

# the ct

## News

Funds sought to protect  
children online · 3

## Sports

Q&A with VCU forward  
Jamie Skeen · 7

## Spectrum

28 Days, 30 Opportunities  
to learn · 10

## Opinion ▶

Bin Laden gets a green  
thumb · 18



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

[commonwealthtimes.com](http://commonwealthtimes.com)

# Drake gives best for homecoming



free



# briefs

## Local and VCU

### Richmond plans upgrades for faster snow removal

Richmond Mayor Dwight C. Jones said Tuesday that the city would respond to future snowstorms by mobilizing sooner and dispatching more equipment and workers.

After criticism of the cleanup from last weekend's storm, and with the possibility of more winter weather this weekend, Jones said the city's efforts have been hampered by on-street parking, as well as the previous administration's decision to sell 36 dump and pickup trucks. As a result, officials said, the time to finish a snow route has doubled, from 45 minutes to at least 90 minutes.

In 2007, then-Mayor L. Douglas Wilder's administration touted its sale of 500 vehicles from its fleet of about 2,700 as a way to save substantial amounts on maintenance and fuel.

*Brief by the Richmond Times-Dispatch*

### Velvet club owner charged with threatening officer

Samuel J.T. Moore III is in more legal trouble as he awaits the fate of a state panel's ruling that could determine the future of his Richmond strip club.

Moore was arrested and arraigned last week on a charge of threatening a law-enforcement officer. A Richmond General District Court judge released Moore on bail and set a March 11 trial date for the Class I misdemeanor.

Defense attorney Michael Morchower confirmed that Moore appeared in court last week on a charge related to a telephone conversation with a police officer. The conversation was about a dispute involving employees at Velvet, Moore's Shockoe Bottom strip club.

Richmond police would not confirm the arrest or comment on the incident, which occurred Jan. 12, according to court records.

If convicted of the threatening charge, Moore faces up to one year in jail and a \$2,500 fine.

*Brief by the Richmond Times-Dispatch*

### Proposed cut to Spanish immersion program draws comments

A proposed cut to a Spanish immersion program drew a number of comments from concerned parents Tuesday night during the Richmond School Board's budget public hearing.

School officials say cutting the program would save the division \$203,000 and help close a funding deficit of \$17.8 million heading into the 2010-11 school year.

The current budget is \$259 million. The proposed budget for 2010-11 is \$245 million and reflects a loss of \$14 million in state and local revenue, plus nearly \$3.8 million in higher costs for insurance and retirement plans.

The board is scheduled to approve the proposed budget Feb. 16.

The immersion program is offered in kindergarten and first grade at William Fox and Southampton elementary schools. It teaches core subjects in Spanish rather than English.

*Brief by the Richmond Times-Dispatch*

## National and International

### University fundraising falls 12 percent in 2009

Charitable contributions to colleges and universities plummeted an average 11.9 percent nationwide in 2009, the steepest drop in at least three decades, according to a new report.

Individual giving dropped in both dollars and participation numbers. Gifts for endowments and new buildings saw the biggest decreases, according to the Council for Aid to Education, which released its 2009 fiscal report on Wednesday.

Donation declines piled on top of endowment drops averaging 22 percent, plus state budget cuts for public colleges.

"We knew that this was going to be a bad year," said Ann E. Kaplan, director of the survey, who noted that 2009 was a bad year for both the institutions and the donors who support them. "Nothing that came out of the numbers surprised me very much."

One area of giving that did not decline as much was gifts from organizations, including corporations, foundations, religious organizations and other nonprofits.

*Brief by The Associated Press*

### Politicians cool on public campaign financing

Backers of public financing for congressional elections are making a new push, triggered by a Supreme Court decision that lets corporations spend unlimited money on politics. Two top Democrats in Congress back the idea but members of Congress prefer the current system because it favors incumbents.

Public-financing proposals have been kicking around Washington for years.

When the Supreme Court ruled Jan. 21 that corporations and unions can spend unlimited amounts of their treasury money on election ads, public financing advocates saw an opportunity.

Without public financing, they say, members of Congress will look to lobbyists and special interests for money to counter corporate attack ads. They might also be inclined to cave in to corporations' legislative wishes rather than risk a barrage of negative election ads.

*Brief by The Associated Press*

### Frustration growing at Haiti aid bottlenecks

The aid flooding into Haiti by plane and boat is not reaching earthquake victims quickly enough to stem growing unrest because of transportation bottlenecks and isolated violence.

Many foreign aid workers and Haitians say donations are arriving, but express frustration at the slow pace of distribution of food and medicine.

U.S. air traffic controllers have lined up an astonishing 2,550 incoming flights through March 1, but some 25 flights a day aren't taking their slots. Communication breakdowns between Haitians and their foreign counterparts are endemic.

Haitians complain that corrupt officials have started to manipulate some of the aid that does reach the streets.

*Brief by The Associated Press*

the  
ct

ROBERTO CURTIS, Executive Editor  
editor@commonwealthtimes.com, 828-6516

CATHERINE MACDONALD,  
Managing Co-Editor  
managing@commonwealthtimes.com,  
828-6516

ERICA TERRINI, News Editor  
news@commonwealthtimes.com

TAYLOR HOWSMON, Sports Editor  
sports@commonwealthtimes.com

ERIKA WILKINS,  
Spectrum Editor  
RAINBOW BRACEY, Assitant  
Spectrum Editor  
spectrum@commonwealthtimes.com,

ERIC HILL, Opinion Editor  
opinion@commonwealthtimes.com

JAKE CUNNINGHAM, Photography Editor  
photo@commonwealthtimes.com

CAROLINE EVERTZ, Production Manager  
graphics@commonwealthtimes.com,

FRANCES CORREA, Multimedia Editor  
multimediaeditor@commonwealthtimes.com

MELISSA TABLANTE  
& PATRICE DELASANDRO,  
Production Assistants  
production@commonwealthtimes.com

GREG WEATHERFORD,  
Student Media Director  
goweatherfor@vcu.edu, 827-1975

LAUREN GEERDES, Business Manager  
827-1642

PATRICIA RODRIGUEZ, Accounts  
Manager  
ctaccounts@gmail.com, 828-2544

CHRISTINA DICK,  
Director of Advertising Sales  
ctadvertising@gmail.com, 828-5019

JACOB MCFADDEN, Advertising  
Representative, 828-5019  
ctadvertising@gmail.com

RACHEL DORRIS, Associate  
Advertising Representative,  
ctadvertising@gmail.com, 827-4562

MATT SCHMIDT, Creative  
Design Specialist,  
ctadvertising@gmail.com, 828-5019

JOHN McWHORTER, Junior Creative  
Design Specialist,  
ctadvertising@gmail.com

BILL LEMMOND, Circulation Director

*The Commonwealth Times strives to be accurate in gathering news. If you think we have made an error, please call Executive Editor Roberto Curtis at 828-1058 or e-mail him at editor@commonwealthtimes.com. Corrections will appear on the Opinion page.*

*Limit one CT per person. Additional copies may be purchased through the Student Media Center for \$1 a copy.*

817 W. Broad St., P.O. Box 842010  
Richmond, VA 23284-2010

# news

## Legislators, advocates rally for child safety online

CATHERINE MACDONALD  
*Managing Editor*

Legislators and child safety advocates rallied at the Capitol Wednesday seeking funding for programs that protect children from online predators.

Signed into law in 2008, Alicia's Law provides \$1.5 million for Virginia's two Internet Crimes Against Children task forces, which fight child pornography trafficking and locate child victims in the commonwealth. House Bill 736 and Senate Bill 284 would provide a dedicated stream of funding for Virginia's two ICAC task forces.

The bills also would expand the Virginia Child Protection System to include data from courts, a process the National Association to Protect Children, known as PROTECT, says will increase transparency and accountability in the court system.

Representatives from PROTECT were joined by Alicia Kozakiewicz, an abduction survivor and Alicia's Law's namesake, Sen. Creigh Deeds, D-Bath,

CHILD SAFETY continued to CT5



Nicole Fisher photo

**From left to right: Ed Smart, Alicia Kozakiewicz, Virginia House Majority Leader Morgan Griffith, Sen. Creigh Deeds and Virginia State Police Superintendent Stephen Flaherty rallied Wednesday at the Capitol.**

## HIV testing made easy, free

ERICATERRINI  
*News Editor*

Students put routine and personal health before stigma Tuesday by participating in free HIV testing at The Wellness Resource Center.

The Director of The Well, Linda Hancock, said The Center for Disease Control and Prevention recommends regular sexually transmitted disease screening for all individuals but some have a higher risk than others including younger people who are more sexually active. She said the staff at The Well hopes to eliminate students' apprehension to testing because of negative connotations and encourage regular screenings.

"(Getting screened annually) is just a reasonable thing to do in the year 2010," Hancock said.

According to a 2009 Quarterly Surveillance Report by the Virginia Department of Health, an estimated 3,485 HIV and AIDS cases were documented in Richmond.

The Well hosted two free HIV testing days last semester, Hancock said. About 96 people were tested on the first testing day and about 54 on the second.

Hancock said the screening process is made easy and completely confidential for students. Those looking to get tested follow these steps:

1. Walk in.
2. Fill out the standard forms.
3. Talk with counselors who explain the testing process.
4. Do the oral swab.
5. Wait 20 minutes for the oral swab to be processed.
6. Receive results.

Hancock said students can return to get results the same day if time is an issue.

Project REACH (Rams Educating About College Health) conducted activities and provided STD and HIV information for students while they waited for results.

Hancock said The Well partners with Fan Free Clinic, a Richmond-based community clinic, to provide free oral HIV testing several times throughout the semester.

Senior Prevention Specialist and HIV Testing Coordinator for Fan Free Clinic, Susan Tellier said the free testing days are alternatives to testing through University Student Health Services, which are available daily but now charge for STD screening because of budget constraints. HIV testing at Health Services requires a blood draw and is \$15. The Well requires a mouth swab and produces results in 20 minutes.

"As a result of (Health Services) charging, there's

going to be a lot of folks that may need a test and may opt not to get a test because of financial reasons," Tellier said.

Tellier said students should know their status, especially if they are sexually active. She said she and many employees of Fan Free Clinic strive to get students into the process of testing when they are young and hope it is a habit they continue.

"For a lot of folks it's that first test, the anxiety and the fear of the unknown and not knowing what to expect," Tellier said. "They come (to clinics) and they realize there are people who care about them."

Tellier said in addition to the free HIV testing, Fan Free Clinic provides an opportunity for students to ask questions about the testing process.

"We give them some tools so that they can protect themselves," Tellier said.

Fan Free Clinic employee and VCU alumna Callie Furlong said she encourages students to speak up when they hear incorrect information about testing and discourage stereotypical thinking when it comes to getting routine tests.

"It's important for students to encourage each other," Furlong said.

*Upcoming free oral HIV testing dates are Wednesday, March 10 and Tuesday, April 6 at The Wellness Resource Center at 815 S. Cathedral Place. Visit [www.thewell.vcu.edu](http://www.thewell.vcu.edu) for more information.*



# Skimping on safety, state cuts for Richmond's finest

SARAH SONIES

*Contributing Writer*

Law enforcement officials say proposed state budget cuts would be “devastating” to public safety in Virginia.

VCU's Director for Communication and Public Relations, Pamela Lepley, said the cuts would not affect VCU police.

However, according to a news release by Gene Lepley, the public information manager for the Richmond Police Department, the Richmond police serve highly student-populated sectors including the Fan District, Carver Community, Ginter Park, Barton Heights and Jackson Ward, City Center and VCU.

The news release showcased the impact on students through the Richmond police's first time robbery initiative that targeted portions of the city. The initiative resulted in robberies in the student-populated areas being cut by more than half over a three-month period from September to November.

Public safety officials gathered at the Capitol to sound the alarm about reductions in state funding to police and sheriff departments.

“The proposed budget cuts may well compromise the safety and welfare of families,” said Charles Jett, Stafford County's sheriff and the president of the Virginia Sheriffs Association. “We fully realize the difficult economic times we all face, but we also understand the importance our citizens' place on public safety.”

Wednesday's press conference also included representatives from the Fraternal Order of Police and the Virginia State Police Association.

According to a press release from the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police, further cuts in state aid for local law enforcement, also known as “599 Funding,” could force some Virginia police departments to lay off officers or discontinue some programs.

The association said according to a survey of police chiefs:

- 83 percent would have to cut back on buying equipment, such as replacing

worn-out patrol cars.

- 82 percent would have to cut training.

- 56 percent might have to lay off officers.

Doug Davis, chief of the Waynesboro Police Department and the president of the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police, said every law enforcement officer's ability to perform service to the community is at a “turning point” because of budget cuts.

“It creates a vicious cycle of unacceptable service and training,” Davis said.

Jett said public safety officials have been “scrambling” to assess the impact of state budget cuts on their ability to provide their services to the community.

“It is an understatement to say that the proposed cuts are devastating,” he said.

The General Assembly is meeting to write a state budget for the next two years. To balance the budget, lawmakers must slash spending by billions of dollars.

Former Gov. Tim Kaine proposed cutting about \$270 million for sheriff's departments and commonwealth's attorneys' offices and about \$73 million for local police departments.

Jett said the proposed biennial budget would abolish almost 1,500 positions from sheriff's offices across Virginia and reduce law enforcement “capability” by 25 percent.

“Many sheriffs rely on the state-funded positions and have been told by their communities that if the cuts become reality, (the communities) will not be able to make up the shortfall,” Jett said.

Sen. Janet Howell, D-Reston, was among legislators who attended the press conference to support public safety.

“The tragic situation is that we have to make an additional \$2 billion in cuts, and all aspects of state government will be impacted,” Howell said.

## Absentee voting process, no excuses

XANTHE WATERS

*Contributing Writer*

It was only after a lengthy trip to the Stafford County Court House that Samantha Fleming, a junior business major, was finally registered to vote.

Fleming said she knew she would be in school at the time of the 2008 primaries so, seeing an opportunity, she grabbed an absentee and early voting application and trekked into yet another office to submit that form.

“It was kind of annoying with all of the rules,” Fleming said. “You had to follow the form exactly. It's not like it took a long time or anything. There's just a lot to it.”

Fleming said the absentee ballot was mailed later with a return envelope. She said she had to have a friend act as a witness and sign to confirm she had voted according to procedure.

It would be easier to vote absentee in Virginia under a bill approved by the Senate.

Senators voted 29-10 in favor of Senate Bill 83, which would allow qualified voters to vote absentee in person without providing an excuse or reason.

Under existing law, Virginians must give an excuse, such as illness or work reasons, to cast a

ballot before Election Day.

“It is unfair to make people who want to vote absentee go through unnecessary hoops,” said the bill's chief sponsor, Sen. Janet Howell, D-Reston.

“There is no need to turn registered voters into scofflaws.”

SB 83 says Virginians still would have to provide a reason to cast an absentee ballot by mail. Current law allows 10 excuses for voting absentee. They range from “disability, illness or pregnancy” to being a student, a police officer or a member of the U.S. military.

All 22 Democrats in the Senate voted for the bill. Of the Republican senators, seven voted in favor of the bill, 10 voted against it and one (Sen. Frederick Quayle of Suffolk) did not vote.

The bill now goes to the House of Delegates for consideration.

If it becomes law, Virginia would be the 33rd state to let people vote absentee in person for any reason.

Howell said that family emergencies, extreme weather and traffic shouldn't determine whether someone's vote gets counted.

“Nothing as arbitrary as traffic should keep Virginians from exercising their right to vote,” she said.

**To track the bill, visit:**

The Legislative Information Service: <http://leg1.state.va.us/>

Richmond Sunlight: [richmondsunlight.com](http://richmondsunlight.com)

**Here is how senators voted:**

SB 83 Absentee voting; qualified voters to provide a reason for not being able to vote on election day.

floor: 1/25/10 Senate: Read third time and passed Senate (29-Y 10-N)

**YEAS** - Barker, Blevins, Colgan, Deeds, Edwards, Herring, Houck, Howell, Locke, Lucas, Marsden, Marsh, McEachin, McWaters, Miller, J.C., Miller, Y.B., Normont, Northam, Petersen, Puckett, Puller, Reynolds, Saslaw, Ticer, Vogel, Wagner, Wampler, Watkins, Whipple-29.

**NAYS** - Hanger, Hurt, Martin, McDougale, Newman, Obenshain, Ruff, Smith, Stosch, Stuart-10.

**NOT VOTING** - Quayle-1.



## CHILD SAFETY continued from CT3

and Virginia House Majority Leader Morgan Griffith, R-Salem, in support of the bills.

The bills' chief sponsors, Sen. Frederick Quayle, R-Suffolk, and Delegate Dave Albo, R-Springfield, also were in attendance to advocate the bills' passage through their respective legislative bodies.

Camille Cooper, PROTECT's director of legislative affairs, compared the funds for other programs to what she says her cause needs.

"The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts gets (\$)22 million a year. Virginia's abused children need (\$)1.8 million," PROTECT's Web site states. "It's all about priorities."

Both bills are currently in committee.

At this time last year, supporters of Alicia's Law held a press conference the morning news broke that Willie B. Fuller, VCU police chief at the time, had been charged with using a computer to solicit sex from a minor and attempted indecent liberties with a juvenile. Prosecutors eventually withdrew the charges after learning Fuller suffered a brain injury and developed dementia after he experienced a diabetes-related seizure in June.

## Correction

In the "Tuition hike, not without a fight" article, which was published Monday, Feb. 1, John Bennett, the senior vice president of Finance and Administration was quoted as saying:

"... since the start of fiscal year 2008 to fiscal year 2010, VCU will lose about \$65.2 million in state support for its instructional budget under current proposals ..."

The quote should have read:

"... since the start of fiscal year 2008 to fiscal year 2012, VCU will lose about \$65.2 million in state support for its instructional budget under current proposals ..."

## Update

Rams Day on the Hill was postponed because of weather conditions and is now scheduled for Feb. 17.

Advertisements



NO NEED FOR A LOAN WITH THE NEW  
**BIG EAT**  
 TINY PRICE™ VALUE MENU

Starting at

**\$5**

order online at [pizzahut.com](http://pizzahut.com)

- NEW STUFFED PIZZA ROLLERS • NEW 9" PERSONAL PANORMOUS™ PIZZA (1-TOPPING)
- P'ZONE® • PIZZA MIA™ PIZZA (MEDIUM 12" 1-TOPPING)

**All Day, Every Day  
 College Special**

No coupon required, just a valid Student ID.

**Large 1-Topping  
 Pizza \$8<sup>99</sup>** 275

Dine-In • Delivery • Carryout

**804-358-3333**

2343 W Broad St



Limited time offer. Minimum purchase, which may vary by location, is required for delivery. Prices and participation may vary. Not all Menu items are \$5. Tax extra. 1.10 lbs. avg. weight of post-baked Classic P'Zone®. Meaty and Pepperoni weights may vary. The Pizza Hut name, logos and related marks are trademarks of Pizza Hut, Inc. © 2010 Pizza Hut, Inc. 32435\_0115NP\_VAU



# sports

## VCU grabs big CAA road win, now prepares for ODU

Staff Reports

For the fourth win in its history, VCU nabbed a victory at the Trask Coliseum in Wilmington, N.C. as the Rams beat UNC Wilmington, 73-60.

Even though leading scorer Larry Sanders (Fort Pierce, Fla./Port St. Lucie) was held scoreless for the first time since Nov. 16, 2008, the Rams were able to dominate the Seahawks down the stretch.

Junior Ed Nixon (St. Petersburg, Fla./Lakewood) scored a career-high 19 points on 7-11 shooting and three 3-pointers.

The Rams started 4-18 from the floor in the first 11 minutes in what seemed like an eerie carbon copy of one of VCU's toughest losses during the 2008-2009 season. The Rams were upset in that game at Wilmington 81-72, behind poor 3-23 3-point shooting.

However, this was a different night and VCU was not going to be denied as the team shot 10-11 in the next 10 minutes, scoring 31 points in that stretch.

The hot shooting gave the Rams a 40-31 lead at the half.

VCU used a 9-2 run early in the second half to gain a 13 point lead, its largest at the time, and kept the lead at double digits

from there.

The Rams got out to a 22-point lead at the 4:55 mark of the second half.

UNC Wilmington was able to drop the lead to under 20 against the VCU bench in the final minutes but couldn't get it any lower than 13.

The Rams locked up the game 73-60 for their eighth conference win of the season, moving them into a tie for fourth in the league.

Nixon's 19 was joined by Joey Rodriguez' (Olviedo, Fla./Lake Howell) 18. Bradford Burgess (Midlothian/Benedictine) and freshman Troy Daniels (Roanoke/William Fleming) scored seven.

Although Sanders, battling foul trouble, did not score, he lead the Rams with 10 rebounds in 19 minutes on the floor.

Chad Tomko was the only Seahawk in double figures with 11.

VCU (16-5, 8-4) plays host to arch-rival Old Dominion at the Stuart C. Siegel Center on Saturday.

With George Mason's upset loss at Georgia State, the CAA is wide open with three teams (ODU, Northeastern and Mason) tied at the top and two (VCU and Drexel) tied for fourth.



stock photo

## Men's basketball draws Akron for Bracketbusters

TAYLOR HOWSMON  
Sports Editor

For the sixth season in a row the VCU Rams men's basketball team will participate in an ESPN Bracketbusters game. ESPN announced the opponent for the 2010 game Monday night on ESPN and Rams' fans found out that the black and gold will square off with Akron on Feb. 20 at 4 p.m. on ESPN.

This marks the third season in a row that the Rams and the Zips have played each other, although only the game two years ago in Akron was an official ESPN Bracketbusters game.

This season's battle will have a little added flavor as VCU coach Shaka Smart will be going up against his former employer and mentor, Keith Dambrot.

Dambrot hired Smart as an assistant in 2003 when the 51 year old was promoted to the position.

"Keith and I talk almost daily, and I'm guessing things will change a bit now," Smart said. "It'll be great to see him, but all

### Complete CAA ESPN Bracketbusters schedule:

- Fri. Feb. 19: ODU at Northern Iowa, 7 p.m., ESPN2
- Fri. Feb. 19: William & Mary at Iona, 9 p.m., ESPN
- Sat. Feb. 20: Louisiana Tech at Northeastern, 1 p.m., ESPN2
- Sat. Feb. 20: Akron at VCU, 4 p.m., ESPN
- Sat. Feb. 20: College of Charleston at George Mason, 8 p.m., ESPN2

### Non-televised games (all to be played on Sat., Feb. 20)

- Boston University at Delaware, 2 p.m.
- Bradley at Drexel, TBA
- South Carolina State at Georgia State, TBA
- Rider at Hofstra, 4 p.m.
- James Madison at Canisius, TBA
- UNC Wilmington at Radford, TBA
- Towson at Manhattan, 2 p.m.

BRACKETBUSTERS continue to CT9



# Q&A with VCU junior forward

TAYLOR HOWSMON  
*Sports Editor*

**The Skeen File:**

Height: 6'8"  
Weight: 245 pounds  
Hometown: Charlotte, N.C.  
High School/Previous School: North Mecklenburg/Wake Forest University  
2009-2010 season statistics as of 2/3/10: Has played in 12 games, starting in seven of them.  
Averaging: 7.0 points, 4.8 rebounds and 18.8 minutes per game.

**The Commonwealth Times:** Twelve games into your career here at VCU, how is it going so far?

**Skeen:** "It's going good. It started off like a blast but now I've been dwindling down a little bit and got to pick it up a little bit. Sometimes I get down on myself, but I got to pick it up."

**The CT:** Why VCU? What was the process involved in transferring here?

**Skeen:** "I knew Anthony Grant was a good coach. He recruited me with coach (John) Brannen. They came down to Charlotte and convinced me that this was a winning school and I looked and saw that VCU was a winning school. I like winning."

**The CT:** You became a contributor very quickly down at Wake Forest. What was your favorite memory down there?

**Skeen:** When we beat Duke my sophomore year at Wake. That was a big-time game and all the students toilet-tissued the whole campus.

**The CT:** What made the late Skip Prosser such a respected coach?

**Skeen:** He had so much wisdom and passion for the game.

**The CT:** In your time in college, whether at VCU or Wake, who is the best player you've faced?

**Skeen:** Al Thornton from Florida State. He was so quick in everything he did.

**The CT:** Talk about Shaka Smart. What has it been like playing for him?

**Skeen:** It has been really good. He gives you a lot of freedom, it's not like he has you on a string. He's not a really strict coach, he lets you play. You can make mistakes and its not like you have to look over your shoulder to see somebody coming off the bench to come get you, that's how old-fashioned coaches are.

**The CT:** What do you think is your best quality on the basketball court?

**Skeen:** Offensive rebounding.

**The CT:** How would your teammates describe your personality off the court?



Before coming to VCU, forward Jamie Skeen earned the title of 'Mr. Basketball' in his home state of North Carolina.

photo courtesy of VCU Athletics

**Quick-fire questions:**

**The CT:** What is your favorite food?

**Skeen:** Cereal

**The CT:** Favorite non-basketball sport?

**Skeen:** Football

**The CT:** Favorite TV show?

**Skeen:** Martin

**The CT:** What is one thing about you that most people don't know?

**Skeen:** I watch NASCAR

**The CT:** Who is your favorite pro sports team?

**Skeen:** Carolina Panthers

**The CT:** Which NBA player, current or former, do you model your game after?

**Skeen:** Al Thornton

**The CT:** What is your least favorite class?

**Skeen:** Religion and Sociology

**The CT:** What is your favorite class?

**Skeen:** Sex and Gender

**Skeen:** Goofy. Sometimes I can get serious, but most of the time I am goofy.

**The CT:** You were named "Mr. Basketball" in the state of North Carolina in high school. What kind of honor is that?

**Skeen:** It is a big-time honor. I got some of my friends who think they should have got it, so sometimes I rub it in their face. I don't brag about it too much, but it was a big time honor.

**The CT:** How does playing in a packed Siegel Center compare with playing in Lawrence-Joel (Wake Forest's arena)?

**Skeen:** A packed place is a packed place to me. Cameron Indoor Stadium (Duke) is loud but it is very small. I think the Siegel Center is bigger than Cameron, but as long as it is packed it doesn't really matter to me.

**The CT:** Who on this team is the easiest to get along with? Who was the first teammate you became friends with?

**Skeen:** David Hinton because he is from Winston-Salem and I played there. Him or Larry (Sanders), Larry is easy to get along with.

**The CT:** Who is the best teammate here? Who is the most fun to play with on game day?



# ODU at VCU preview

## VCU

VS

## Old Dominion University Monarchs

- Tied for fourth in the CAA with 8-4 record (16-5 overall)
- VCU is 7-1 at home in CAA (Lost to Northeastern)
- Coach - Shaka Smart, first year (Record of 15-5)
- Last season accomplishments: CAA Champions, NCAA Tournament participants

### Probable starting lineup:

Larry Sanders (f)  
Joey Rodriguez (g)  
Jamie Skeen (f)  
Bradford Burgess (g)  
Brandon Rozzell (g)

### Star watch:

Larry Sanders – 6'11", 235 pounds, Fort Pierce, Fla.  
Team best 15.8 ppg (fifth best in CAA)  
Team leading 9.1 rebounds per game (third best in CAA)  
Third most double-doubles in CAA. (7)

### VCU All-time record against ODU:

Leads all-time series 41-38  
At home: 22-15  
At ODU: 15-21  
Neutral: 4-2  
At the Siegel Center: 9-1  
Last season's results:  
Jan. 17, 2009 in Richmond: VCU won 61-44  
Feb. 14, 2009 in Norfolk: ODU won 69-75  
March 8, 2009 in Richmond CAA tournament semi-finals: VCU won 61-53

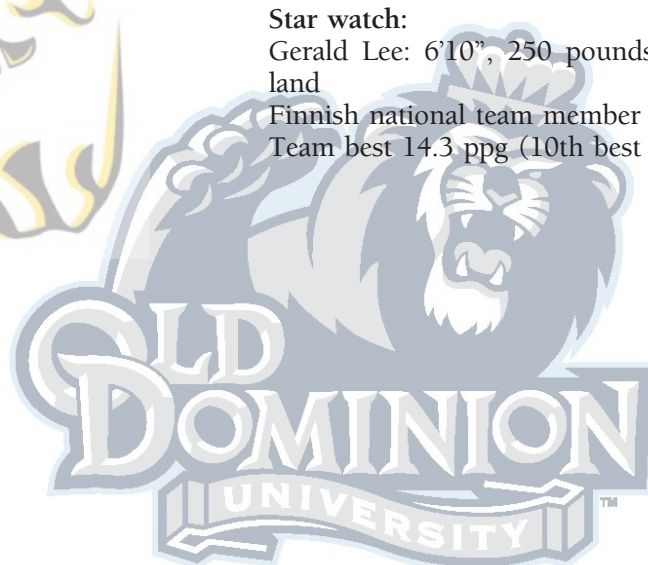
- Tied for first in the CAA with 10-2 record (18-6 overall)
- ODU's 4-2 on the road in CAA (Lost to George Mason and Northeastern)
- Coach - Blaine Taylor, ninth year (Record of 161-94)
- Last season accomplishments: CollegeInsider.com Tournament Champion

### Probable starting lineup:

Gerald Lee (f)  
Kenyon Carter (f)  
Frank Hassell (C)  
Kent Bazemore (g)  
Ben Finney (g)

### Star watch:

Gerald Lee: 6'10", 250 pounds, senior from Uusikaupunki, Finland  
Finnish national team member  
Team best 14.3 ppg (10th best in CAA)



**ADAM STERN**  
*Assistant Sports Editor*

### Game information:

Saturday, Feb. 6  
Verizon Wireless Arena at the Stuart C.  
Siegel Center  
TV: Comcast SportsNet

### Notes:

- The Monarchs had a two-game lead over the Rams in the CAA standings as of Wednesday.
- ODU is the top team in the conference and third best in the nation in scoring defense allowing 55.6 points per game.
- ODU and VCU rank 1 and 2 respectively in assists (both average 15.6 per game).
- ODU and VCU rank 1 and 2 respectively in steals (both average 8.5 per game).
- VCU and ODU rank 1 and 2 respectively in turnover margin.
- VCU and ODU are number 1 and 2 respectively in the CAA and in the state of Virginia in home winning percentage (VCU also ranks 16th nationally).
- VCU has scored 18 more points than ODU this season, but the Rams have let up 58 more points than the Monarchs.
- VCU guard Joey Rodriguez is first in the CAA in assists and fifth nationally with 7.0 per game.
- ODU guard Kent Bazemore is first in the CAA with 2.8 steals a game.

## SKEEN continued from CT7

**Skeen:** Larry or Joey (Rodriguez).

**The CT:** How smooth has the transition been? What has been the toughest and easiest part of acclimating yourself to CAA play?

**Skeen:** The toughest has been blending in and getting to know my teammates' tendencies on the court, but I had a whole year off to learn that. The easiest is just playing basketball because at the end of the day, it's still just basketball.

**The CT:** You started only five games into your career here. Did you expect to be a starter quickly, and how much does that matter to you?

**Skeen:** It really doesn't matter, I just wanted to play. I just really wanted

to play and contribute to the team.

**The CT:** I hear a lot of talk from people about your role on this team. At Wake Forest you got to play a lot more on the wing, where now you play a lot more down low. Which do you prefer? And how has that transition been?

**Skeen:** Here I get to do a little of both. I like how coach Smart lets me play a little of both and gives me a lot of freedom.

**The CT:** What is your plan once you leave here? Are you looking to play in the NBA or something outside of basketball?

**Skeen:** Anyone would say they want to play in the NBA, that's a big-time dream. As of right now I don't think that I'm doing well enough to get into the NBA or even play overseas, I'm the type of person that's hard on myself. I got to step up and do better though, because it is what I want to do.



## BRACKETBUSTERS continued from CT6

we will be focused on is getting another win against a quality opponent.”

VCU bested Akron in its first Bracketbuster match, 57-52 in Akron on Feb. 23, 2008. On the return trip, the Rams nabbed the Zips, this time in Richmond, by a score of 73-69 on Dec. 17.

“It’s a great chance for us to play another quality team from outside our league in our building,” Smart said. “Our focus is clearly on the conference season, but it’s nice for the teams in our league to have a chance to beat up on some quality teams from other leagues.”

In the 2009-2010 campaign, Akron is 15-6. Junior Brett McKnight lead the team in scoring with 9.9 points per game and senior Jimmy Conyers scores 9.1 per game. The Zips have five other players who average seven or more points

per game.

VCU and Akron have two common opponents on the season. The Zips defeated Western Michigan in Kalamazoo on Jan. 27, while the Rams dropped one to the Broncos back on Dec. 18. The other is Rhode Island, who Akron lost to at home on Jan. 5. VCU beat those Rams at the Stuart C. Siegel Center on Dec. 7.

“They are going to be a tough draw for us,” Smart said. “I haven’t seen a ton of them this year, but I know they are sound defensively, so we’ll have to come out sharp and execute our game plan.”

All 12 CAA teams will also participate in Bracketbusters. Five of the games, featuring VCU, ODU, Northeastern, William & Mary and George Mason, will be televised on ESPN’s family of networks.

## This week

### Upcoming Events

#### Men’s basketball

Sat. Feb. 6, Old Dominion, Siegel Center, 4 p.m.

#### Women’s basketball

Thurs. Feb. 4, James Madison, Siegel Center, 7 p.m.

Sun. Feb. 7, at Old Dominion, Norfolk, 2 p.m.

#### Men’s track and field

Fri/Sat. Feb.5-6, New Balance Invitational, New York, N.Y.

#### Women’s track and field

Fri.-Sat. Feb. 5-6, CNU Captain’s Invitational, Newport News, Va., New Balance Invitational, New York, N.Y.

#### Men’s tennis

Sat. Feb. 6, Winthrop, Thalhimer Tennis Center, 2 p.m.

#### Women’s tennis

Sat. Feb. 6, Winthrop, Thalhimer Tennis Center, 10 a.m.

Advertisements



# UN-FRIEND THE FLU

The flu season is far from over. If you haven’t been vaccinated for the H1N1 flu virus, now is the time. It’s very important for your own health and for those around you.

Visit  
**H1N1GET1.COM**

and enter your zip code to find a vaccination location near you.

Or call  
**877.275.8343**

© Copyright 2010 Virginia Department of Health. All rights reserved.

**VDH** VIRGINIA  
DEPARTMENT  
OF HEALTH  
*Protecting You and Your Environment*



# spectrum

## Let heritage speak

### The top 10 books, albums, films for Black History Month

ERIKA WILKINS AND RAINBOW BRACEY

*Spectrum Editor and Assistant Spectrum Editor*

It feels as if the new year has barely dawned, yet February is already here. Yes, boys and girls, it's Black History Month. In recognition, the Spectrum Section has compiled a list of books, films and music to remind readers why we celebrate black history, how the African-American community sees itself today, and where the future of black America lies. Through potent stories of past struggles, progress and revolution, this list is the readers' go-to guide for the month of February.

#### Best grooves

NWA "Straight Outta Compton"  
2Pac "Me Against the World"  
The Notorious B.I.G. "Ready to Die"  
Common "Resurrection"  
A Tribe Called Quest "Beats, Rhymes and Life"  
Mos Def "Black on Both Sides"  
Talib Kweli "Quality"  
India Arie "Acoustic Soul"  
Erykah Badu "Baduizm"  
Lauryn Hill "MTV Unplugged No. 2.0"

#### Best views

"Guess Who's Coming to Dinner" (1967)  
"The Great Debaters" (2007)  
"Do the Right Thing" (1989)  
"Malcolm X" (1992)  
"Remember the Titans" (2000)  
"Something New" (2006)  
"Invictus" (2009)  
"Brown Sugar" (2002)

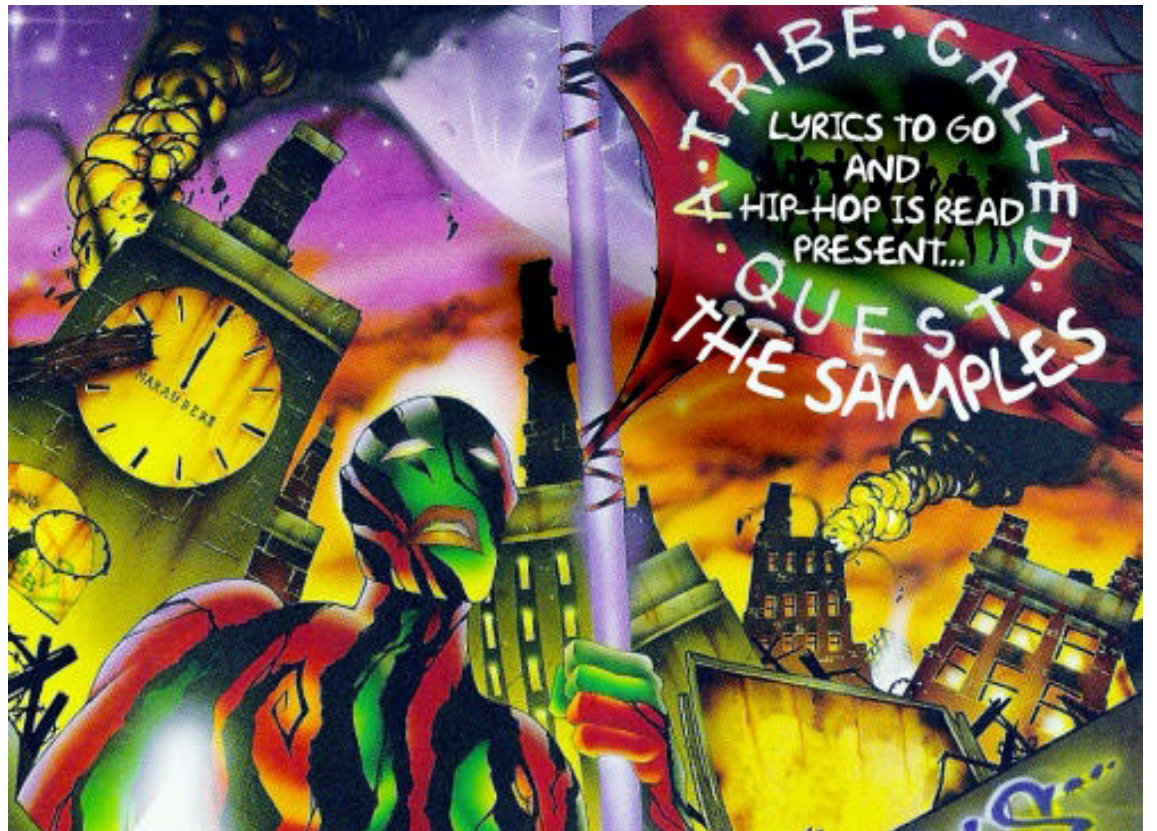




"Diary of a Mad Black Woman" (2002)  
 "Precious: Based on the Novel Push by Sapphire" (2009)

## Best truths

"Letters to My Daughter" Maya Angelou  
 "A Lesson Before Dying" Ernest J. Gaines  
 "Dreams From My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance"  
 Barack Obama  
 "Living and Loving Out Loud" Cornel West with Davis Ritz  
 "The Souls of Black Folks" W.E.B. Dubois  
 "A Mercy" Toni Morrison  
 "Their Eyes Were Watching God" Zora Neale Hurston, Henry  
 Louis Gates Jr., Edwidge Danticat  
 "My People" Langston Hughes  
 "Brother I'm Dying" Edwidge Danticat  
 "56 Thoughts from 56 Hope Road: The Sayings and Psalms of  
 Bob Marley" Cendella Marley and Gerald Hausman



## Advertisements



### Sit-In.

Fifty years ago, 34 African-American students from Virginia Union University walked into the Thalhimers department store and sat down at the lunch counter.

They were denied service.

They refused to leave and were arrested.

## They changed the course of history.

Honor the Richmond 34 this month during **Sit-In|Stand Out at Richmond CenterStage**, the downtown performing arts center located at the site of the former Thalhimers. Attend lectures, performances and other events at CenterStage and Virginia Union from February 17– 22, and recognize this important chapter in American history.

For more information, visit [RichmondCenterStage.com](http://RichmondCenterStage.com) or [Facebook.com/RichmondCenterStage](https://Facebook.com/RichmondCenterStage).



Altria



Dominion

Genworth  
Financial



Marriott  
RICHMOND

SUNTRUST

CenterStage  
RICHMOND



### Stand Out.

PHOTO CREDITS: L. RICHMOND CENTERSTAGE; R. AARON SUTTEN



# Grammy's

# 2010

*"How wonderful life is with Gaga in the world." – Elton John*

**ERIKA WILKINS**

*Spectrum Editor*

When the 52nd annual Grammy awards opened it found itself in a drag queen's paradise. There was a profusion of glitter, over-exaggeration, and men in uniform that would do Liza Minnelli proud. Covered in grease, oil and glittery sunglasses, the equally outlandish and experimental Lady Gaga and Elton John serenaded each other with the sort of blinding theatrics only the two of them could conjure. Deadened hands stretched feebly from a conjoined piano while they verified that while John may be the more consummate of the two, Gaga is without question the freakiest.

The evening's theatrics and collaborations continued with Green Day and the cast of "American Idiot's" rendition of "21 Guns." And while I'm sure RuPaul rejoiced over the night's first performance, the second most assuredly received a "Sashay away" for its regrettably lackluster demonstration. Green Day performs best when they stick to crowd-amping anthems or intimate ballads; not an

over-dramatized combination of the two. Those performances are best left to pop entertainers, like Beyoncé.

The ten-time nominee was next on the lineup with a remix of "If I Were a Boy" and Alanis Morissette's "You Oughta Know." With husband Jay-Z cheering in the audience, the girl-power advocate, who's not afraid to say "I need a man," put on a hair-swinging, crotch-grabbing, floor-crawling performance for the ages. The entire theatre stood for the full 5 minutes and 50 seconds of her stage time, a testament to her entertainment excellence.

It was Pink however, that took home "Best Performance of the Night" for her ingeniously executed "Glitter in the Air." In her barely legal bodysuit she was hoisted by nothing more than ivory cloth into the air, where she was encircled by an eccentric-but-enchanted human chandelier. Pink then proceeded to twirl elegantly and athletically all the while crooning of sugary-sweet encounters. The extraordinary entertainment persisted as she immersed herself in water only to have it cascade gracefully from her body while she revolved upside down,

hanging just by her feet. Trick after sensational trick earned audible gasps of astonishment from an enraptured crowd. All the while, she never missed a note.

That unfortunately, is more than can be said about the Black Eyed Peas rendition of "Imma Be" and "I Gotta Feeling." It was of course full of their idiosyncratic energy and customary abnormality, but the group's choreography wasn't enough to mar Fergie's shrieking.

Other disappointments were Jamie Foxx's "Blame It" performance featuring T-Pain, Slash, and Doug E. Fresh. After the disaster, he apologized to Jay-Z for the auto tune; in retrospect, he should have apologized to the audience for providing a monumental waste of time.

The "Album of the Year" winner, Taylor Swift, was also a let-down. Though she's responsible for providing a generation with a candied and adolescent view on romance, she has light years to go in performance. Her debut with Stevie Nicks was a solid effort, which unfortunately missed her usual kitschy mark and instead fell

limply on deaf-ears.

The evening's biggest failure however came not from a performer but from critically acclaimed director, Quentin Tarantino's presentation of Drake, Lil' Wayne and Eminem's performance. Why he decided to break out his English to Ebonics dictionary is a mystery. His attempt at a southern-ethnic accent was both pathetic and insulting, and simultaneously managed to spoil the evening while putting a dent in more than 50 years of societal progress. But what's a village, without its idiot?

For entertainers, the Grammy's are less an award show and more a feral race to be named "best of the night" by gossip magazines and the blogosphere. For one night, the likes of Beyoncé and Will.i.am compete for Joe Shmoe's bid on who gave the best performance, acceptance speech and I-can't-believe-I-won face. For the viewing audience, that means an unparalleled night of remarkable performances propelled by explosions, acrobatics, guitar solos and glitter. Sunday's Grammy awards, though not without its dark spots, were no exception.

## And the winners are...

### **Song of the year:**

Beyoncé "Single Ladies (Put a Ring on It)"

### **Best new artist:**

Zac Brown Band

### **Record of the year:**

Kings of Leon "Use Somebody"

### **Best rock album:**

Green Day "21st Century Breakdown"

### **Album of the year:**

Taylor Swift "Fearless"

### **"Best of" awards...**

#### **Best Performance of the Night**

– Pink "Glitter in the Air"

#### **Best collaboration**

– Lady Gaga and Elton John  
"Your Song"

#### **Most energetic performance**

– Drake, Lil' Wayne, Eminem, Travis Barker  
"Forever"

#### **Best remix**

– Black Eyed Peas  
"Imma Be/I Gotta Feeling"



Mel Kobran photos

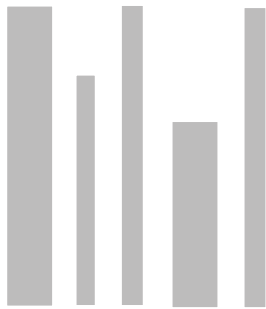
# VCU Homecoming Concert



While the up-and-coming hip hop artist performed for barely 30 minutes, the crowd at the Stuart C. Siegel Center hung on to Drake's every word.



2010







Performance by

# Drake



Virginia native Chris Brown also made an appearance at the Homecoming Concert.

Mel Kobran photos



# Weekend Calendar

## Thursday 2/4

**Art After Hours:** VMFA continues its series with Gayle McGehee & Nocturnes and the poetry of Tarfia Faizullah. 6-9 p.m. \$10. Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. 200 N. Boulevard. 340-1405.

**Chocoholic!** Enjoy an evening of chocolate fountains, wine and refreshments to benefit CHIP of Greater Richmond. 6-9 p.m. \$35. Virginia Holocaust Museum. 2000 E. Cary St. 592-2177.

**Crimes of the Heart:** 1981 Pulitzer Prize winner by Beth Henley. 8 p.m. \$15-\$20. Chamberlayne Actors Theatre. 319 N. Wilkinson Rd. 262-9760.

**The Garden Is For Lovers:** Valentine’s Display In the Conservatory. See the blooms of tulips, daffodils, and orchids. 9 a.m. \$10 adults, \$6 children. Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden. 1800 Lakeside Ave. 262-9887.

**John Marshall School Corps of Cadets:** Explore the history of military training as part of the public education system. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Free. Virginia Historical Society. 428 North Blvd. 358-4901.

## Friday 2/5

**Beer and Blues with Rattle Snake Shake:** 5-8 p.m. Free. Capital Ale House. 704 E. Broad St. 612-1900.

**First Fridays Art Walk:** Explore the galleries of Broad Street. 7 p.m. Free. W. Broad Street, Between Belvidere & Fourth Streets. 304-1554.

**Servant of Two Masters:** Escape to the tale of a moonlighting servant by Carlo Goldoni. 8 p.m. \$20 general public, \$15 students. Henly Street Theatre. 4901 Old Brook Rd. 340-0115.

**Round Up for Richmond:** Have an evening with the RoundUp Girls, and great music. 8 p.m.-2 a.m. Free. The Hat Factory. 140 Virginia St. 788-4281.

**Design 2009:** A Retrospective of Winning Work 10 a.m-5 p.m. Free. Virginia Center for Architecture. 2501 Monument Ave. 644-3041.

## Saturday 2/6

**SCAN’S Bourbon Street in Shockoe Bottom:** Greater Richmond Stop Child Abuse Now third-annual Mardi Gras Event. 8 p.m. \$50. Main Street Station.1500 E. Main St.646-2041

**Citizen Cope:** Enjoy the stylings of singer/songwriter Citizen Cope. 9 p.m. \$20. The National. 704 E. Broad St. 612-1900.

**Capital Ale House’s 3rd Annual Karneval Celebrations:** Latin Carnival with Bio Ritmo. 8 p.m. \$15. Capital Ale House. 704 E. Broad St. 612-1900.

**David Plouffe at The Richmond Forum:** A lecture by campaign manager for President Barack Obama. 8-10 p.m. \$36-\$70. Landmark Theatre. 6 N. Laurel. 646-4213.

**Richmond Symphony:** Paganini and Petrushka: 8 p.m. \$17-\$72. Carpenter Theatre at Richmond Center Stage. 600 E. Grace St. 225-9000.

## Sunday 2/7

**Hokies v. Hoos Food Fight:** The UVA and VT rivalry is displayed at the sixth-annual food fight to encourage donations to the Central Virginia Food Bank. 7 p.m. Free. Ukrops Cafe and Grill. (All area Ukrops) 3522 W. Cary St. 353-0676.

**Theatre IV** presents “The Song of Mulan” 2 p.m. \$10. Empire Theatre.114 W. Broad St. 783-1688.

**Music Jam:** Capital Ale House will host an open jam session. 7-11 p.m. Free. 623 E. Main St. 780-2537.

**ArtWorks** January Art Exhibit: Featuring Starting Point by Fiber Transformed. 12-7 p.m. Free. ArtWorks. 320 Hull St. 291-1400

**An American Turning Point:** The Civil War in Virginia, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Free. Virginia Historical Society. 428 N. Blvd. 358-4901.

[www.commonwealthtimes.org](http://www.commonwealthtimes.org)

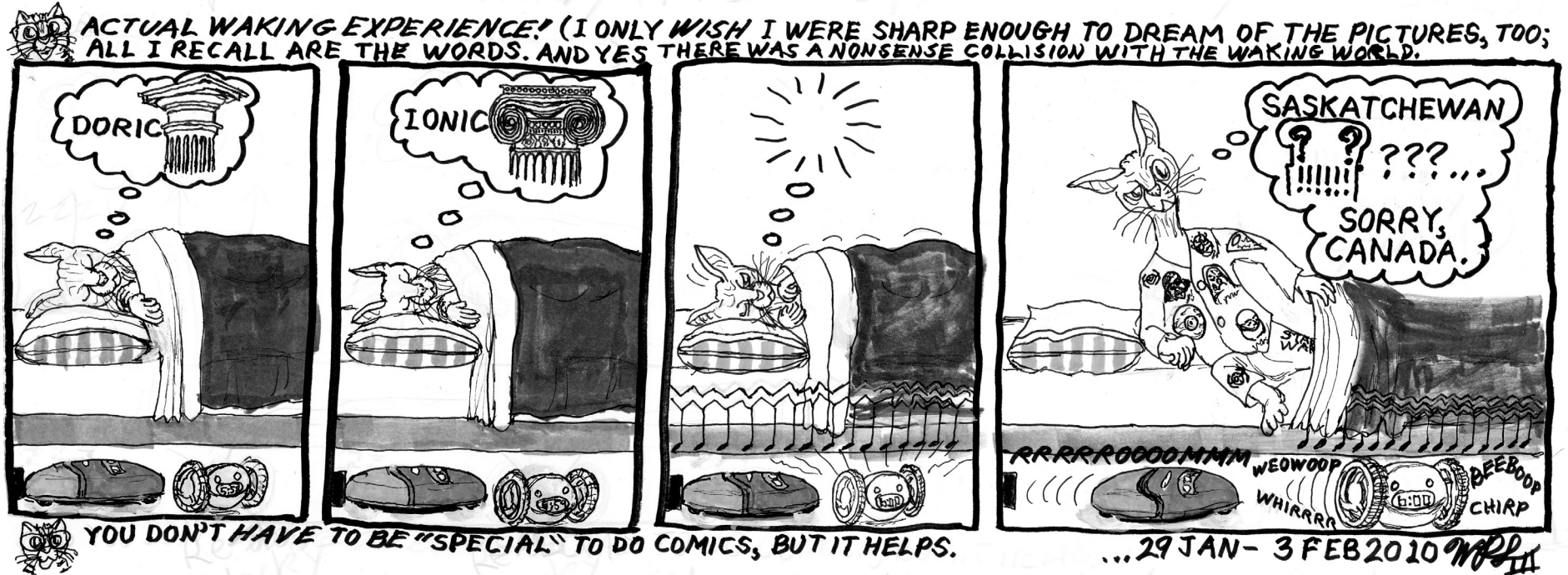
the  
ct  
the new face of news.



# comics

## Pizza from Scratch

© 2010 Bill Lemmond



## Forget Fairytales

Christine Stoddard



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](mailto: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



# SUPER BOWL POOL PARTY AT CARY STREET GYM

Come relax at the pool and watch the Super Bowl! Innertubes will be provided, and we will play games at half time.

**Date:** February 7

**Time:** starts at 6pm

**Location:** Cary Street Gym Aquatic Center

**Cost:** Free!



**VCU Recreational Sports**  
Division of Student Recreation

Questions? Call **827.0319** or  
visit [www.recsports.vcu.edu](http://www.recsports.vcu.edu)

VCU is an EEO/AA institution.

V i r g i n i a   C o m m o n w e a l t h   U n i v e r s i t y



Thursday, February 4, 2010

## Egg Donors Needed



We are looking for healthy women between the ages of 18-29 willing to help couples establish a pregnancy. Participants will be compensated for their time and effort. Inquiries will be confidential and anonymous.

**VIRGINIA**  
**IVF & Andrology**  
C • E • N • T • E • R

To learn more about becoming an egg donor,  
please visit our website at [www.vaivf.com](http://www.vaivf.com)  
or call (804) 323-9980 x 14.

commonwealthtimes.com · CT17



# opinion

## Bin Laden goes green, The eco-fatwa cometh

ERIC HILL  
*Opinion Editor*

How do you find Osama bin Laden? Look for recycling bins in the Afghan desert.

In the latest tape released by the infamous religious extremist, he claimed, "All of the industrialized countries, especially the big ones, bear responsibility for the global warming crisis." The tape, which was given to the Al Jazeera network for release, has not yet been confirmed as authentic.

If this is indeed Mr. bin Laden, it certainly is a change of pace from what we normally hear. In his last tape, which was released just over a month ago, he claimed that al Qaida was responsible for the Dec. 25 bombing attempt in Detroit. In this new tape, he sounds more like a liberal European economist than fundamentalist Afghani terrorist.

In the tape, Mr. bin Laden criticizes the United States for not adopting the Kyoto protocol, claims that people should boycott the U.S. dollar as a currency and makes the statement that, "Noam Chomsky was correct when he compared the U.S. policies to those of the Mafia," according to the transcript released by Al Jazeera.

Noam Chomsky is Jewish.

So why the sudden change from "death to America" to "death to U.S. monetary policy and ecological ignorance"? The mainstream opinion being battered around on the Internet and major news networks is that bin Laden is attempting to gather support from a larger base of people, namely eco-terrorists and domestic political dissidents. Most newsmen agree that this is an attempt to damage the resilience and reputation of the United States in a non-violent way.

What is compelling about this change is not so much that bin Laden is adding this new rhetoric and abandoning the "holy warrior" message, but that he is trying to broaden the struggle against the United States by highlighting other items on the list of evils that our government has perpetrated. He is, in a sense, trading ideology for populism. In one instance on the transcript he encourages the American people who have lost their jobs in the mortgage crisis to abandon the dollar because it serves banking and corporate interest.

Does this make Osama bin Laden less extreme or more pragmatic? Truth be told, a lot of people would agree with some of the stances he made in his latest tape, even some of the most dedicated supporters of national defense. As President Barack Obama said at the State of the Union address, "I hated the bank bailout, you hated the bank bailout, it was about as popular as a root canal." Yet because of corporate and bank

interest, we did it anyway.

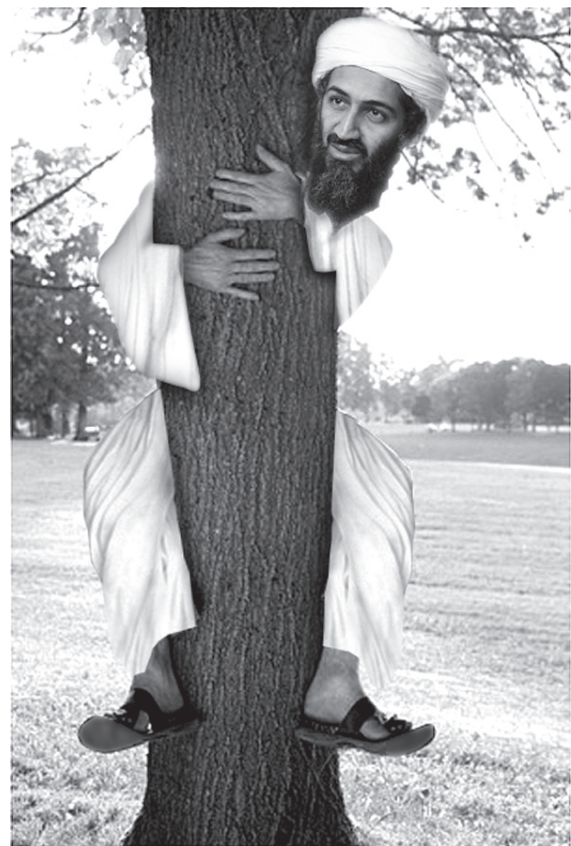
Since the beginning of the release of these tapes, the United States has sought to paint bin Laden as a radical who is attempting to destroy the American way of life because of his Islamic ideology. Of late, closer examination reveals that these messages are more about challenging a corrupted system of hegemony, run by greedy capitalists and warmongers.

Even though there is an Islamic consensus within al Qaida, new elements are being added to the concept of what constitutes a terrorist. This procession of events raises many questions. Will we one day count protesting environmentalists, tea partiers, or socialists among our enemies of the state? What if there is a worldwide consensus that the United States must relinquish its self-imposed role as the policeman of the world? Will the United States simply declare anti-U.S. actions as terrorism? Can a majority opinion still be called terrorism?

While I would never go as far to say that I agree with Osama bin Laden about politics, I can begin to understand that this man might have genuine grievances and reasons for becoming a terrorist. He is not wrong to say that our government cares more about industry than the well being of its people, that it is preoccupied with economic success rather than social equity and that the United States has made a business of peddling influence.

There is no reason to believe that Osama bin Laden is not genuinely concerned with climate change or monetary policy—he is a leader, albeit a bad one. Already the United States has begun to realize that it cannot remove the Taliban completely by force, understanding that they will have to be incorporated or compromised within the process of maintaining a stable government in Afghanistan. Ground commanders in Afghanistan are trying to find ways to convert young mujahideen into the Afghan army, so that when president Hamid Karzai's administration takes more control over the country over the next two years, more men will be invested in sustaining the government than overthrowing it. It could be that 20 years from now Afghanistan will be run by men who once believed that bin Laden was the freedom fighter and the U.S. soldiers were real terrorists.

We must make a stand against men who only seek to destroy for their own gain. At the same time, we also have to listen to honest criticism, if only to diffuse it. It is true that Osama bin Laden is our enemy, that he is allegedly responsible for killing thousands of people. Unfortunately, in many instances, he has more depth than the bogeyman we make him out to be. In the end, while we may not abide the advice of bin Laden, it takes a terrorist to know one, and apparently he thinks a lot of them are running our country.



Patrice Dalesandro illustration

the  
ct

ROBERTO  
CURTIS  
Executive Editor

ERIC  
HILL  
Opinion Editor

Opinions expressed are those of individual writers and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Commonwealth Times or Virginia Commonwealth University. Unsigned editorials represent the institutional opinion of The CT.

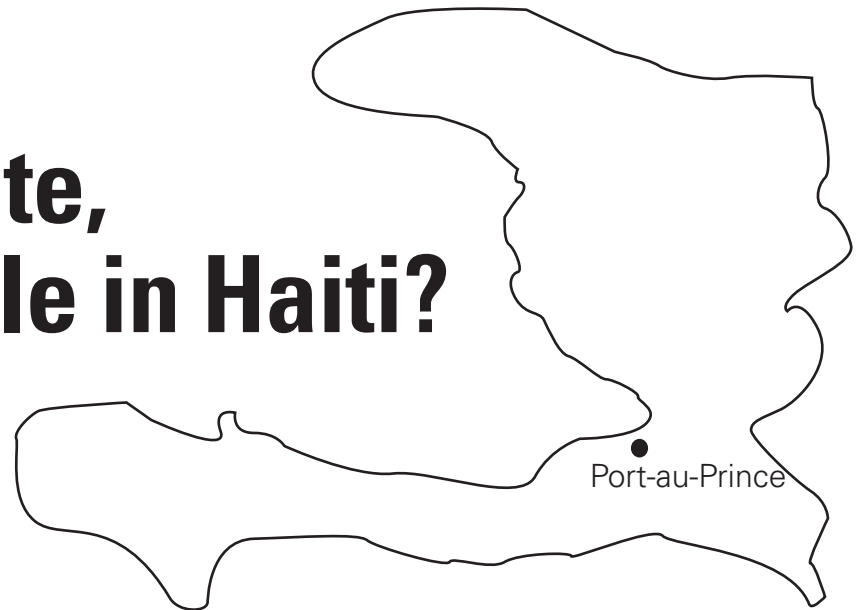
### Add Your Voice

The opinion pages of The Commonwealth Times are a forum open to the public. Clear, concise and compelling contributions are welcome online at our Web site, by e-mail at [opinion@commonwealthtimes.com](mailto:opinion@commonwealthtimes.com), or by mail and in person at 817 W. Broad St., Richmond, Va. 23220-3806.

Letters 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.



# Students respond to debate, what is the journalist's role in Haiti?



**Editor's note:** These articles were written by students in Professor Bonnie Davis' journalism class. I wish to express my thanks to Professor Davis for taking the initiative to encourage her students to publish in The CT. I would like to remind any professors who teach classes on writing for pertinent news subjects that I am willing to review any student work that you nominate with the author's permission

The idea of a journalist as simply an observant third party is perhaps the toughest role for me to accept, particularly in times of human tragedy. Recently the earthquake in Haiti has been at the forefront of debate over whether or not journalists are getting too close to the story and letting it affect their work. I'm somewhat undecided on the issue, but in general I would say this concern doesn't necessarily negatively impact the overall product. People are relational and relatable. When images from the earthquake were first shown they were shocking and portrayed the amount of help the nation continues to need. The only way we can understand what is truly happening in Haiti is through news reports and the people delivering them. As I was watching the news these past few weeks, the more memorable moments that have stuck with me have been those times when I've noticed a reporter become a little more emotional. I watched a clip of Anderson Cooper helping a young boy after he suffered a head wound while looting in the street. When I first watched the clip, I agreed with Cooper's actions. However, I find it difficult to decide where to draw the line. It's obvious that young boy wasn't the only person Cooper encountered who had sustained a serious injury, so what makes this particular case so important? Cooper doesn't have the time to save everyone he meets, but is it fair to help one and not another? In the end, I think he did the right thing, and it caught my attention because I've seen Cooper report in tragic situations before and he has done nothing close to his work in Haiti. After watching his extreme reaction to Haiti's violence, I now understand just how bad things are in that country.

– Nan Turner

The coverage regarding the earthquake in Haiti has totally gone astray. It started out as breaking news about a natural disaster, but quickly turned into a press release to alert us about how crappy the Haitian government is run and the level of poverty among its citizens. Personally, I think that the level of media coverage in the aftermath of Haiti's earthquake has been over the top. Obviously, there must not have been much news over the last two weeks, because for the American media to devote

so much news time and effort to a country that isn't even our own is ridiculous. This is a third world country that has a corrupt government and is barely even on the map. We're donating millions of dollars so that it can go to a small percentage of the population, rather than reaching out to help rest of the people who are starving and have no place to live. It's a joke. As usual though, we want to be the superpower that saves the world. I don't understand why newspapers are spending money to send camera crews and other staffers to Haiti when all we need to do is send mobile journalists to report from their cell phones. Don't get me wrong, it's definitely very sad and I hope that Haiti can recover. But Haiti needs to deal with this itself, just as American did with Hurricane Katrina.

–Matt Birch

For many journalists and reporters, getting that lead to a good story is huge. Some like to take advantage of a story and exploit it for personal benefits or for their company or capitalize on an issue. Some actually care for the well being of the people/issue they are covering and truly have good intentions.

Is the recent coverage of the earthquake in Haiti too close? Too little? Are journalists focusing in the right places? Do they have a personal agenda? I'm not sure if we will ever find out. These questions come up at a time when many journalists are running around Haiti covering the tragic earthquake that hit. I never pay particular attention to specific reporters when it comes to covering tragedies such as this. I do know that Anderson Cooper, Geraldo Rivera, and Soledad O'Brien are usually the reporters on the scene when something like this happens. In a way, I'm pessimistic. I truly believe that while yes, these reporters care, they also want to be the one known for getting that "exclusive" coverage or great story. I find myself in the middle on this subject though. I believe that they do care about the earthquake victims, particularly Anderson Cooper. One Internet clip shows Cooper stopping in the middle of reporting to aid a young boy who was struck in the head by a rock that was intended for looters. Cooper probably

didn't help much, but he did what he could and he didn't have to. I believe that every reporter, given the opportunity, would have done the same. As a reporter, I would be nervous because Haiti is very dangerous right now. But that's why Cooper, O'Brien and Rivera were hired because they are willing to put themselves out there to obtain good coverage.

–Patrick Rossman

I do not believe there is any problem with journalists getting close to the victims of Haiti. I think any career one chooses may cause some emotional attachment. When journalists cover a variety of stories, they are exposed to so many different things that it is nearly impossible to separate your emotions from your profession. If anyone is able to do that, such as a doctor, a teacher or those in other professions, then I would like to meet them. The only case in which a line should be drawn is if a journalist is incapable of doing his or her job because emotions get in the way. Journalists must remember that they are news gatherers, and once they have all the information required for a complete story, they then are free to help others, or in this case, victims in Haiti. I don't think I could travel to Haiti just to report a story and then return without the desire to help any of those affected by the tragedy. I realize that it is our job to get close to all our sources for stories we may be reporting, and to gather their trust, which is what many journalists in Haiti are doing. I wouldn't want to lose that trust and bond built by turning my back on them.

–Ayanna Brown



# howdy!

bringing you what's new every Monday & Thursday



VCU'S AWARD-WINNING INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

VCU Student Media Center » 817 W Broad St. Richmond, VA