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The **independent** student press of Virginia Commonwealth University

commonwealthtimes.com



The wait is over
Basketball returns
with a bang as VCU
trounces VUU

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free



briefs

Local and VCU

Obstacles await McDonnell administration

Big win notwithstanding, Republican Gov.-elect Bob McDonnell will start his administration hampered by state budget cuts, a politically divided legislature and a sour economy.

Less than 24 hours after he was elected Virginia's 71st governor, McDonnell acknowledged that he will face tough economic times when he takes office Jan. 16.

Gov. Tim Kaine has cut \$6 billion from the state's \$75 billion, two-year budget because of declining tax revenue. He is expected to cut an additional \$1 billion.

Brief by the Richmond Times-Dispatch

Henrico fire fatal to two half brothers

Two half brothers who died from injuries suffered in a fire at their eastern Henrico County home Friday night were the only ones home, their sister said Saturday.

Asheli Black, 18, declined to discuss a possible cause of the fire, which remains under investigation by authorities. She identified the two victims as her brother, Ashton I. Black, a 16-year-old sophomore at Henrico High School, and their half brother Aaron D. Brown, a 9-year-old third-grader at the Virginia Randolph Education Center.

Brief by the Richmond Times-Dispatch

Muhammad execution nears

For three weeks in 2002, John Allen Muhammad led a two-man sniper team that struck on his orders, claimed 10 lives and deliberately terrorized Virginia, Maryland and Washington.

"Call me God," police were told in notes left at the scene of two attacks.

He is set to be executed by lethal injection Tuesday for the slaying of Dean Harold Meyers, 53, shot in the head from long distance at a Manassas-area service station the evening of Oct. 9, 2002.

Brief by the Richmond Times-Dispatch

National and International

House narrowly passes health care bill

The Democratic-controlled House narrowly passed landmark health care legislation Saturday night to expand coverage to tens of millions who lack it and place tough new restrictions on the insurance industry. Republican opposition was nearly unanimous.

The 220-215 vote cleared the way for the Senate to begin debate on the issue that has come to overshadow all others in Congress.

In the run-up to a final vote, conservatives from the two political parties joined forces to impose tough new restrictions on abortion coverage in insurance policies to be sold to many individuals and small groups. They prevailed on a roll call of 240-194.

The legislation would require most Americans to carry insurance and provide federal subsidies to those who otherwise could not afford it and large companies would have to offer coverage to their employees.

Brief by the Richmond Times-Dispatch

Turkey to admit Sudan leader despite Darfur charge

Turkey said it will welcome Sudan's leader even though he has been indicted for orchestrating crimes against humanity in Darfur.

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir is free to join an Istanbul summit of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. The 57-nation group holds its main meetings Monday.

Erdogan said Sunday that Turkey respects human rights and would not hesitate to challenge al-Bashir if it believed he had committed atrocities. But Erdogan said he doesn't believe that Sudanese paramilitary forces committed acts of genocide against African residents of Darfur.

Turkey does not recognize the International Criminal Court, the Netherlands-based body that in March issued an arrest warrant for al-Bashir

Brief by The Associated Press

Army: Shooting suspect is critical, but stable

A U.S. Army spokesman said the man authorities said went on a shooting spree at Fort Hood is in critical but stable condition.

Spokesman Col. John Rossi told reporters on Sunday at Fort Hood that Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan is still hospitalized in Texas. He was taken off a ventilator on Saturday.

Hasan was shot during an exchange of gunfire during Thursday's attack. The military moved him on Friday to Brooke Medical Center in San Antonio, about 150 miles southwest of Fort Hood.

Thirteen people were killed and 29 others wounded in Thursday's attack at Fort Hood.

Brief by The Associated Press

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Monday, November 9, 2009



news



Twitter, Facebook build career development

KATE LEWANOWICZ
Staff Writer

The hours college students spend surfing social networking Web sites Facebook and Twitter might play a part in kick-starting their careers.

Experts like Jolie O'Dell, a social media expert and writer for Web technology news site ReadWriteWeb stated in an e-mail, social media such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and hundreds of other networking sites are playing an increasingly important role in career building.

Using social media for career development is "as important as having a personality or being highly recommended," O'Dell stated.

"No matter what industry you're in, building a professionally relevant social graph (network) should be part of your long-term career strategy," O'Dell stated. "It can make all the difference between a vibrant and challenging intellectual, professional life and a stagnant, conventional and boring one."

Mass communications Professor Marcus Messner encourages all of his students to build a presence on various social and professional networking sites such as Twitter and LinkedIn.

Web sites like Twitter allow students to "easily be in touch with some of the top notch people in your field," Messner said.

Social media can open up the door to network-

ing possibilities even if students do not have the immediate opportunity to meet professionals in their industry face-to-face.

When students start following professionals in a particular field, they get a glimpse at industry trends and see what people in that field are talking about, Messner said.

Trevor Dickerson, a 21-year-old junior at VCU is the founder of the local-turned-mainstream Web site DowntownShortPump.com and co-owner of the media consulting business RVA MediaWorks.

Dickerson uses social media like Twitter to help bring in more than 50,000 visitors to DowntownShortPump.com each month.

Twitter allows him to connect with a large number of people from different walks of life, he said.

Though professional networking outlets such as LinkedIn are important, he said, less formal media such as Twitter enable people to become familiar with personality.

While playing an increasingly more significant role in personal and professional networking, social media – like anything else online – is to be approached with caution.

Messner recommends customizing privacy settings immediately after setting up any type of account, be it on Facebook or LinkedIn.

Also, like any form of mass communication,

O'Dell, Messner and Dickerson agree it is important to keep readers in mind and do not recommend posting anything potentially harmful.

"Be personal but be professional at the same time," Dickerson said.

According to Dickerson, learning how to use internet-based networking will only become more important as social media continues to grow in prevalence.

Since May 2008, the number of users on Twitter has grown by nearly 1,500 percent, according to studies by the Nielsen Company.

Messner predicts that over the next couple of years, social media will become increasingly mobile, allowing for greater accessibility.

"Everybody will have a mobile communication center in his or her hand," Messner said.

According to O'Dell, the future of social media includes a more fluid transfer of content between users and personalization of content to user-specific interests.

These developments mean that it will only become more important for those seeking to build a career to have a personal and professional presence online and generate content to be distributed around the more interconnected Web, she said.

"The Internet is beginning to function a lot like the human brain," O'Dell said, "and you don't want to be forgotten."

Expert Advice

Ready to jump in to the world of social media? Here's what Jolie O'Dell, a social media expert and writer for web technology news site ReadWriteWeb, mass communications Professor Marcus Messner and Trevor Dickerson, the founder of the local-turned-mainstream website DowntownShortPump.com and co-owner of the media consulting business RVA MediaWorks, suggest:

Establish a presence. Sign up for both Twitter and LinkedIn, even

if the accounts are considered "static" profiles. "Static" profiles are set up once at design time and do not change.

Find a niche. Start finding people and businesses in an industry and topics of interest. Pay attention to trends.

Get connected. Choose a person, brand or topic to follow and observe how they are using social media to their advantage.

Generate content. On Twitter, once accustomed to the Web site, start tweeting (this is also known as micro-blogging).

Twitter Lingo

"Tweet" – A 140-character blurb that you broadcast to the world. Tweets can range from interesting links to something new you've learned. Tweet anything that interests you or those following you.

"Follow" – To add someone to a list of people whose tweets will show up on your homepage. If you're lucky, they'll follow you too.

"List" – A group of people all tweeting about similar things. You can make your own lists and add

people you follow, or you can look up lists made by other people.

"Retweet" – When someone tweets something so excellent that you copy and paste it (usually giving credit to the original source with "@[name]") and tweet it yourself.

"Hashtag" – Used to share your tweet with a relevant group of people. For example, if you tweeted about VCU, you might include a hashtag ("#vcu") so your tweet shows up in a central location where everybody is tweeting about VCU.

Greening conference discusses sustainability efforts, encourages students

AUTUMN HORD
Contributing Writer

The fourth annual Greening Virginia Universities and Colleges Conference on Oct. 22, which was hosted by VCU, discussed topics including campus green-initiative operations and the most efficient green design practices.

Rice Center Director Leonard Smock welcomed the 130 representatives of colleges and universities who attended the conference along with architectural firms from Virginia, Maryland, Washington D.C. and North Carolina.

Smock said he is responsible for everyday operations of the Rice Center, while implementing research and teaching the center's mission.

The center's Walter L. Rice Education Building, located on the James River, is Virginia's first Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design platinum-certified building. The LEED is a green building rating system developed by the U.S. Green Building Council.

"My hope is that students will have come away from the conference with a better understanding of the possibilities and difficulties in building and operating 'green' on college campuses," Smock stated in an e-mail. "And with insight into what students can do in their daily college life to further day-to-day greening of our campuses."

Walter Simpson, a certified energy manager and LEED accredited professional in green build-

ing design, was a speaker at the conference and discussed climate preservation.

Simpson is an environmental consultant who retired in 2008 from the University of Buffalo where he was the campus energy officer for 26 years and the director of UB's green office.

"New buildings can and should be designed to minimize adverse environmental impacts," Simpson stated on the Campus Sustainability Perspective Blog. "The first rule of green design is this: The greenest building is one not built."

Jacek Ghosh, VCU's director of sustainability, was an integral part of the conference, Smock said.

Ghosh's panel titled "The Sustainability Initiative at Virginia Commonwealth University" lead a discussion on the sustainability plan being developed at VCU.

There were exhibitors who set up booths sharing information about green products and services. Attendees could participate in virtual tours of either the Rice Center or VCU student recreation sports projects.

Attendees were informed of green initiatives in curriculums leading to green jobs and climate action plans being developed at Virginia's universities and colleges.

Virginia Sustainable Building Network sponsored and organized the conference. VSBN promotes environmentally sound-building practices and sustainable development for Virginia, according to the VSBN Web site.

Promoting Awareness

There are a number of student organizations and offices that work to promote environmental awareness. Here are a few of the efforts being made by VCU according to its Year of the Environment Web site:

Green Unity for VCU is an active student organization that works with the Center for Environmental Studies as well as student groups and local organizers. Green Unity will be hosting VCU's Year of the Environment Student Kick-Off on Nov. 18 in the University Student Commons Plaza.

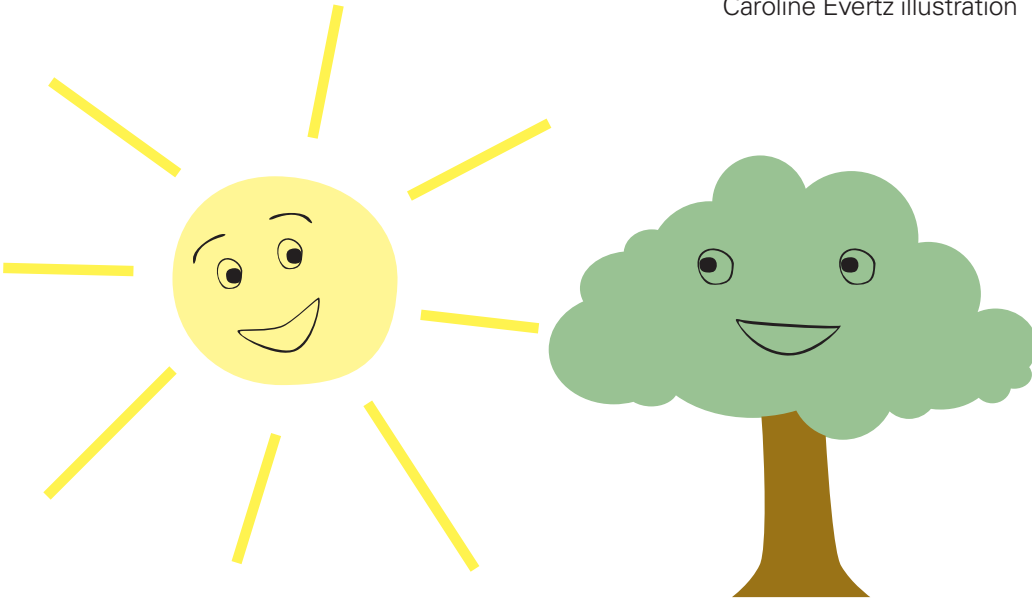
The MCV Student Government Association and Monroe Park Student Government Association are the governing bodies of the MCV and Monroe Park Campuses of VCU. They organize plans for social and community service events, advocate for students, and voice concerns and provide funding for programming done by other student groups.

Students in VCU fraternities and sororities volunteered during student move-in to collect cardboard and plastic bottles for recycling. Participating organizations included Collegiate Panhellenic Council, Sigma Gamma Rho, Phi Sigma Sigma, Alpha Kappa Lambda, Delta Chi, Lambda Phi Epsilon, Lambda Upsilon Lambda and Sigma Alpha Epsilon.

VCU Dining Services partners with Psi Chi, the National Honor Society in Psychology, for an awareness campaign called Waste Week. During this week, students are challenged to reduce the amount of food wasted at Market 810 in Shafer Court Dining Center.

In partnership with the Facilities Management Division and the Department of Environmental Conservation, the Office of Residential Life and Housing at VCU is promoting green living by making changes to campus residence halls.

Other offices include the VCU Center for Environmental Studies, the VCU Rice Center for Environmental Life Sciences and the VCU Sustainability Committee.



Caroline Evertz illustration

Managing college-life stressors

AMELIA REDDINGTON
Contributing Writer

With final exams rapidly approaching, college students are prone to stress because of the need to obtain high academic standing.

Dealing with stress is a struggle students face daily and is not limited to maintaining a high grade point average but include transitional lifestyles and financial issues according to Katie Vatalaro Hill, health educator and assistant director of the VCU Wellness Resource Center.

The Associated Press and mtvU, a television network for colleges and universities, conducted a survey on how stress affects college students' mental health. The results indicated 64 percent of students were somewhat happy with their lives. However, school-related concerns were cited as the main stressors by many students.

"Stress is the number one complaint among college students," Hill said. "Stress gets in the way of student's academics."

Some students say the biggest stressor in school is time management.

"I have financial responsibilities, so I have to work," said Autumn Hord a junior mass communications major. "And I have school responsibilities, so I have to study."

With the economic recession,

students also are stressed about finding jobs after graduation.

"I am stressed about my future," said Michael Prentace a junior mass communications major.

According to Vatalaro Hill, students can reduce stress by calling a friend, taking a study break, getting some fresh air, doing any kind of exercise and most importantly, getting plenty of sleep.

"Definitely try and get some sleep," Vatalaro Hill said. "Some people get overwhelmed and cut out their sleeping time."

Another method VCU students use for stress relief involves just listening to music.

"When I'm stressed," said Marcos Chappell a junior mass communications major, "I drink a lot of Coke and Fanta Orange and listen to rap."

Vatalaro Hill said there are two kinds of stress: healthy and unhealthy. Not all stress is bad stress.

Stress becomes unhealthy when a person starts to experience side effects, according to Vatalaro Hill. She said the side effects can include muscle tension, headaches, over or under eating, stomach aches, trouble sleeping and trouble concentrating.

"Stress can also be motivating," Vatalaro Hill said. "Sometimes people need to have that stress to help motivate them to write that paper."

Night walking on campus



Caroline Evertz illustration

TALYA CUNNINGHAM
Contributing Writer

The Monroe Park Campus is pitch black, street signs are barely visible and the faded shadows of streetlights flicker in the distance. A female student quickly scurries through the park anxiously flipping her head in all directions, leery of what lies ahead.

Walking VCU's campus alone at night is a common necessity among students, endangering innocent lives and putting students in harm's way.

"I have felt unsafe on-campus," said Monique Glover, a mass communications major. "I feel safe sometimes at night, but if I see people in my walking path, I get nervous."

To help students avoid walking alone at night, VCU offers the Security Escort Service, which drives students to their desired destination near campus.

The 2008 annual VCU crime report listed larceny as the largest and most numerous offense on campus. However, using common sense, becoming familiar with the area and being surrounded by others reduce the risk of becoming a predator's target, said Cpl. Rebecca Ellison, VCU's crime prevention specialist.

"The VCU Police suggest always walking in the company of others," Ellison stated in an e-mail.

According to Ellison, every person regardless of gender, race or ethnicity can fall victim to an attacker. No one should think it can't happen to them.

"Everyone is vulnerable and must be responsible for their personal safety," Ellison stated. "Gender is not the issue, it is personal awareness that is paramount."

Attackers prey on people who are easily distracted, or those who are not paying attention. Predators strive to take the path of least resistance, requiring three classifications of a victim, Ellison stated.

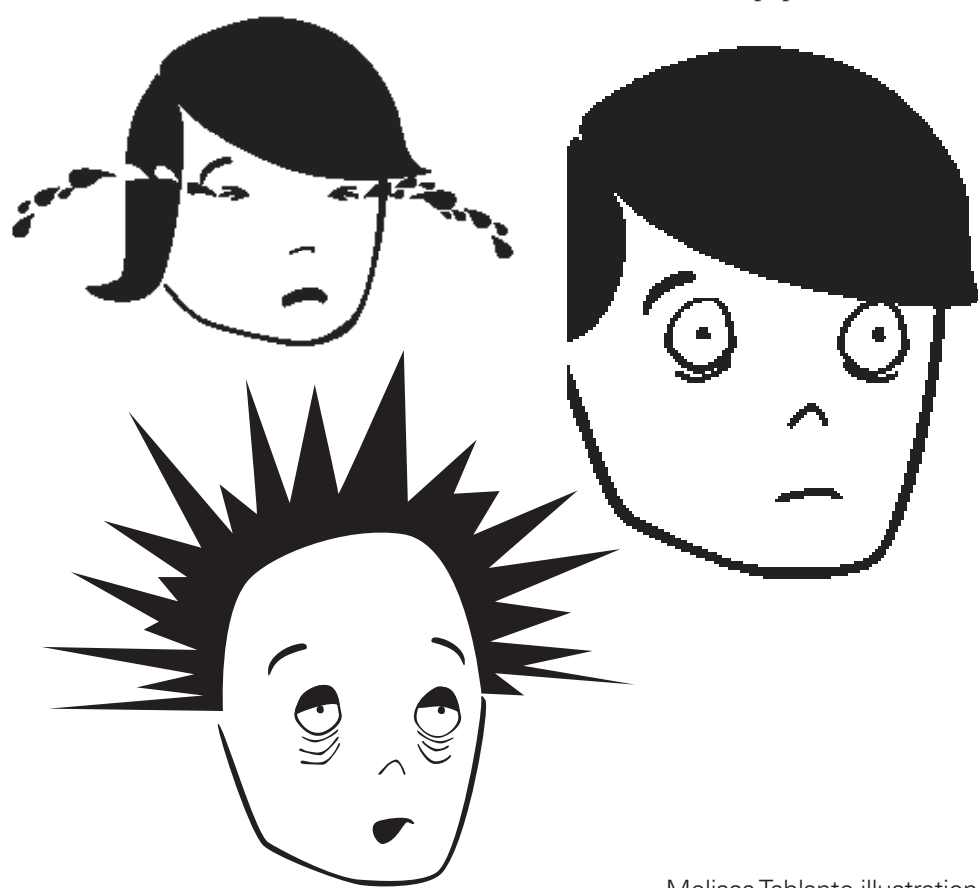
"One: victim; two: assailant; and three: opportunity," Ellison stated. "If a person is able to remove opportunity from the victimization triangle, they can possibly avoid becoming a victim."

Biology Major James Gibson said, "I don't feel safe because I'm paranoid. I don't trust people, so I carry a knife with me."

Avoiding dangerous unlit areas and alleyways are instant ways to increase safety, followed by strength in numbers. Although there is truth to the safety-in-numbers philosophy, true security really lies within the individual to be cautious when it comes to safety, Ellison stated.

According to Ellison, the VCU police participate in summer orientation programs to educate incoming students and their parents on campus safety. VCU police also conduct residence hall safety seminars each fall semester and provide safety presentations and coordinate safety programs with the VCU Office of Greek Life.

"VCU has over 90 sworn police officers and over 300 non-sworn security officers," Ellison stated. "We are the largest campus police department in the commonwealth and are a state-accredited agency."



Melissa Tablante illustration

sports

Men's basketball off to good start in '09



Jay Rodriguez (12) works the ball to his right.



Brandon Rozzell (32) skies for two.

ADAM STERN
Staff Writer

The men's basketball team got the post-Eric Maynor era off to a superb start Thursday night as the Rams crushed cross-town rival Virginia Union University 85-55 in the U.S. Army Downtown Showdown.

First-year head coach Shaka Smart showcased the team's new, intense style of play that wreaked havoc on a Panthers team that is picked to finish top of its conference this season.

"You have to take your hat off to VCU," said VUU head coach Willard Coker. "They're well-conditioned and they push the ball down your throat, I mean right down your throat."

Junior forward Larry Sanders (Fort Pierce, Fla./Port St. Lucie), who picked up numerous off-season accolades coming into the season, looked like a man among boys throughout the game and was so unstoppable that he registered a double-double with nine minutes left in the first half—all with relative ease.

The Rams' talisman has infinitely inflated shoes to fill this season following the departure of arguably the best athlete to ever come out of VCU in Maynor. Yet while dropping his usual plethora of dunks and blocking his usual bounty of blocks, it was his zero fouls that was most noteworthy following last season's habitual foul problems.

"If he can do that on a nightly basis, we'll be in good shape," Smart

BASKETBALL continued to CT7

Monday, November 9, 2009

BASKETBALL continued from CT6



Issiah Grayson (2) strips the VUU ball-handler.

said.

Sanders' scintillating performance was joined in conjunction with strong play from senior T.J. Gwynn (Burlington, N.C./Cummings), now a starter for the team, and junior Brandon Rozzell (Richmond/Highland Springs – who has put up big numbers two years in a row in the annual exhibition against the Panthers. Rozzell scored all 14 of his points in the first half, and was four of six from downtown – including three on three consecutive plays.

"We have a fast team and all of us like to run," Rozzell said. "Today I was just the open guy lucky enough to knock down the shots."

Armed with a near-insurmountable lead by halftime, Smart spent much of the second half tinkering with the team and by game's end he had used all 12 players in uniform in an assortment of different lineups. All 12 of those players scored at least one point in the contest, including the four freshmen on this season's squad.

Virginia Union's only bright spot on the night came from the impressive play of

sophomore Gregg Redford, who seemed to be the only player capable of adjusting to VCU's blitzkrieg-like defense. The former Hermitage High School player finished one rebound away from a double-double with 14 points and nine rebounds.

The only players who didn't see action on the night for VCU was forward Terrance Saintil (North Miami, Fla./Monsignor Pace) and junior forward Jamie Skeen (Charlotte, N.C./North Mecklenburg).

Saintil is facing up to two months on the sidelines after suffering ligament damage in his right thumb during practice two weeks ago.

Skeen, the Wake Forest transfer who came to VCU last year, is forced to sit out the first eight games of the season because of NCAA transfer rules and won't be available to play until the Dec. 19 matchup at Tulane.

The Ram's will start the regular season off on Friday night at home versus the Bethune Cookman Wildcats of the Mid-Eastern Atlantic Conference.



Larry Sanders (1) executes his signature dunk against Virginia Union University.

By the numbers: VUU at VCU

<p>Virginia Union—55</p> <p>Bran. Byerson 8, McDonald 4, Brax. Byerson 6, Redford 14, Ramsey 6, Wilson 2, Simmons 4, Ford 8, Dupuy 1, King 0, Garba 2</p> <p>Totals: 21 10-13 55. 3-pointers Brax. Byerson 2, Ford 1</p>	<p>VCU—88</p> <p>Gavin 4, Sanders 22, Rodriguez 11, Burgess 9, Gwynn 6, Grayson 2, Theus 1, Pishchalnikov 1, Daniels 3, Rozzell 14, Hinton 4, Nixon 8</p> <p>Totals: 31 16-21 85. 3-pointers Rodriguez 1, Daniels 1, Rozzell 4, Nixon 1</p>
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The best is yet to come ...

TAYLOR HOWSMON
Sports Editor

The VCU men's basketball team won its exhibition match up with Virginia Union by a score of 85-55. Everybody has been talking about the win and the excitement for the new season, but here are five things I learned in the VCU win about the 2009 season to come.

1. No surprise who the spotlight is on:

I doubt any VCU fan was wondering who would be leading this team in scoring, and the Virginia Union game was no surprise. There is no doubt Larry Sanders will be the man for the black and gold this season—and he was Thursday night, scoring a double-double before halftime. Joey Rodriguez, Brandon Rozzell, T.J. Gwynn and Bradford Burgess were also major contributors as they were all of last year. Newcomer Jay Gavin also showed some signs that he will be a tough match

up for many of VCU's opponents this season. Every last one of these players will need to contribute in every game in order for the Rams to have success.

2. The style fits the personnel:

Shaka Smart has brought a very unique and interesting style of play to VCU. The Rams have always been known as a running team, built around athleticism, but this year coach Smart has turned up the heat on opposing offenses even more. Virginia Union had trouble even getting the ball up the floor and only scored 55 points on the night. The defensive pressure was, in my opinion, the most exciting thing about Thursday night. The Panthers looked flustered all night. But there is no doubt that while the Rams are light in the front-court, fast is a good style of play.

3. He owned the paint, and just about everywhere else on the floor:



game commentary

COMMENTARY continued to CT9



sports

VCU volleyball wins again

TAYLOR HOWSMON
Sports Editor

The VCU volleyball team had another huge weekend winning two CAA matches.

On Friday the Rams rolled past in-state rival James Madison by a score of 3-1. On Saturday, VCU put themselves into the driver's seat for a CAA regular season title by beating George Mason 3-2. After struggling through games two and three, the Rams fought back and won the final two sets. VCU can clinch its first ever CAA regular season title with wins this coming weekend with matches at Georgia State and UNC Wilmington, two teams the Rams have already beaten this season.



file photo

Volleyball weekend

Statistical leaders

Ivana Rich - Had eight blocks Friday night, becoming VCU's all-time leader in that category.

Mariel Frey - 25 kills in the two matches. Led VCU with 14 in the win over James Madison on Friday night. Also had 28 digs and four serve aces.

including 19 on Friday night to lead the team. Had a .444 hitting percentage on Saturday night in the win over George Mason. Also had eight kills in the final two sets to lead the VCU comeback Saturday night.

Lenka Melicharkova - Had 85 assists over the weekend. Also added 19 digs and 9 kills in the two victories.

Marisa Low - recorded 43 digs.

Michala Kvapilova - 23 kills,

CAA Volleyball standings

	CAA		Overall	
VCU*	10-2	.833	22-8	.733
Delaware	10-2	.833	17-7	.708
George Mason	9-4	.692	20-8	.714
William & Mary	8-4	.667	16-10	.615
Northeastern	7-5	.583	14-11	.560
Hofstra	5-6	.455	11-18	.379
James Madison	4-9	.308	11-18	.379
UNCW	3-8	.273	13-15	.464
Georgia State	3-9	.250	16-12	.571
Towson	1-11	.083	8-19	.296

*Holds tiebreaker over Delaware

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COMMENTARY continued from CT7

The thing that I found most entertaining about Thursday night was the improvement Larry Sanders has appeared to have made. The guy has grown by leaps and bounds since arriving in Richmond two years ago, but this year appears to be his breakout season. I don't know if it was the division two competition but from where I was sitting, Sanders looked like a man-child and was all but unstoppable. He finished the night with six blocks along with 22 points and 14 rebounds to add to the double-double he had at half. But amazingly, I don't think the numbers do his night justice. He was dominant. I am looking forward to seeing him play all year, and if you weren't there Thursday night, make sure you get to a game this year to see this guy play (he won't be here much longer).

4. The point guard question didn't really come up:

Obviously there was no Eric Maynor Thursday night, however despite all the point guard questions that have been circling, the question was answered Thursday. Joey Rodriguez was exceptional at the position. It is obvious he has improved in many ways, but the leadership was the thing I was most impressed with. Darius Theus, the freshman, also looked good playing the position. But I was most impressed when Rodriguez came out as VCU played a little "point guard by committee." The question is: Can these guys hold up handling the ball and being a quarterback on the court? The success of VCU will hinge upon that answer.

5. I know it's just an exhibition:

It is hard to get too excited about this win because VCU is supposed to pound Virginia Union—that's why the game doesn't count. I was very excited to watch VCU basketball again and I know a lot of people shared that emotion, but let's remember this team has real games in a week. When the Rams start with wins over division one teams, I will get really excited about this team. But seriously, how great is it to have basketball back in the capital city?



Follow the VCU Basketball Info and all other VCU athletics news in Taylor Howsmon's CT Sports Blog at www.twitter.com/theCT_sports

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spectrum

theater
review

Cast adds depth to flat musical plot



Kyle Laferriere photo

CHRISTIAN WRIGHT
Contributing Writer

There was a fundamental problem with “Ain’t Misbehavin’.” It had nothing to do with the actors, songs, set lighting or audio design.

The problem with “Ain’t Misbehavin’” is the musical itself. It takes wonderful songs by Fats Waller and simply represents them in period with a lot of razzle-dazzle.

To be fair, that might be your cup of tea if you always liked the song-and-dance of musicals and hated that pesky little plot underneath. For everyone else who wants, well, a plot or story, it presents a quandary.

Granted, it was a well composed show. The five principle vocalists, Joshua Boone, Jasmine Coles, Olisa Enrico-Johnson and Joshua Grace, were all outstanding. They sold you in their performances of Fats Waller’s songs. You felt their sorrow in “Black and Blue,” and their cheer in “Handful of Keys.”

The songs also play straight to stereotypes of the 1920s. They mention speakeasies, the movie “Reefer Madness,” jazz joints, Harlem and radio. The vintage 1920s costumes, which pay homage to Zora Neale Hurston and the flappers, are also well done.

The lighting and set design were amazing, as well. During transitions, the backdrop changes color from a sunset orange to a husky blue and then back. Big piano keys that mimicked skyscrapers lit up in time with the music. The wonderful eye candy heightened the performances and music.

The only distracting part of the performance I attended were technical difficulties with the microphones. I only mention this because it took me (and the rest of the audience) out of the moment, especially in the second act, where the music isn’t quite as good as the first. The energy got sucked out of the room for the last 20 minutes. It picked up in the finale, but it laid bare the problem with the concept of the show. Two years ago, Theatre VCU put out a production almost exactly like “Ain’t Misbehavin’” called “Smokey Joe’s Café.” The only difference between the two was that “Smokey Joe’s Café” used ‘50s songs set in the same period. It was even more pointless than ‘Ain’t Misbehavin’.’ The songs were so recognizable that you felt as if you’d accidentally stumbled onto the oldies station on the radio. “Ain’t Misbehavin’” felt fresh because

AIN’T MISBEHAVIN’ continued to CT12

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spectrum

album review

Wolfmother brings music back

ERIKA WILKINS
Assistant Spectrum Editor

When Robert Plant parades himself on a stage, his characteristic enigmatic charm washes over the audience. When he opens his mouth and lets that distinctive soulful drawl fall from his lips, he captures generations. He, alongside the other members of Led Zeppelin, possesses an epic quality that popular rock bands of today undoubtedly lack. The original Woodstock-era musicians share a raw dynamic energy that is momentarily absent on the music charts. Their brilliant music and psychedelic song writing has been replaced by the likes of Fall Out Boy and Good Charlotte singing “dance, dance” and “I don’t wanna be in love.”

It’s therefore an absolute delight to finally hear rock music with integrity, innovation and viability. Wolfmother, a four-member Australian band, has given listeners a reason to love music again. Vocalist, Andrew Stockdale is the most captivating, curly-haired frontman since Julian Casablancas (of The Strokes), wailing, crooning and shrieking his way through the band’s newest LP “Cosmic Egg.” The album is brimming with powerful songs that would do its predecessors proud. Take for example, the exemplary “New Moon Rising.” Drummer Dave Atkins pats out a steady rhythm, under guitarists Ian Peres and Aidan Nemeth’s instrumental grunting. All the while Stockdale moans (See the small town boy now/from a small time family/He’s got to find his way now/gotta find himself a woman). It has been decades since the music industry has heard lyrics so simple, primal and honest.

The band continues its conquest of rock and roll with the hard-driving “10,000 Feet” and the eternally cool “Cosmic Egg,” which is featured both electronically and acoustically. Wolfmother boldly finishes its album attempting a feat many musicians lack the gumption to even try. The Aussies flawlessly and soulfully cover Jimi Hendrix’s “If 6 was 9.” Proving yet again that their signature uniqueness garners them a place among rock royalty, the musicians lay down the number with staggering precision. It is without a doubt the best rock album of the year. Congratulations to Wolfmother for finding the music again.

Grade: A+

Download (don’t steal): “White Feather” by Wolfmother

AIN’T MISBEHAVIN’ continued from CT10

Waller’s jazz music isn’t immediately identifiable. Yet, both were masking the fact that, at their heart, they were glorified jukeboxes set to wonderful eye candy. Patti D’Beck, who directed “Ain’t Misbehavin’” and “Smokey Joe’s Café,” is a veteran Broadway choreographer who has worked on some excellent productions. I would much rather see her redo, “A Chorus Line” or even “Grease.” At least those plays, however superficial, are about something.



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Duchess of York leads the Richmond music scene



ABOVE: Duchess of York plays for a crowd at The National.

BELOW: Austin York and Jacob Shank performing live.



Monday, November 9, 2009

ERIKA WILKINS

Assistant Spectrum Editor

What separates undiscovered talent from ordinary bands trying to make it big? A little bit of magic. It is with great will power that I refrain from littering this article with references to everyone from Queen and Zeppelin to the Jackson Five. Not because this band of brothers replicates the sounds of bands that precede them; not because there's a lack of words to describe the soulful heart-thumping music, but because I want to convey the grandeur this group of musicians inspires.

Soundly embedded in the Richmond music scene is a band so insightful, majestic and passionate you'll scarcely believe they've just finished puberty. Duchess of York is creating a rumbling in Virginia that has music fans coming out of the woodwork and giving them a new band to idolize. I am one of those adoring fans. Hearing Duchess' music for the first time a year ago instantly made me a life-long fan—I'm talking stick with them through thick and thin, die hard, scream at the top of my lungs and make no apologies fan. That ability to capture adoration and devotion with music alone is the magic that Michael York, Austin York and Jacob Shank possess.

When these magicians join forces, they conjure music

MUSIC continued to CT14

spectrum commonwealthtimes.com · CT13



restaurant review

ROBERTO CURTIS
Executive Editor

Carytown Bicycle Company and Pamparius.com hosted their first ever pizza crawl Friday night, prompting approximately 30 cyclists to ride around Richmond sampling the sauciest slices the city could serve up.

The group was made up of employees of Carytown Bicycle Company, members of the VCU cycling team as well as others.

"We got guys from the bike team and a couple mass comm kids and some random people that found out about it through Facebook," said event organizer and Pamparius.com co-founder Andy Stites.

Computer science alumnus Brett Ashford said the combination of cycling and eating could prove to be a problem.

"(Digestion) is my top concern at the moment," Ashford said. "(Vomiting) could be rough. I'll probably keep riding but I'll part with it."

The swarm of cyclists descended on four pizza joints for small, hot portions before saddling back up in search of the next helping.

The first destination, Strawberry Street's 8 1/2, welcomed the bikers around 7:30 p.m. and they sampled the restaurant's two flavors: red and white.

Business major Johnny Phan said the pizza's spiciness won him over.

"I liked the zest. It had a little kick to it," Phan said. "It was good, thin pizza."

The next stop on the high-speed crawl was Tarrantino's on East Broad Street. Copious amounts of piping-hot cheese typified this pizza, and judging by the smiles and the speed with which the larger slices disappeared, many were pleased with the results.

Two blocks away awaited the following restaurant, Romanza Pizza on North Second Street.

Stites spoke highly of the bargain pizza this shop offered up.

"\$8.99 for a 14-inch large? You can't beat that,"



Roberto Curtis
photos

Pizza crawl unites bikers and pizza lovers

ABOVE: Participants enjoy slices of pizza during the crawl.

BELOW: Cyclists gather outside Piccola Italy as they end the crawl.

Stites said.

Romanza's pizza was certainly fresh and crunchy, and not too far off from the typical Assante's slice. The sauce was certainly tastier and less sugary however.

The fourth and final pizza sampling of the night was Piccola Italy at North Harrison and West Main streets.

"It was quite rubbery and salty," Ashford said. "It felt like it was sitting out awhile."

Overall, many felt the event was a huge success.

"It's neat to get everybody out and gathering for food. I think that's a cool combination," said art education major Donna Miller. "It warms the soul on a warm night like tonight."

One person even said the pizza crawl was "dream come true."

"I can't tell you how many times in college I was walking down the street high wishing I could find people on the corner giving away free pizza," said a man who called himself John Johnson.

MUSIC continued from CT13

that could have easily filled the entire "Almost Famous" soundtrack—Elton John or no Elton John. They are a wonderful mix of old school rock, reggae, glam and metal. With compelling ballads like "Half Moon," where vocalist Michael York croons, "If you want me to stay, I think I'll quietly go." They even channel the late Johnny Cash with poignancy not often doable by people of their age. On the anthem-inspiring "Little Boom Box," — which could easily be the next "We Will Rock You," blasting before sporting events from now until eternity — Duchess of York switches gears completely. They pound out a hard-hitting and undeniably cool track—the likes of which they're most known for. But it's on one of the band's title song for their upcoming album "United By Colors," that they showcase their talent as musicians most profoundly.

This masterpiece of no certain standing begins with sweet repetitive guitar licks that are quietly interrupted by a smooth, jazzy overlay. It's then that Michael begins his daunting, nursery rhyme drone in a manner that is exclusively his. He sings of sociability, virtuosity and Timbuktu without skipping a beat.

Even at a stage so early in their lives and career, the members of Duchess of York pained, love-struck lyrics carry a maturity that easily masks their youth. In songs with lyrics both intimate and important, Duchess is solely about the music. With the band's pension for unexpected timing and apparent musical capability, there are no tricks, falters or pretentious drum solos. Duchess of York just serves fans the artfully created rhythms that have built the band of tomorrow its unwavering following.

Download (don't steal):
"United By Colors" by
Duchess of York





spectrum

Erika Wilkins photos

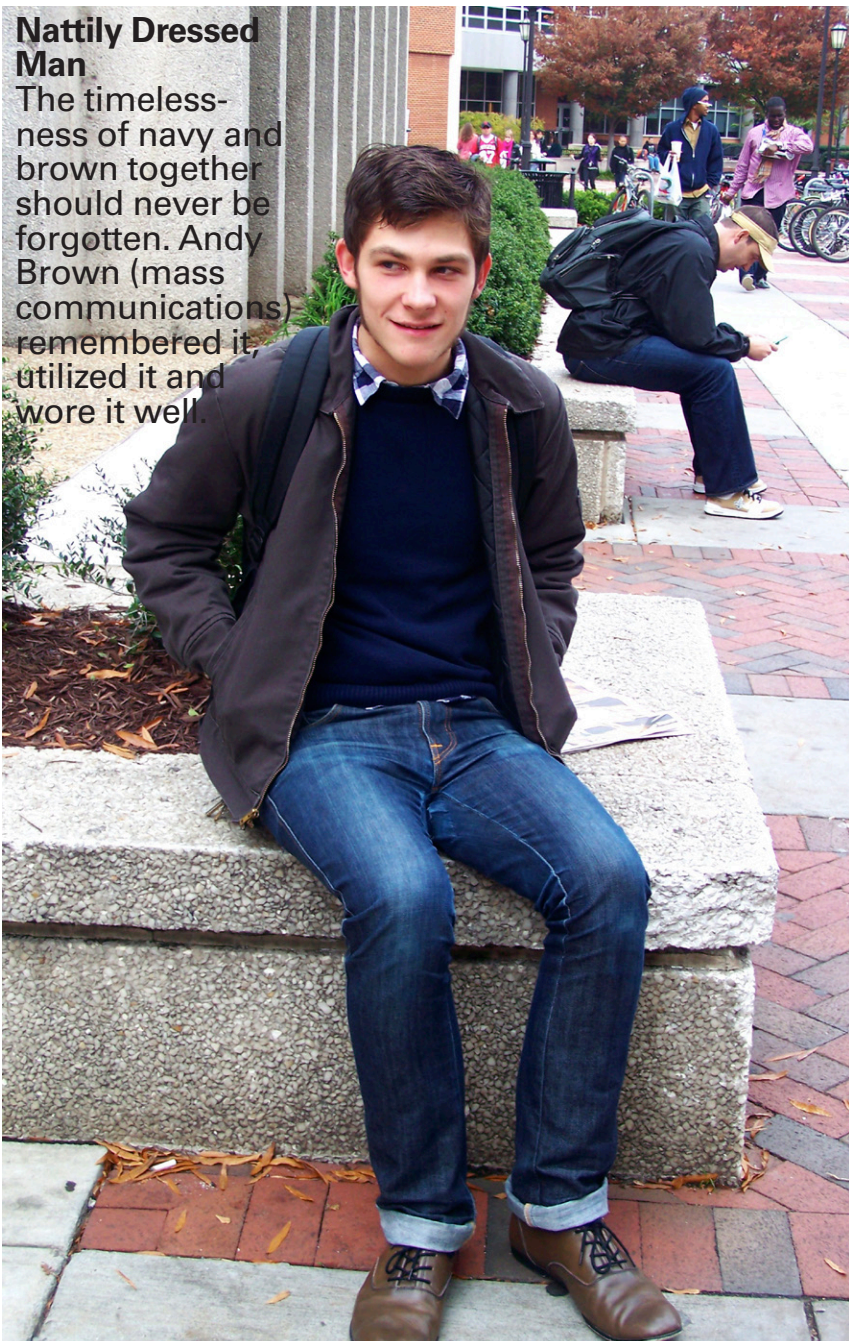


ABOVE: Dapper Dandies
Ryan Sample (social work) and Aaron Newsome (marketing) bring color and class to an otherwise drab campus.

Fashionable Rams



ABOVE: Sweat-suit Alternative
Jamie Harrison (fashion merchandising) offers the VCU community an alternative to sweatshirts and leggings as casual wear. Ripped jeans and sweaters are just as comfortable—and twice as stylish.



Nattily Dressed Man
The timelessness of navy and brown together should never be forgotten. Andy Brown (mass communications) remembered it, utilized it and wore it well.



Cold Weather Cool
Braving the cold with unique style, Allison Smith's (communication arts) charcoal and black ensemble of oxfords and fingerless gloves is incredibly chic.

Monday, November 9, 2009

spectrum commonwealthtimes.com · CT15



comics

Purple Prose

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OH NO! IT'S AN ILLUSTRATED EDITORIAL - IN TWO PARTS! IT'S ABOUT ONE OF THE BIGGEST - BUT SNEAKIEST, LEAST UNDERSTOOD - THREATS TO ORDINARY PEOPLE. BUT BEAR UP: IT'S ALSO THE RETURN OF POO-FLINGING MONKEYS - IN ASSLESS CHAPS!



Opinions expressed within the comics pages are those of individual artists and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Commonwealth Times or Virginia Commonwealth University.

Add your voice

The comics pages of The Commonwealth Times are open to the VCU community. Contributors are welcome by email at graphics@commonwealthtimes.com, or by mail and in person at 817 W. Broad St., Richmond, Va. 23220-3806.

Comics must be sent from a valid VCU e-mail address or signed with daytime and evening telephone contact. We reserve the right to edit for grammar, style and space.

Roberto Curtis
Executive Editor

Caroline Evertz
Production Manager

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Monday, November 9, 2009

comics · commonwealthtimes.com · CT17

opinion

Is being fat a pre-existing condition? Statistics say no, obesity could become a rationing tool

ERIC HILL
Opinion Editor

Genetic abnormalities that can result in health problems, accidents that occur prior in life and pregnancy are all examples of what are deemed “pre-existing conditions” by the health insurance industry. While Congress debated the passage of its health care bill on the House floor this past weekend, it became clear that the issues of a surprisingly overlooked large group of people would have to be considered. That group was fat people.

An overweight person is designated by a body mass index of 25-30, an obese person has a BMI of higher than 35 and an extremely obese person has a BMI of more than 40. Over the past few decades there has been a frightening increase in the number of people becoming overweight or obese. According to the statistics from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey conducted by The Obesity Society, an obesity research group, over the last 30 years the prevalence of obesity has doubled. According to the Centers for Disease Control national survey taken in 2007, more than a quarter of all Americans are now obese.

In a New York Times article published this past Saturday, it was reported that the “fat pride” community is now CT18 · commonwealthtimes.com · **opinion**

lobbying Congress to dissuade them from passing some policies that would marginalize the benefits of obese people within the health care reform package. Statements were made in the Times article by a member of the National Association for the Advancement of Fat Acceptance, making the point that any legislation that reduces coverage based on obesity, is discrimination. This is dumbfounding.

In the “why should I support NAAFA” heading on the NAAFA Web site it says, “Our thin-obsessed society firmly believes that fat people are at fault for their size and it is politically correct to stigmatize and ridicule them. Fat discrimination is one of the last publicly accepted discriminatory practices. Fat people have rights and they need to be upheld!” It goes on to say the diet foods industry is benefiting from the discrimination against fat people, causing people to purchase diet foods because they can’t accept themselves. All of this time I thought we were a sex-obsessed society.

Fat people deserve equal treatment under the law and should not be ridiculed, but that does not mean that their behavior can be completely overlooked. Sure, some people become obese from natural causes, genetic disorders and family history. That does not, however, account for a doubling of

obesity rates in the United States—it is an impossible excuse. There are serious environmental factors at work here such as what you eat, how much you eat and how much physical activity you have during the course of a day.

Clearly there are some factors weighing against the obese; fatty food is incentivized because it is cheap, so you have a lot of obesity in less affluent communities. Children no longer have compulsory physical education classes, many people have sedentary desk work, and a large portion of our entertainment now requires us to move nothing more than our thumbs and necks. Ultimately, most cases of obesity are results of terrible entrainment, like smoking.

Cigarettes are sold everywhere, are addictive and remarkably bad for your health. If cigarettes had not been exposed as a health hazard, and a conscientious public restrained their influence, then all of the cancers which smoking causes would be far more prevalent today. Likewise scientific analysis has determined that obesity increases the likelihood of type-2 diabetes and hypertension, which invariably lead to more serious issues like heart attack and stroke.

The vast majority of people don’t want to be obese. However not wanting a condition you have does not mean

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ROBERTO CURTIS
Executive Editor

ERIC HILL
Opinion Editor

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Monday, November 9, 2009

Letter to the Editor

Dear Commonwealth Times,

I was looking forward to seeing this past Thursday's edition of the CT because as a strong supporter of Bob McDonnell and his candidacy for Governor, I thought it would be a nice surprise to see him getting coverage in a paper that is typically dominated by Democrats and every step that they take. For instance, Creigh Deeds visits a coffee shop near campus that, according to your own paper, had a marginal turnout and it graces the front page. On the other hand, Bob McDonnell wins the Governorship in the first election since Obama's historic victory last year and a gas leak at the Landmark Theatre adorns the cover. Would it have been the same had Deeds won? I highly doubt it.

I also noticed that in your articles that did mention the election, it seemed that you were attempting to marginalize McDonnell's victory and point to voter apathy as the reason for his success. One article even featured a quote from me. I find it funny that out of the 10 minute interview I did, the writer chose to use the one quote from me that mentioned something to the effect of lack of enthusiasm among VCU voters. It failed to show the rest of my statement that said that there was a large amount of excitement among McDonnell supporters, including college students, for his campaign.

Equally as interesting were the "talking head" quotes you used from students referring to the election. Once again, either you didn't do a very good job in finding a wide range of students, or you carefully chose which quotes to use and not use. Ninety percent of the quotes featured support for Deeds, which is interesting considering he lost the election by nearly 20 percentage points. Is VCU that far out of touch with the rest of the state? Absolutely not. The one quote that didn't support Deeds was one that featured a girl who didn't want to say one way or the other because she seemed afraid to offend her professors or administrators at the university. I wonder why that is. Well I'll be glad to say what some won't: VCU is a university that is primarily run by those who support, or lean towards, the Democratic Party. Most people know this and accept it. I certainly have. What is troubling to me is the utter lack of an attempt to try and promote equality among viewpoints. For instance, despite my numerous attempts to inform the school and this paper about an event the VCU College Republicans were putting on that featured syndicated columnist and author S.E. Cupp along with Gubernatorial candidate Bob McDonnell's daughter, Cailin, there was absolutely no coverage or promotion outside of what we did whatsoever. However, if James Carville were to show up, I'm sure the red carpet would be rolled out.

I would like to close this out by stating a fact that I know will never see the light of day in this paper otherwise. More people voted for Bob McDonnell than any other gubernatorial candidate in the history of Virginia. His 1,160,356 votes topped the previous record set by George Allen, another Republican, in 1993. So while overall voter turnout was relatively low, the fact that McDonnell achieved this is an even greater testimony to the strength of his campaign. I am so proud to have been a part of this campaign.

Sincerely,
Lee Vogler

HEALTH CARE continued to CT19

that it is a pre-existing condition. If obesity is allowed to continue to increase at these dramatic rates, without some kind of social stigmatization, health in this country will degrade further, creating a higher cost for everyone. Fat people have rights but by allowing their poor health to continue without an incentive to become healthier is sanctioning poor health practices. When it comes down to it, each person is responsible for their health. If you keep on putting cigarettes in your mouth and understand that there is a warning label on them, you can't tell society to pay for your lung transplant because you didn't read the label.

So if society's goal is to improve public health with this health care reform bill, and it is clear that a large portion of our population is afflicted by a condition that is preventable with personal responsibility, then we should encourage personal responsibility. Saying obesity is OK is never going to make the obese happy—it's just going to make people more obese. If anything should be done in this health care bill about the obesity epidemic, it should be to improve the affordability of healthy food, and set aside money for effective weight loss programs. Children should be encouraged to exercise, have healthier lunch options in public schools and take courses in essential nutrition.

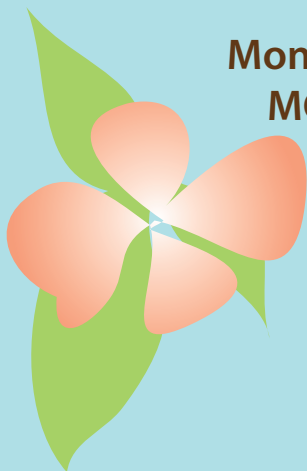
We already have to ration health care in this country and it will continue. Let us ration it properly, where the people who have the greatest costs are given the greatest opportunity to improve, not hampered by misplaced acquiescence or marginalized by disdain. We owe the obese a chance to improve their health through affordable insurance but we do not owe them the entitlement to be self destructive at society's expense.

recycle me,
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