his product validates: With your television off, you can see TV more clearly for what it is.

GAMER'S CORNER

THE UNSPOKEN WORD

the BALCONY

WHAT'S the BUZZ

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The Commonwealth Times

Spectrum wants students who know their stuff to write for them about movies, arts, music, fashion and other student issues.

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Tickets are available in the VCU Commons Programs Office, Room 229. Sponsored by Black Caucus, Fall Block Planning Committee and APB.



VCU is an EEO/AA Institution. If further assistance is needed please contact APB at 804-828-4554.
Event sponsored by APB. Materials designed by David Busby.



SPORTS

Upcoming Sports EVENTS

Baseball

April 22: George Mason, Petersburg Sports Complex, 7 p.m.

April 23: George Mason, Petersburg Sports Complex, 4 p.m.

April 24: George Mason, Petersburg Sports Complex, 2 p.m.

Men's tennis

April 21-24: CAA Championship at Old Dominion in Norfolk, Va.

Women's Tennis

April 21-24: CAA Championship at Old Dominion in Norfolk, Va.

Men's Track and Field

April 21-24: CAA Championship at George Mason in Fairfax, Va.

Women's Track and Field

April 21-24: CAA Championship at George Mason in Fairfax, Va.

Club Crew

April 23: Kerr Cup, Philadelphia, Pa.

To post events on the sports calendar email benbowjj@yahoo.com

Correction

A story on page 7 of the April 18 edition incorrectly said that VCU pitcher Harold Mazingo allowed two earned runs in his start last Friday against Virginia Tech. The story also said that it was the fewest runs he's allowed all season. Mazingo allowed two runs, but only one was earned. The total was not the lowest all in his nine starts so far this season, but it was the least he's allowed since throwing six scoreless innings against Sacred Heart on Feb. 26.

CAA championship has nice ring to it

JULIAN BENBOW
Sports Editor

Davion Lambert has been thinking about the 24-point gap that separated second-place VCU and two-time defending Colonial Athletic Association champion William & Mary.

That's a lot to think about.

The process would probably start somewhere around the shot put, where the Tribe racked up 24 points by dominating the top three spots in the shot put. It could move to the 21 points from the 5,000m, then to the 20 William & Mary got in the javelin and end about four miles away at the 1500-meter run where they picked up another 18.

He and the rest of Rams men's track team will have a chance to forget it all this weekend in Fairfax when George Mason host the CAA conference championship. Not only is VCU aiming to dethrone the Tribe, the Rams want to bring the school its first CAA track and field championship since 1996.

"Everybody knows what's at hand," said Lambert, a sophomore jumper. "Everybody knows what on the table."

Lambert saw it every day in practice shimmering on the hand of first-year assistant coach Ron Jones. Between the two athlete of the year awards and the record-setting long jump, Lambert and Jones share certain commonalities.

The difference between the two, however, is that Jones flosses a championship ring that he and the Rams earned nine years ago by dominating the rest of the field with 148 points as a team, including distant runner-up William & Mary, which posted 118.

Having Jones as a mentor "made a big difference in how I performed," said Lambert, who knows that legacy Jones left on the track and has every intention of surpassing it.

The mission, almost LeBron-Jordanian, starts with winning a championship, something Lambert—almost exclusively a jumper—can't do on his own, something sprinter James Frierson can't do either, something that will go beyond the individual abilities of newcomer Brett Frykberg or newly crowned CAA Athlete of the Week Lukasz Matusiewicz, but will have to combine them all.

"I think everybody should be ready," Lambert said, with the challenge just days away. "Everybody's been ready. Everybody knows who's going to get their points. We need all the little points. Everybody should go into their event thinking they're going to score."



Pat Kane

After falling 24 points short of winning the CAA championship, Davion Lambert (above) and James Frierson (below) are just two of the Rams looking to bring VCU its first men's track championship since 1996.



Pat Kane

TRACK continued on page 12

SPORTS

Leonard goes pitch for pitch with UNC, Tar Heels win late

JULIAN BENBOW
Sports Editor

John Leonard was only supposed to go three innings against North Carolina yesterday, but he was throwing so well.

Those three innings came and went and he had only given up two runs (one earned) on three hits and an error.

Leonard sat the Tar Heels down in order in the fourth and told head coach Paul Keyes to leave him in.

Goundout. Pop up. Groundout. On to the fifth.

Leave him in longer.

No runs. One hit. No errors.

By the time Leonard was done, he had thrown 6.1 innings against the No. 12 team in the country according to Baseball America and handed the ball over to Cody Eppley with the game tied at 2.

That was as good as it got.

Tar Heels pinch hitter Jay Cox sent a double down the right field line to score centerfielder Chase Younts and give UNC a 3-2 lead, which they would hold onto for

the rest of the game.

Andy Gale through six innings for UNC, giving up two earned runs eight hits and a walk while striking out seven.

Jonathan Hovis picked up the win for striking out three batters in two innings of relief.

The Rams jumped on the Tar Heels early when freshman shortstop Sergio Miranda scored on an RBI single by sophomore second baseman Scott Sizemore.

UNC answered in the second inning after capitalizing on a leadoff walk by Leonard and a throwing error by Miranda. Younts and first baseman Matt Spencer had run-scoring singles to put the Tar Heels up 2-1.

The Rams tied the game in the fifth inning when third baseman Barrett Ripley and left fielder Kwan Evans lead off the inning with back to back singles. Miranda sent a 2-1 pitch to left field allowing Ripley to score the game-tying run.

Eppley threw 0.2 innings for the Rams, allowing one run, and Brett Walker added a scoreless eighth inning.

While UNC improved to 30-8-1, maybe VCU (20-10), which had been mentioned with the Tar Heels among other teams in Baseball America's projected NCAA tournament field, proved it belonged.

TRACK continued from page 11

By that logic, the personal-best, 24-foot, 3-inch long jump by Brandon Argro couldn't have come at a better time than Wednesday's practice. The jump, he said, is a confidence boost for this weekend.

"That could put me in either a number one or a number two spot from a four or a five," he said.

That would also mean another four to six points to add to the Rams' total.

Frierson contributed 22 points last year for the Rams, only to fall short, but "because I was on last year's team," he said, "I want to be better than last year's team."

VCU dominated nine of the 21 events last year, but the Tribe owned distance events (50 points from the 800, 1,500, 5,000, and 10,000) and closed things out with throws. While VCU may have been two-dimensional last year, sprinter James Frierson knows they'll have to pick up points in events outside the sprints and jumps in order to win and he says this year's team is has the talent to do it.

"We're a better team than what we had last year," said Frierson. "We're a lot

more well-rounded, we're not just based on sprints."

Frierson will run the 4x100-meter relay along with sophomores Jackie De-shazo, Lukasz Matusiewicz and Mariusz Mostrag. He will also run the 100, 200 and 400 in order to hoard as many points as possible.

He and Argro both said in their second years they feel more prepared for the championship meet because of

the work they've done in workouts and weight rooms with their new coaches.

"I've got pretty much the same thing I had on my plate last year," Frierson said. "I just didn't have the proper silverware."

That's the coaching. I just stuck my face in the plate, now I've got my silverware. This year I'm ready to eat."

He saw the same thing Lambert saw hanging on the hand of his new coach and expects to have a ring of his own after this weekend.

"Conference is the big thing," Frierson said. "No one wants to go out with a naked finger."

"Conference is the big thing. No one wants to go out with a naked finger."

—VCU sprinter James Frierson



GET IN THE GAME

The Commonwealth Times

CT Sports is looking for students with skill to cover all the VCU sports action this semester.

The section is looking for beat writers for:

**Baseball
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For more information, contact Sports editor Julian Benbow by e-mail at benbowjj@yahoo.com or by phone at (804) 828-1058.

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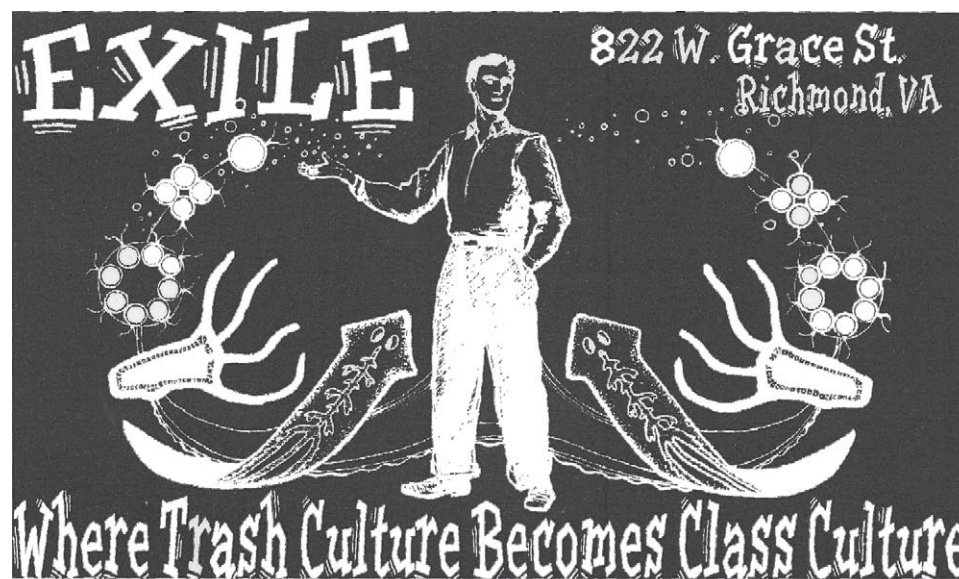
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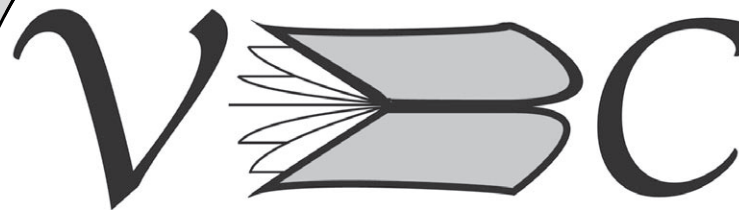
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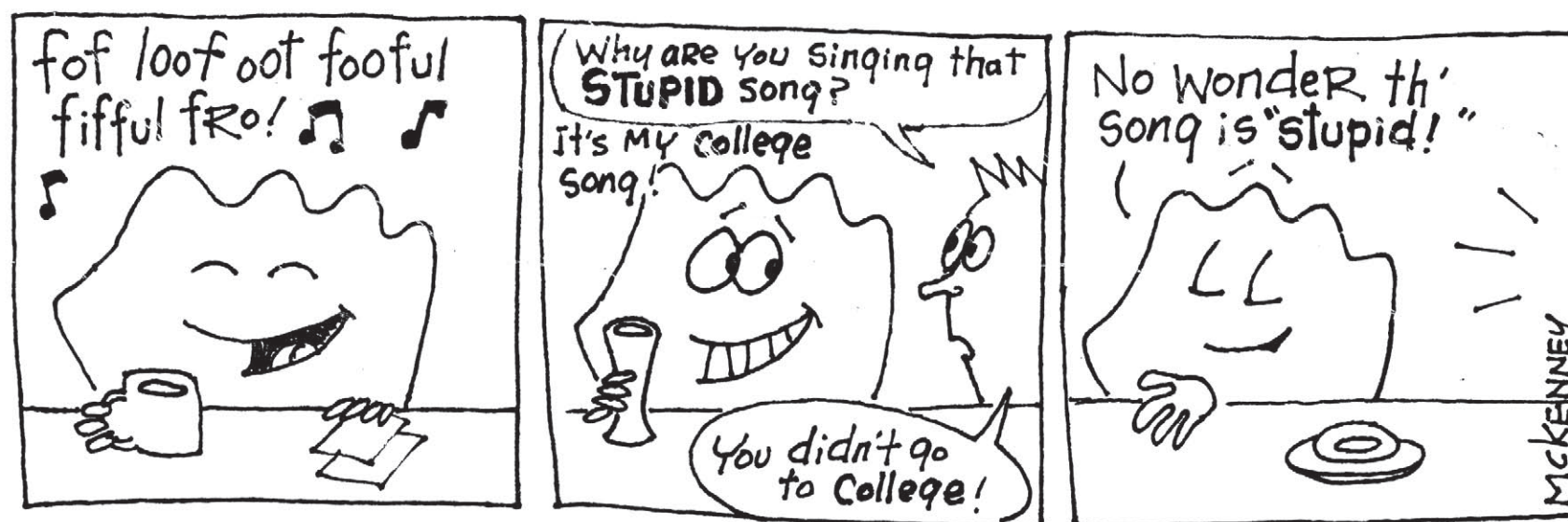
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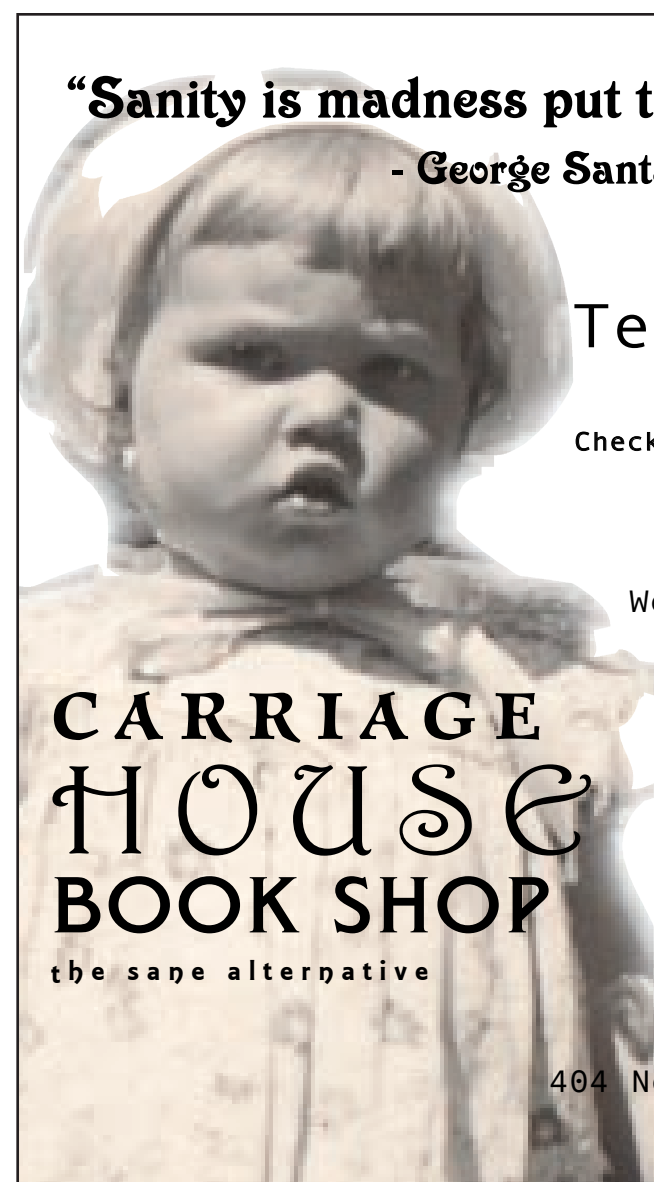
Phil McKenney



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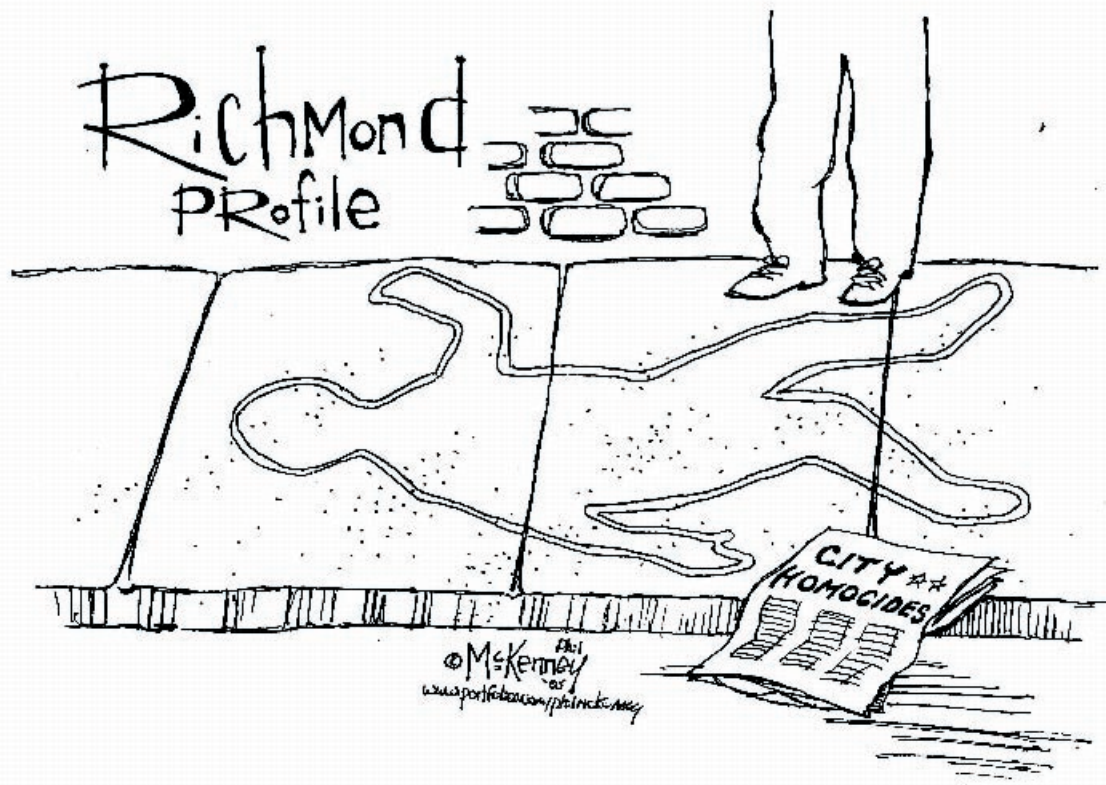
Opinion In Brief

Pull an all-nighter

Starting this Monday, April 24, students can take advantage of 24 hours of library access five days a week in a two-week special pilot project designed to test student interest in 24-hour library availability. For the last two weeks of the semester, the library will be open continuously from 11 a.m. Sunday until 9 p.m. Friday (shorter Saturday hours, unfortunately, will remain in place).

Take advantage of this opportunity if you want to see longer library hours during the semester, if you've ever been frustrated because you had to cut studying short when the library closed – or if you just need some time off from your roommate's snoring. Longer library hours means more opportunities for students to study, and more chances to get one last book before that paper is due the next day.

Whether the library pilot project is successful or not, students do need a 24-hour study area to use when the library is closed. Smaller, cheaper areas might be considered, such as part or all of the old Hibbs cafeteria that is about to undergo renovation, or the Student Commons. But as long as the library leaves its lights on all night anyway, it might as well be open.



Editorial Cartoon | by Phil McKenney

Your Turn *Letters to the Editor*



Calculated response

The Commonwealth Times recently reported on the SGA Senate Bill which would have recommended that TI-89 calculators be allowed in all classrooms. What the article failed to highlight is that the bill was not struck down but purposefully dropped, and that by doing so the student body lost out.

I was the Senator who amended the bill and unfortunately caused its demise; however, if the bill's sponsors hadn't selfishly dropped the legislation, it would have saved students huge amounts of money. The bill after my amendment would have stated that students *must* be informed of their classes' policy on calculators before they even add it to their schedule.

I personally am ashamed that two of our Senators would remove this bill just because they didn't get their way. Sen. Michelli stated he brought forth this bill because he bought an advanced calculator and found out he couldn't use it only two days before the exam. If this bill had been in place, then he wouldn't have bought the calculator in the first place, or at least he would have had time to save for a new one. I know it may be too

late for these two Senators to save money by being able to use their nice calculators, but I wish they would give the rest of the students a chance to not even be in that horrible situation!

Unfortunately, it is too late for any other Senator to resubmit the bill for this year, but believe me, it will be passed in the fall. I just know it's going to be too late for many.

Jessica Lee
Senator,
Monroe Park Campus SGA

Watching, not making

I just wanted to comment that you misquoted me in the "porn star" article. You stated that my club is "currently" not making porn, inferring that I will be at some point, which is not true in the slightest.

The Porn Club has yet to be even officially started, so really we can't logically be making or watching porn right now – I plan on starting the club next semester.

Since this issue of the paper has come out, I've had quite a number of people come up to me and mention the article and even

inquire when I'll start actually making porn. It may not seem like a big deal, but this is really damaging to my reputation. I have quite high morals, and things like this really hurt. You have no idea how terrible it is for people to assume that I would even consider making porn videos.

That's all I really have to say on the matter; thanks to your article, people now see me in a very wrong light.

–Jennifer Koca

My roommate, Jen Koca (not Roca), has not just been affected by the harmless error of a mistyped letter in her last name. On Monday, Apr. 18, the article "Porn-star, ex-porn addict debate ethics of adult film industry" stated "Jennifer Roca, a VCU student, said she plans to start a pornography club at VCU. Currently, the club doesn't make pornography, only watches it, she said."

Any educated person (as I'm sure all VCU students are) would instantly notice that "plans" to start a porn club equals the club not "currently" doing anything; however the more significant error here is the reasonably perceived implication that Jen and the potential club intend to make

pornography in the future.

If anyone on campus knows Jen Koca – unfortunately, as her roommate, that would be me. I can assure you Jen has no intentions of making pornography now or in the future. Furthermore, I can assure you Jen did not state or imply this at the debate.

I urge your writers to be more alert in the future so that such character defamations through misstatements can be avoided. This article was published on April 18th, not April 1st.

Sincerely,
Shelley Mountjoy

Editor's reply: The Commonwealth Times apologizes for the unintended implication in Louie Corbo's story, "Porn-star, ex-porn addict debate ethics of adult film industry." We regret the error.



Say something!
Write a letter
to the editor

cteditor03@yahoo.com
commonwealthtimes.com

The Commonwealth Times

*The independent student press of
Virginia Commonwealth University*

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Op/Ed

Reduce, reuse, recycle, rethink

On Earth Day and every day, every little bit helps

OMAR YACOUBI*Op/Ed Editor*

I'm in an environmental science course this semester, so Earth Day has new meaning for me this year. BIOL-103 has given me a new appreciation for just how much each one of our actions has so much impact on the environment, and how much our actions are multiplied by those around us engaging in the very same activities.

From driving our cars to what kinds of foods we chose to eat to how we dispose of our trash, every time we start a car, pick up produce at the supermarket or even flush the toilet we are making decisions – conscious or unconscious – that deeply affect the environment around us.

Being in a state like Virginia where there are so many trees and rivers, it may be hard to see just how important conservation can be. Until the trees turn brown, keel over and die, we may think we're doing fine for ourselves.

But Virginia's environmental abundance should also remind us of why it's so important to preserve what we have. By the time the consequences of our actions have become visible, it's too late.

Sure, it's depressing to think about the consequences of our actions, but that's exactly

why we need to do more to limit them now. Not thinking about something and putting it off isn't going to make it go away – I'm learning that now with my term papers coming due at the end of the semester, and I can tell you from experience: it's not fun.

So, wherever you can, reduce, reuse and recycle. The decision can be as simple as switching from disposable items such as plastic silverware and paper plates to the reusable kind, or it can be a smarter investment like buying a more fuel-efficient car.

I've made the investment of buying fluorescent bulbs for my dorm. They are slightly more expensive, but they last about ten times longer so I don't have to throw away as many

bulbs, and I don't have to change them as often. I don't pay the electric bill for my dorm, but it is important to know that fluorescent bulbs, in addition to lasting longer, use about one-fourth the energy of incandescent (regular) bulbs.

This is significant, because each extra watt, each extra appliance left plugged in, each light left on pollutes the environment that much more, since most of our electricity comes from coal. Coal, in turn, gets burned into the atmosphere as sulfur oxides that can form into acid rain. Nitrogen oxides from cars do the same, as well as contribute to ground-level ozone (smog), an

especially important concern as the summer season approaches – not to mention the carbon dioxide that contributes to global warming.

Mercury, too, has been a concern. In the last year the Environmental Protection Agency warned that pregnant women and children shouldn't eat too much tuna or fish caught from rivers because of high levels of mercury in the meat. Most of this mercury comes from smokestacks at coal power plants, which the government has yet to clamp down on.

Seeing as how there are 6 billion of us on the planet now, and growing every day, we should tread as lightly on the planet as we can. I don't mean that we should "save the whales" or hug trees, but ultimately conservation is in our own self-interest because we want to ensure the survival of the human race.

Our environmental decisions now may only affect beluga whales or caribou in the arctic right now, but eventually the same actions will affect more and more of the earth's population, and we should do all we can to make sure the earth we enjoy now is the one our grandchildren will be able to enjoy – we may even see the effects of our pollution in our own lifetimes.

Besides disposing properly of chemical pollutants so they don't pollute our groundwater or the Chesapeake Bay, we should also recycle all we can so that our garbage isn't taking up space in landfills. Someday we'll run out of room, but like I said, by then it will be too late.

*Omar Yacoubi may be reached at
yacoubioa@vcu.edu*

Recycling Facts & Figures

Recycled Paper Facts

• **Trees saved:** 17 per ton

• **Energy saved:** Each ton of recycled paper produced requires 4,102 kilowatt-hours (kwh) less energy than unrecycled paper

• **Energy saved equivalent to:** Average US residential customers use approximately 8,100 kwh to heat and air condition their homes annually

• **Water Saved:** The manufacture of recycled paper requires 7,000 less gallons of water per ton as compared to non-recycled paper.

• **Air Pollution reduced:** Reduces overall emissions of air pollution by 60 pounds per ton

• **Solid waste reduced:** for every ton of recycled paper produced, landfill reduced by 3 cubic yards

(Source: VCU Dept. of Environmental Conservation)

Upcoming events

VCU Earth Day Celebration
Friday, April 22, 2005
Commons Plaza
10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Cash for Trash
Commons Plaza
April 30, 2005
9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Don't fall for the privatization trap

Social Security needed to insure against stock market instability

OMAR YACOUBI*Op/Ed Editor*

Contrary to what you may have heard, the sky is not falling – to put it another way, the reports of Social Security's death have been greatly exaggerated. This doesn't mean that

National focus

the Social Security system is perfectly fine and we should go about our daily lives never worrying about the future, but the system is not nearly in as imminent danger as some would have you believe.

This isn't the first time we've had to fix Social Security. As President Clinton said in 1998, keeping Social Security is "the great challenge of every generation." As we look toward Social Security's future, one solution that has been proposed is private accounts invested in the stock market. Let me be clear – no single idea could be more dangerous or antithetical to the idea of Social Security.

The whole point of Social Security is to

reward a lifetime of work with a guaranteed minimum level of income at retirement to insure against stock market losses. Any "voluntary" plan to divert payroll taxes into private accounts goes against this fundamental reason Social Security exists.

The problem is that private accounts won't save Social Security at all – quite the opposite: they will cost the system money. Current benefits are paid out from payroll taxes, and any effort to divert those taxes into private accounts will hurt the system, not help it.

Republicans have gotten smart about this. They call their plan "reform." And, at first glance, private accounts would seem like a good idea. But we have already seen what private accounts are like in the form of 401(k)'s – you could ask the folks at Enron why they wouldn't want the stock market to determine their retirement future.

Republicans will tell you their plan is voluntary; what they won't tell you is that the reduction in Social Security benefits to pay for their plan isn't. Investment will be required to make up the difference.

Wall Street loves the Republicans' privatiza-

tion plan. It means billions upon billions of new investment dollars that will inflate stock prices and provide new revenue for capitalization of resources – what business does best. What business doesn't do, however, is look at the long-term costs of their decisions.

In the long run, increased reliance on the stock market means Americans will be hit even harder if the stock market ever crashes – business will be hit harder too when the bubble finally bursts. That disclaimer on the bottom of every mutual fund advertisement you see isn't a joke – "MAY LOSE VALUE."

Yes, Social Security has needed tweaking before to keep its finances stable, and it may need it now. But it's no excuse to go and tear down what generations of Americans have built up as a legacy to their descendants.

Social Security was formed in the first place as a response to the Great Depression of the 1930s, a time when Americans experienced firsthand how the capitalist system can and

does fail. President Franklin D. Roosevelt was propelled into office to find the solutions, and Social Security was one of them.

Now that the lessons of the Great Depression are fading from our national memory, Republicans see an opportunity to exploit young people to achieve their long-held political goal of undoing Roosevelt's legacy. Don't buy into it.

We can find other solutions to fix Social Security, such as raising the cap on payroll taxes and raising the retirement age. Such

adjustments have been made before to keep America's promise to its future generations, and there's no reason we should give up on that promise now.

President Bush has relied up until now on young people to jump at the chance of higher returns in the stock market, hoping that we've forgotten the lessons of history. The reason? Just try and persuade someone over 50 that they shouldn't get their Social Security check when they retire – all of it. I don't know about you, but I'm looking forward to mine.

*Omar Yacoubi may be reached at
yacoubioa@vcu.edu*

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