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

commonwealthtimes.org

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free





Mel Kobran cover photo

briefs

Local and VCU

Dorothy Height, 'the grand lady of the civil-rights movement,' dies

Dorothy Irene Height, a Richmond native whose fight for racial and gender equality spanned eight decades – 40 years as head of the National Council of Negro Women – died Tuesday in Washington. She was 98.

Height was among the coalition of African-American leaders who pushed civil rights to the center of the American political stage after World War II, and she was a key figure in the struggles for school desegregation, voting rights, employment opportunities and public accommodations in the 1950s and 1960s.

She stood on the dais during the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s speech at the 1963 March on Washington, which she helped plan.

Brief by the Richmond Times-Dispatch

Fight may loom over at-risk children

Gov. Bob McDonnell is anticipating a possible showdown Wednesday with returning lawmakers over his proposal to prune further spending to help troubled kids.

The Republican is recommending trimming an additional \$10 million for services for at-risk youths. Over the past two years, because of the recession, the program has been cut by \$86 million.

The General Assembly met Wednesday to approve or reject McDonnell's proposed revisions to legislation passed this winter. He is recommending amendments to 122 bills as well as 96 modifications to the pending two-year, \$83 billion Virginia budget.

McDonnell did not veto any of the 821 bills sent to him from January to March.

Brief by the Richmond Times-Dispatch

Despite Virginia law, \$25 million in natural-gas royalties still stranded

A new law might have resolved the 20-year-old conflict that has stranded more than \$25 million of natural-gas royalties in escrow accounts. But the state board responsible for diverting those royalties into escrow cannot apply that law to release the money to mineral owners, the state's top energy official said Tuesday.

Speaking at a Virginia Gas and Oil Board hearing in Southwest Virginia, the director of the state Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy said the twin bills that clarified coal-bed methane ownership did not give the board the authority to determine ownership.

The legislation is modeled on a 2004 Virginia Supreme Court decision that declared landowners who sold only coal from their property retained the rights to coal-bed methane gas. The bills aimed to release royalties from escrow by ending the dispute between landowners and coal companies who both have claimed Virginia's most abundant natural gas.

Brief by the Richmond Times-Dispatch

National and International

Restrictions for Germany's airspace lifted

Air controllers in Germany say that all restrictions for the country's airspace have been lifted.

Deutsche Flugsicherung said Wednesday that the current weather situation allowed it to completely reopen the airspace above Germany – among Europe's busiest in normal situations.

A statement from the agency said the concentration of volcano ash in the sky "considerably decreased and will continue to dwindle because of the weather conditions."

All German airports, including Frankfurt International, a key global hub, are expected to operate normally by the end of the day, it said.

Brief by The Associated Press

Pope promises 'church action' against clerical sex abuse

Pope Benedict XVI has promised "church action" to confront the clerical abuse scandal.

Benedict told his weekly public audience Wednesday in St. Peter's Square that he had told victims of abuse during his recent trip to Malta that he "shared their suffering ... assuring them of church action."

Benedict met Sunday with eight Maltese men who say they were abused by priests as children. The Vatican issued a statement saying Benedict had told the men during the private meeting that the church would do everything in its power to bring justice to abusive priests and would implement "effective measures" to protect children.

Benedict's words Wednesday are his first public comment on the scandal, although he called for repentance last week.

Brief by The Associated Press

China mourns 2,064 victims of devastating earthquake

Bowing their heads in silent tribute, thousands of officials, soldiers and civilians gathered Wednesday in ceremonies across China to mourn the 2,064 victims killed in a devastating quake that hit one week ago in a remote Tibetan region.

At the quake's epicenter in Yushu County in western Qinghai province, hundreds stood quietly for a nationally televised ceremony held on a hill with rubble from destroyed buildings behind them.

Red Chinese flags flew at half-staff as the blaring of horns and sirens from cars, police vehicles and ambulances sounded in the background after three minutes of silence that began at 10 a.m.

Qiang Wei, Communist Party secretary for Qinghai province, called on people to unite and rebuild in the wake of the quake, which also left more than 12,000 people injured.

Brief by The Associated Press

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

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Thursday, April 22, 2010





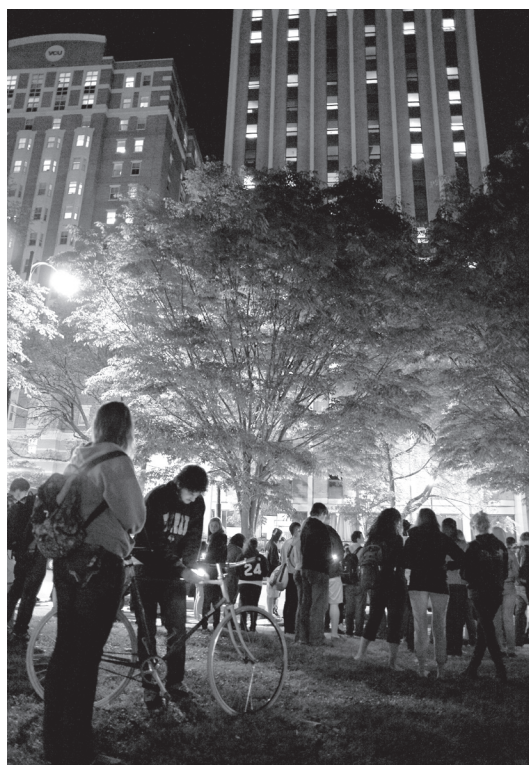
news

More than 600 mourn student in candlelight vigil



Mel Kobran photos

ABOVE As more students arrived at the vigil, the line of attendants stretched from Johnson Hall to Pace Campus Ministries.



LEFT Many passersby stopped to join the group of students already present at the vigil.

Thursday, April 22, 2010

ERICATERRINI
News Editor

More than 600 students gathered at 11:30 p.m. Monday on the sidewalk across from Rhoads Hall to pay their respects in a candlelight vigil to freshman Sara Prescott, 18, whose body was found late Sunday night.

According to the investigation report by Richmond and VCU police departments, Prescott was found lying near Rhoads Hall, her residence. The Medical Examiner's Office has ruled her death a suicide. Prescott died of blunt force trauma as the result of a fall.

During the vigil, students filed in a line, which wrapped around the corner sidewalk next to Monroe Park, facing the area where Prescott's body was found late Sunday night.

Many stood silent, with their heads bowed and only the glow of candles lighting their faces, while others huddled with friends as they stared in the direction of the dimly lit alley between Rhoads Hall and Pace Campus

Ministry. Some students began to sing, and a small group of students placed their candles on the sidewalk in a circle.

About 10 police officers from the VCU Police Department stood on the opposite facing sidewalk—just outside of Johnson and Brandt Halls—to monitor the large crowd for safety reasons.

About 30 minutes into the vigil, Prescott's parents arrived and stayed briefly to join the outpouring of the VCU community. They later expressed their appreciation to the vigil organizer, Sally Blakemore, a freshman early childhood education and social work major.

"I woke up this morning and felt really, really bad about everything that had happened," Blakemore said. "I just decided no one deserves to feel the way that she did and I wanted to make some sort of difference to her parents and to all of her friends out there to show that we as a student body and community care about

VIGIL continued to CT4

news • commonwealthtimes.org • CT3





VIGIL continued from CT3

**Some students placed their candles on the ground.**

what goes on.”

Blakemore, who had no previous connection to Prescott, said the idea to organize the vigil came after she discovered a Facebook group had been created to support Prescott’s friends and family.

Blakemore said after she began promoting the vigil on Facebook to reach out to the student body and VCU community, the number of attendants steadily increased. The Student Government Association offered to provide candles.

Reuban Rodriguez, associate vice provost and dean of student affairs, and VCU Police Chief John Venuti were also at the vigil.

Rodriguez said he had spoken with the residence assistant staff of Brandt and Rhoads halls along with Venuti and University Counseling Services in a meeting to address their feelings and how to assist others.

“It’s always a tragedy when a student loses their life,” Rodriguez said.

Rodriguez said the first step after any student death is to notify the parents. Based on the wishes of the family, the university will take further steps to inform the VCU student body, staff and faculty of the details they want released. He said part of his job as the dean of student affairs is to organize a university response in emergencies and the university worked quickly to issue a mass e-mail offering counseling services, but student safety is an ongoing discussion.

“A lot of people don’t realize – whether it’s certain circumstances or just ongoing protocol with safety measures – we literally consider every day, safety, as a primary importance for students in the residence halls,” Rodriguez said.

According to Jihad Aziz, the director of University Counseling Services, his department has been involved in several activities to support the university

community.

Aziz stated in an e-mail counseling services has met with students individually and in groups who are directly affected, residence hall staff and security and faculty to help them process their experience and share information about the grieving process. Counseling services has highlighted a link on its website, which provides information about the grief process and how to recognize and help someone in distress.

“University Counseling Services has several protocols in place for emergencies,” Aziz stated. “Students have access to an on-call counselor in a crisis situation at any hour of the day, seven days a week. In an emergency situation, students who seek services are seen immediately during our normal operating hours. A number of protocols are in place for individuals who experience an emergency situation.”

“When we have a situation where numerous people in the university community are impacted, we make our services available to the VCU community,” Aziz stated. “We meet with students, faculty, and staff in a variety of venues to provide information and support during difficult times. We also have contact with concerned parents or friends and provide them with information and helpful resources as well.”

For more information about University Counseling Services, visit students.vcu.edu/counseling. To schedule an appointment with Monroe Park Campus counseling services, call 828-6200 or visit 907 Floyd Ave., Room 238. To schedule an appointment with the MCV Campus counseling services, call 828-3964 or visit Grant House at the Medical Center, located at 1008 East Clay St., Room B-011.

Visit commonwealthtimes.org for a video of the vigil.

Suicide and depression

studies show students at risk

JILLIAN QUATTLEBAUM

Contributing Writer

A 2009 survey conducted by VCU’s Wellness Resource Center stated 1.2 percent of VCU students have attempted suicide in the past 12 months and 5.6 percent seriously have considered suicide. Feelings of sadness, severe depression and anxiety occur in more than 30 percent of VCU students.

VCU’s Associate Director of Clinical Services Joy Bressler said the two leading causes of suicide are feelings of hopelessness and severe depression. Bressler also said the patterns across age groups are similar where more females attempt suicide, but more males successfully complete the act.

Bressler said these statistics are correct if all the numbers are reported.

“Many had felt suicidal or made an attempt but told nobody,” Bressler said.

Bressler said people who seek treatment have a better chance of fighting depression.

“The success rate is really pretty good for people that are feeling very depressed and suicidal with receiving therapy and counseling,” Bressler said. “Sometimes with medication, too.”

While Vice President of University Relations Pamela Lepley said she can not recall an incident of suicide since she has been at VCU, such an event can leave lasting effects. George Mason University experienced the effects of suicide after Trevor Curiel, an 18-year-old freshman from Kansas, was found dead in his dorm on Sept. 1, 2008.

“I had heard about it ... while I was at work at the pool on campus,” Caitlin Pfaff, a 21-year-old George Mason student, stated in an e-mail. “I think everyone was pretty shell-shocked seeing as how it was only the first week of school.”

Pfaff said she did not talk to a

professional after the GMU suicide, but she did talk to someone.

“I remember talking to my roommate at the time about it and telling her what I heard. We had a pretty long discussion about it,” Pfaff stated. “It’s always hard for people to come to a different place by themselves, much less college.”

The American Association of Suicidology’s website states the two groups of college students at a higher risk for suicide are those who had a mental-health disorder in the past, and those who developed a disorder while at college.

Based on the 2007 Youth Behavior Surveillance Survey, 14.5 percent of high school students in the United States reported considered making an attempt at suicide in the previous 12 months. A total of 6.9 percent had attempted it.

The current economic recession is a concern for many suicide-prevention advocates.

A survey from the National Association of Colleges and Employers states of all 2009 college graduates, less than 20 percent of those who applied for a job have one.

Bressler said the feeling of failing their families is among the reasons why people are at risk for suicide.

“Job loss, feeling like they could no longer support their family; they were being a burden, that it was shameful,” Bressler said. “(There is) a lot of shame around feeling depressed.”

The AAS also states there is a direct link between suicide and unemployment. The peak rate of suicide occurred during the Great Depression. Today, the foundation is worried about most job loss as a major factor.

“When combined with the loss of job,” states the AAS, “home loss has been found to be one of the most common economic strains associated with suicides.”



news

Student organizations host blood drives for Monroe Park, MCV Campuses

ERICATERRINI

News Editor

A blood drive was held Wednesday in the University Student Commons Ballroom from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Alpha Phi Omega, Delta Epsilon Mu, the NAACP at VCU and Spring Fest sponsored the drive on the Monroe Park Campus.

Arielle Reinhardt, a senior psychology major and member of the fundraising committee for Delta Epsilon Mu, said her sorority deals with pre-health services. She said their philanthropy is the children's hospital but they also do other outreach programs like the blood drive.

"It's just really good that people are willing to do this for our community," Reinhardt said. "It's good that young people get involved. We always need blood and especially with people that have blood types that are really needed—this is just a really easy way to help."

Another drive will be held on the MCV Campus Thursday, April 22 from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m., in the Larrick Student Center.

The MCV Campus drive will be sponsored by Psi Omega, the School of Medicine, and the VCU Alumni Association, Students Today Alumni Tomorrow.

Both drives benefit Virginia Blood Services.

For more information about VCU blood drives, call 828-4381 or visit vador.com.

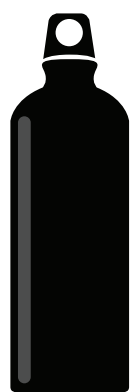


Erica Termini photo

Travis Evans, a freshman computer engineer major, gives blood during the Monroe Park Campus blood drive.

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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, April 22, 2010

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Earth Day festival postponed to Friday

ERICATERRINI
News Editor

Early morning April showers on Wednesday caused some outdoor Earth Day events to be postponed until Friday from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the Compass Point, Green Unity members said.

Co-hosts of the 2010 Earth Day events – Green Unity, VCU Recycling and Save the Trash! – rescheduled the outdoor festival and shortened the event from six to three hours, according to Green Unity co-founder Amanda Schutt.

According to James McCarthy, a Green Unity member, the student groups plan to feature local non-profit organizations and business, which promote greener initiatives, and other activities.

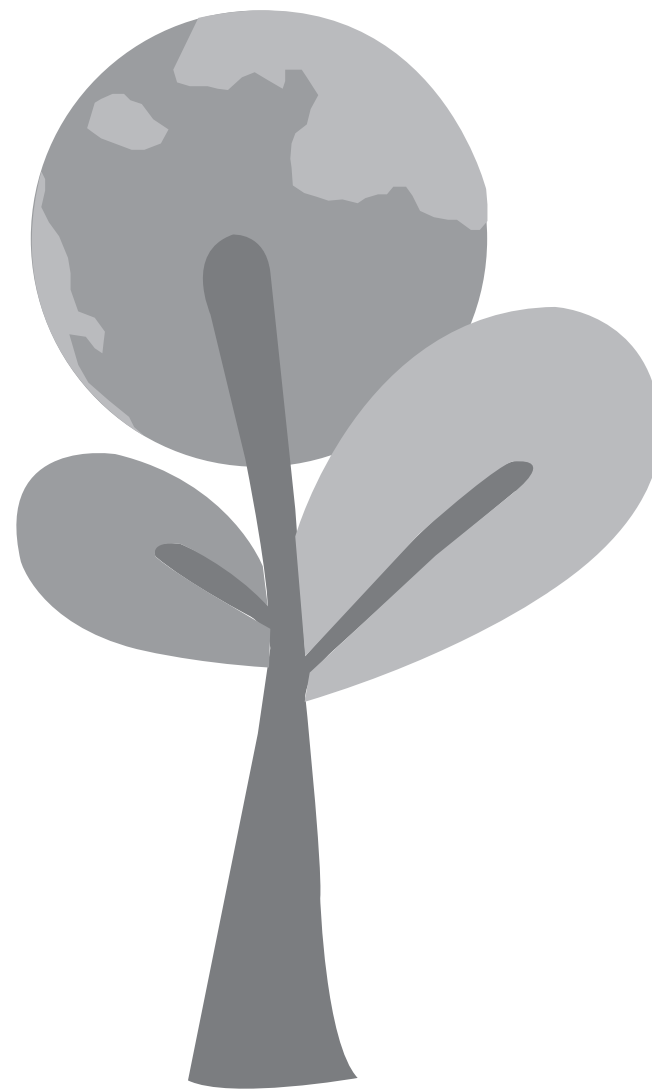
McCarthy said students who participate in a survey, which will examine student interaction with the environment, will be given a plant. Other activities will include games like a limbo

competition.

The VCU fashion department will present a fashion show of eco-chic clothing, made entirely out of thrift store products and other recycled materials, McCarthy said. Guest speaker Joel Salatin, the owner of Polyface Farms, will be addressing the community at 3 p.m., in room 253 of the Trani Life Sciences Building after the outdoor festival.

Green Unity will also be hosting a gardening event at the Trani Life Sciences Building and on Cary and Harrison streets with the Boy Scout Troop 737 “BayScape,” Saturday, at 9 a.m. The two organizations will be planting 600 native shrubs, flowers and grasses to help manage storm-water runoff from campus as a part of a project to improve the water quality of the James River and protect the Chesapeake Bay.

For more information about these events, visit the Green Unity Facebook group: Green Unity 4 VCU.



Patrice Delesandro illustration

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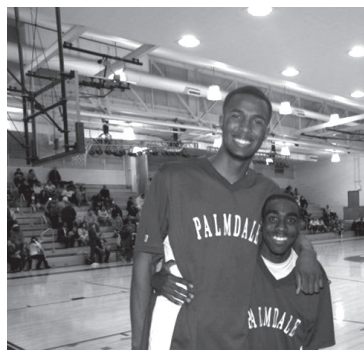
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Thursday, April 22, 2010



sports

Basketball recruiting class 'talk of the league'



FROM LEFT DJ Haley, Toby Veal, Rob Brandenburg, Reco McCarter, Juvonte Reddic

ADAM STERN

Sports Editor

VCU's 2010 men's basketball recruiting class is big in more ways than one: both in size and storylines. The five-man recruiting class includes a colossal Californian in 7-foot-0-inch center D.J. Haley, a player recruited by this year's National Champion runner-ups, Butler, in Rob Brandenburg and highly-touted ACC and SEC recruit Juvonte Reddic (6-foot-10-inches).

"They snatched a couple guys, man," said Dave Telep, National Recruiting Director for Scout.com, a sports publishing company that focuses on recruiting. "I actually thought they were wasting their time with Reddic. I thought he was going to wind up going higher, so for them to pop Reddic was a big deal."

The recruiting class, which announced Haley, Reddic and Colorado transfer Toby Veal last Wednesday after Reco McCarter and Rob Brandenburg signed in the fall, is also big in substance. Now that junior guard Larry Sanders (Fort Pierce, Fla. / Port St. Lucie) has once-and-for-all declared his intentions to bypass his senior season to enter the NBA Draft, VCU will need to fill a void that had long become one of the team's strongest facets of their game.

"VCU's primary concern (going into this year's recruiting) was getting some bodies for their front court and I don't know if it could have worked out any better for them," Telep said. "Long, rangy guys

that fit in with the style they play. It's perfect."

Indeed the class is so skillful on all scales that one might be hard pressed to find the best "steal" (when a mid-major school lands a player being recruited by a more prestigious university) of the lot, although of those there are plenty. Brandenburg, whose status as a late-bloomer kept him under the bigger school's radars, was first viewed by VCU's recruiting staff at a tournament last April. Since then, they, along with several other mid-major university recruiters in pursuit of the shooting guard, would show up to his games, hoping he would score less than 25 points so larger schools wouldn't catch wind of him, according to Telep.

"If (Brandenburg) was available now (rather than already being committed), VCU probably wouldn't have a chance (of signing him)," Telep said.

Similarly, Haley, a 4.0 student who was originally recruited by VCU assistant Will Wade when he was an assistant at Harvard, is a late-blooming prospect that might have only ended up at VCU via a combination of resourceful recruiting and a lack of interest from brand-name schools close to his home state.

"I think coach Shaka finally has a guy on his team that's smarter than him," Telep said jokingly, referring to Haley's perfect grade point average. "How he wasn't recruited by some of the Pac-10 teams looking for size will remain a mystery."

That mystery is mitigated to a certain extent by

VCU's unusually high profile as a mid-major. The Rams have won by far the most games of any Division I school in Virginia in the last nine seasons with 217, they have the best home winning percentage in the commonwealth at 86 percent and they here reached the NCAA tournament two times in the last four years and this past season won the College Basketball Invitational tournament.

Perhaps most attractive to potential recruits is the school's newest feather in their cap: two players drafted in the NBA draft in consecutive years, provided Larry Sanders is picked when the draft is held on June 24 at Madison Square Garden in New York City.

"If one of these five guys turn out to be as good (as Eric Maynor or Sanders), they hit a home run," Telep said. "I can't imagine that's (two players getting drafted in consecutive years from a CAA school) going to happen again anytime soon."

Regardless of how the five players pan out in their VCU careers, Smart's first class has begun a process of solidifying his mark as an unrivaled recruiter.

"Shaka did really, really well," Telep said. "This is an Atlantic-10 recruiting class in the CAA, that's what it looks like to me. I think this is going to wind up being the talk of the league."



Panther pop quiz: Georgia State poses midseason midterm

ADAM STERN

Sports Editor

First-place VCU are already half way through their conference slate, but this weekend's three-game match up versus Georgia State might well pose the squad's first true test of the season.

The Rams, predicted to finish seventh in the CAA Preseason Coaches' Poll after last season's 10th place finish, have taken the league by storm and surprise, posting an 11-1 record with 12 games remaining. However, the combined record of the conference foes already faced is a feeble 15-30, and two of the four teams represent the two (statistically) worst in the league.

"I guess you have to say lucky stars there (to play worse teams first)," said sophomore Andrew Phillips, who covers the team for VCUAthletics.com. "Regardless of the schedule you're dealt, you still have to go out and win games."

The Rams come into the series on the back of one of their most scintillating non-conference wins of the season after defeating VMI 11-4 Tuesday in Lexington.

The win is no mean feat for a couple of reasons: VMI are in the midst of an outstanding season and received their first ever national ranking last week when they were ranked 26th, and VCU redshirt-junior Joe Van Meter (Oyster Bay N.Y./Arizona State) tied a school record with three home-runs.

Van Meter has been VCU's utility man and superman simultaneously this season, hitting a team best .384 with a .589 slugging percentage. Van Meter went 4-4 versus the Keydets and scored seven runs with seven RBIs.

"I think (Van Meter) knows he's going to have to be one of the biggest bats on the team if they're going to be successful," Phillips said. "I don't think he necessarily puts a bunch of pressure on himself, he just comes through for the team."

When the Rams take to the field in the first game of the set Friday night, they will face a GSU team that's facing a role reversal to the Rams' current fortune.

Last season, the Panthers finished second in the conference with a mark of 12-9 before winning the CAA Championship in postseason play.

This year Georgia State is only 5-4 in the conference, leaving them in sixth place heading into weekend action. However, the Panthers are on a bit of a revival, and posted a 4-1 record last week overall, including a 2-0 sweep of Air Force.

They also have many players leading important statistical hitting categories, while no VCU player makes the top 10 in almost all of them. Junior outfielder Ryan Fleming leads the CAA in home-runs with 12. He is also one of three GSU players on the top five in RBIs, although he is not one of their three players in the top five of batting average.

"They're supposed to be a good hitting team; The Diamond is not supposed to be a hitter friendly park, so maybe that will play true this weekend," Phillips said. "This weekend will be a big test."

Series information

Teams: VCU (11-1) vs. Georgia State (5-4)

Location: The Diamond

Game times

Game one: Friday, 7 p.m.

Game two: Saturday, 4 p.m.

Game three: Sunday, 1 p.m.

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CAA report

Standings

- 1: **VCU (11-1)**
- 2: James Madison (11-4)
- 3: George Mason (7-5)
- 3: UNC Wilmington (7-5)
- 4: Georgia State (5-4)
- 5: William & Mary (6-6)
- 6: Towson (6-9)
- 7: ODU (4-8)
- 8: Delaware (3-6)
- 9: Hofstra (3-6)
- 10: Northeastern (0-9)

Player of the week

Carlos Alonso, Delaware: Alonso became the fourth player in school history to hit for the cycle when he performed the feat in Friday’s 18-10 win over Towson and is hitting a league best .466 from the plate.

Co-pitchers of the week

Kevin Munson, James Madison: Munson went 2-0 with a 0.00 ERA in two winning appearances out of the bullpen in games over UNC Wilmington. Munson is 6-0, all saves, and has a 0.76 ERA.

Drew Leenhouts, Northeastern: Leenhouts struck out 19, gave up just three hits and allowed no runs in more than 10 innings pitched last week.

Rookie of the week

Chris O’Grady, George Mason: O’Grady allowed just one run off one hit in seven innings in an 11-1 victory of Northeastern Sunday.

Batting average

- 1: Carlos Alonso, Delaware: .470
- 2: Brandon Williams, Georgia State: .428
- 3: Rob Lind, Georgia State: .425
- 4: Joey Wood, Georgia State: .423
- 4: Dan Palumbo, Georgia Mason: .423

RBI's

- 1: Brandon Williams, Georgia State: 54
- 2: Ryan Soares, George Mason: 52
- 3: Ryan Fleming, Georgia State: 47
- 4: Carl Moniz, Georgia State: 47
- 5: Pat Dameron, Delaware: 45

Home runs

- 1: Ryan Fleming, Georgia State: 12
- 2: Matt Townsend, James Madison: 10
- 3: Robbie Monday, UNC Wilmington: 10
- 4: Trevor Knight, James Madison: 10
- 5: Joey Wood, Georgia State: 9



spectrum

concert review

Peppery, upbeat storytelling with VCU Jazz

NICHOLAS BONADIES

Staff Writer

Just like classical music has its symphony orchestra or string quartet, you probably think of a small combo when you think of jazz—a three or four member rhythm section, perhaps a few horn players. It's in this intimately communicative setting that we get to hear the best of what jazz can do—create that free exchange of ideas for which jazz has always been famous.

I arrived at the W.E. Singleton Center for Performing Arts Tuesday seeking just that, and VCU Jazz was eager to deliver. The Small Jazz Ensembles concert was given as part of the department of music's ninth annual celebration of Jazz Appreciation Month—or “a month-long JAM,” as the program describes.

Six different groups played, each consisting of seven or eight players with slightly differing instrumentation. Each group entered and exited, perfectly aloof—they took their applause politely and silently. The music transitioned from one set to the next with minimum fuss and a refreshing absence of interim chatter. The overall effect was not unlike listening to an album, but with all the satisfaction and vibrancy of a live performance.

Each band gave its take on standards by the likes of John Coltrane, Charlie Parker, Charles Mingus, and others. But where the concert truly shone – and where the audience was the most engaged – were the original numbers, written, arranged and now performed by VCU Jazz students that were interspersed throughout the program.

Early on we heard “Heart-Beat” by pianist Nick Berkina, a shimmery bossa with flute and vibraphone spotlights. Soon after, there was drummer/vibraphonist C.J. Alicea-Semanatte's “Not Really”—whose intro was nothing short of spellbinding. The band enveloped its audience in a swarm of clangs and echoes as anxious and distant as they were overwhelming, like the dull roar of traffic at a bustling intersection.

“Park Avenue,” by trumpeter Nick Skinner, was peppery and upbeat, ending with a drum solo by Alicea-Semanatte that made fascinating and innovative use of near-minimalist motivic chunks. Trombonist John Hulley brought us “Um Dia; Um Rio; Uma Vida,” which made fun and engaging use of the band's tonal ranges. The crowd cheered later when all but the rhythm section lowered their instruments to sing a few lines.

Tenor saxophonist Chris Sclafani's “Riding Low, Living Slow” deserved every second of its applause. The sultry tenor saxophone and bass opening was clearly written to utilize Sclafani's arrestingly human lyricism, like a torch song without words. Soon joined by Hulley's growling wah-mute counterpoint, the intensity built steadily and almost dangerously with each chorus, but never broke out of its loose, sexy groove.

Top-notch playing was demonstrated in each of the sets, but by the end of the night it was the original music that had packed a lasting punch.

We'll hear much more from the inspired music-makers VCU Music has to offer in the future.



Polanski's 'Ghost Writer'

a haunting and enigmatic accusation

JEREMY CLEMMONS

Staff Writer

Roman Polanski's "The Ghost Writer" (based not on the Philip Roth novel, but rather Robert Harris' political thriller, "The Ghost") is a curious film about displacement and secrecy. Both are concepts not far removed from the velvet-tipped gloves of Mr. Polanski himself, who has had to both displace (to anywhere but the United States although he is currently under house arrest in Switzerland) and also keep disgustingly mum about his much-publicized rape of a young girl some 30 odd years ago.

All of this quite possibly feeds into to a lingering resentment, or ressentiment, as portrayed in the film's haunting atmosphere – the cold, immaculate interiors, the thrashing rain beating over the eastern seaboard in relentless anguish. This is a United States shown at its most grimy, its most unforgiving. All of the principal characters (with the exception of Ewan McGregor's) are exiled in one way or another from their native Britain, shacking up on the American shore out of necessity for refuge. The murky waters here are a constant reminder of all that remains soiled and unfinished.

It is no surprise the film opens in those waters: Its contamination is established from an immediate shot of a lifeless body turning in the early morning tide. The corpse is, or was, a ghostwriter (an author who pens, without popular recognition, another person's story) for ex-Prime Minister Adam Lang (Pierce Bro-

snan). But a dead body is the least of Lang's worries. He is desperately caught up in an international court investigation for war crimes (rendition, torture—the usual post-9/11 spiel) committed during his term. Naturally, a warm memoir would serve as a tonic for this swarming madness.

Alas, another "ghost" is needed to complete the project. In comes McGregor, the unnamed apparition (referred to in the novel as "the Ghost"), whose intelligence and speedy writing skills are employed to finish the job.

However, more is left behind from the previous ghostwriter than an unfinished manuscript and a dead body. Troublesome clues and mysteries arise, like Lang's curious rise to prominence in politics and, of course, his peculiar sympathies toward the United States and the war on terror (especially given his Labour Party affiliations).

Also waiting behind closed doors and mouths is his beautiful wife, Ruth (Olivia Williams), whose advice and strong support for her husband is of curious origin and persuasion. Tom Wilkinson as Paul Emmett appears late in an already longish film, and the mere intrusion of such a prominent character (and actor) perhaps compels too much toward obvious conspiracy than is necessary.

"The Ghost Writer" is representative of a specific anti-Americanism that is popular in mainstream cinema as of late (one waits patiently while Hollywood digests life after Bush the second). However, this particular British brand is more decidedly progressive

in its approach, even if it condemns policy more along the lines of collusion and deceit than political inadequacy. Much of this discontent surely shows through in the film's monochrome color scheme and unsympathetic characters, but also in its comic fatalism: The ending shot is a darkly humorous payoff (even for those who couldn't stand the rest of it).

Nonetheless, images of water-boarding and explicit torturing, of international outrage and political fervor, proliferate in "The Ghost Writer." If this is an denunciation on Tony Blair, it's an interesting one. Is it vindictive? Sympathetic? Something else? It's hard to tell. The reason is both the depths of betrayal and intrigue that lay behind the movie's shifty plot. Adam Lang/Tony Blair is presented as a beaten wreck, yes, but also as fiercely committed (one could even say seduced) by an unshakeable belief in the honor of his actions. As Lang defiantly leans towards a skeptical McGregor at one point, he argues, "I did what I had to!"

It's an uncompromising world, and an even more uncompromising political landscape. Is director Polanski actually Blair, trapped in hopeless exile for crimes he didn't "really" commit? Maybe, maybe not. What we do know from this film is that there is no real sanctuary from our most terrible decisions; that the bleak sand and surly waters merely serve to keep us indoors, where we are left to endlessly confront the nightmares we've left behind.

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Weekend calendar

April 22-25

Thursday 4/22

The National: Arlt. 8 p.m. \$20-\$23. The National. 708 E. Broad St. 612-1900.

Chamber Brass Ensembles: 7-8:30 p.m. Free. James W. Black Music Center, Recital Hall. 1015 Grove Ave. 828-6183.

MCV Campus Year of the Environment Earth Day Event: There will be music, speakers, and prizes outside the Egyptian Building. Booths will be located in the Kontos Plaza with vendors and educational topics, including healthy eating, composting, transportation, energy conservation, recycling and smoking cessation. 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Free. Egyptian Building, Kontos Plaza. 1223 E. Marshall St. 828-3986.

A Million Blooms at Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden: A Million Blooms is the opening for the spectacular Glorious Glass in the Garden exhibit with glass sculptures by artist Hans Godo Frabel. Celebrate spring with A Million Blooms-offering a million ways to have fun in the Garden and featuring a spectacular succession of blooms including daffodils, cherry blossoms, tulips, iris, roses and peonies. 9 a.m.-5 p.m. \$6-\$10. Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden. 1800 Lakeside Ave. 262-9887.

Friday 4/23

Gallery5's 5-Year Anniversary Boylesque: An all-male variety show. A selection of community members, artists and local celebrities will bare it all in this comically inspired variety show. 8 p.m. \$7. Gallery5. 200 W. Marshall St. 644-0005.

43rd Street Gallery 25th Anniversary Show: Show Opening "For the Birds" featuring works by artisans with a Bird theme. Carvings, glasswork, clay, birdhouses, jewelry. Wine and cheese reception. Show runs through May 31 5-8 p.m. Free. 43rd St. 233-1758.

Kevin Hart: Kevin Hart can be seen in such comedies as "Superhero Movie," "Drillbit Taylor," "Fool's Gold," "Epic Movie," "Scary Movie" (3 & 4), "The 40-Year-Old Virgin," "Soul Plane," "Along Came Polly," and "Paper Soldiers." 8 p.m. \$37.50. Carpenter Theatre at Richmond CenterStage. 600 E. Grace St. 225-9000.

Doctors w/o Borders presents: The Spring 2010 Disaster Relief: Present Futures, Shane McAfee, Transpose, Vinny Gallo. 1621 W. Broad St. 353-4901.

Martini Night with "Sex, Drugs, Rock & Roll" twelve monologues come with this one-man show that portrays a funny, yet bleak landscape of the Western world, by Eric Bogosian. 8 p.m. \$10-\$22. The Firehouse Theatre. 1609 W. Broad St. 355-2001.

Saturday 4/24

19th Annual James River Wine Festival: 19th Annual James River Wine Festival to benefit Diversity Thrift. This weekend-long event features wine sampling, arts and crafts, great food, live music, and more. 12-7 p.m. \$15 in advance \$20 at gate. Innsbrook Pavilion. West Broad Street and Cox Road. 323-0437.

Intergalactic Bead and Jewelry Show: If you're looking for a fantastic variety of beads in one easy shopping location then come to the Intergalactic show. Exhibitors come from across the U.S. to offer you a wider and unique selection of beads than you'll find in your local area. 10 a.m. \$5. Richmond Raceway Complex. 600 E.

Laburnum Ave. 228-7500.

Kings Dominion Cheer & Dance Championship: All levels of cheerleading squads and dance teams are encouraged to participate. Please see website for specifics and registration information. 10:30 a.m.-10 p.m. Kings Dominion. 16000 Theme Park Way. 876-5000.

An Evening with Elvis Costello: 8 p.m. \$38.50-\$42.50. The National. 708 E. Broad St. 612-1900.

Sunday 4/25

Zumba for a Cause: All money raised goes to build an AIDS Hospice Shelter in Cambodia and everybody is encouraged to bring a can of food to donate to the Virginia Food Bank. Come ready to have fun, and join the party. 3-8 p.m. \$10. Gordon Elementary. 1701 Gordon School Rd. 794-1285.

Earth Day Richmond and Fish Festival: This event encourages Richmonders to make every day Earth Day. Enjoy food, art, dance, environmental exhibits, earth-friendly goods, plenty of kids activities and live music. The health of the Earth is within everyone's mission. Free parking at Plant Zero and Art Works (Fourth and Hull Streets). 10 a.m-5 p.m. Free. James River and Flood Wall. Southside of the Mayo Bridge (14th St.) 291-1400.

Blue Sky Fund's Carnival: Join us for the Blue Sky Fund's Carnival at The Steward School to raise awareness about drug and alcohol abuse prevention and promote unity in the community. The carnival will feature games, food, and much more. All ages are welcome. Admission to the carnival is free with the donation of a canned food item to the Central Virginia FoodBank. 1-3 p.m. Steward School. 11600 Gayton Rd. 938-9961.





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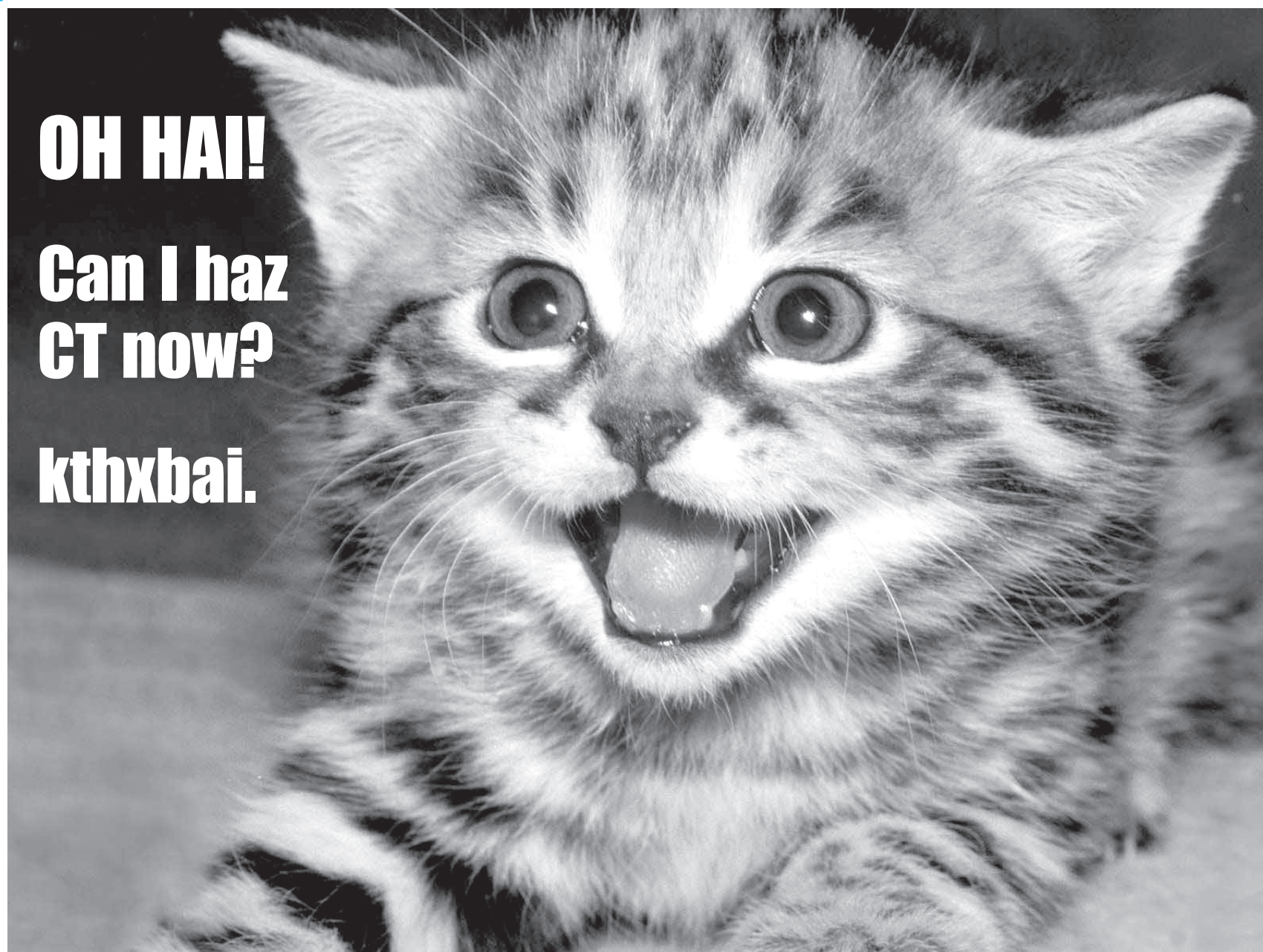
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For further inquiries, please contact editor@commonwealthtimes.com

Requirements

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2 Must have served as managing editor, section editor, associate editor, copy editor or in the business department for at least one semester or demonstrate equivalent experience.



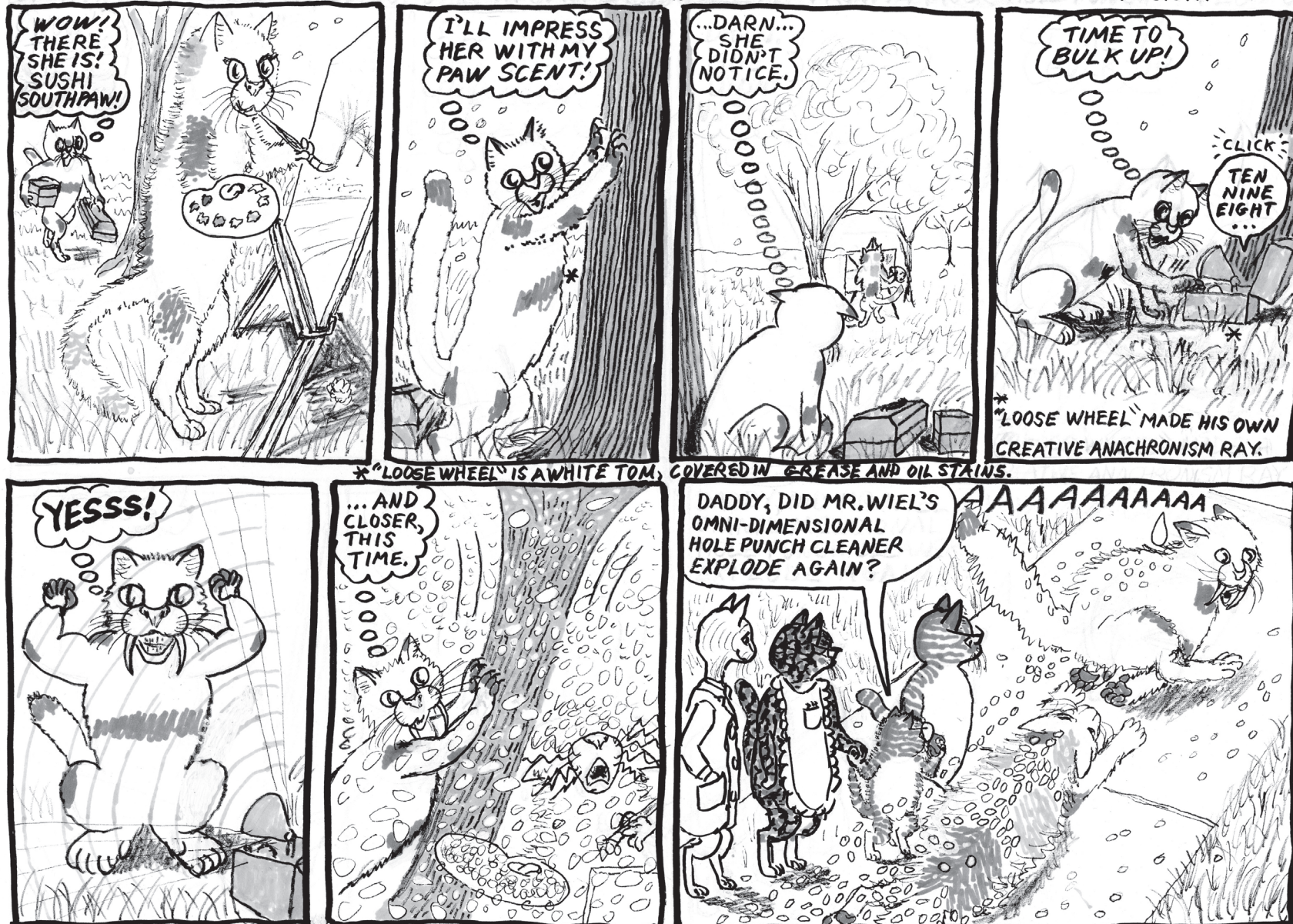


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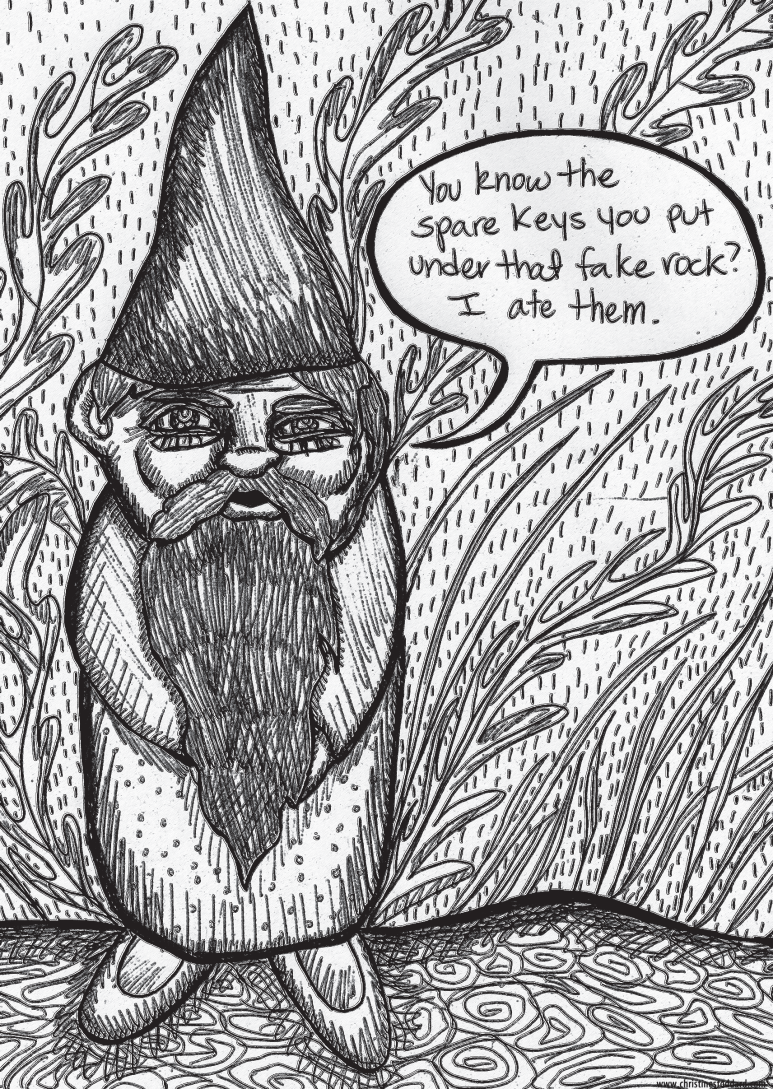
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opinion

colin sense

Trimming the fat off health care

COLIN HANNIFIN
Columnist

Late last month, President Barack Obama signed one of the most important health-care reform bills into law. The news coverage of this act has been significant. Whether you're a supporter or detractor of the new law, there is no question that it makes some significant changes in how we pay for health care. It might make health care more affordable for many Americans, but a question remains: Does it actually make health care cheaper?

The answer to this question is murky. The Congressional Budget Office has reported that the law will lower the federal deficit by billions of dollars over the next 10 years, largely by new fees on pharmaceuticals, taxes on income) and other related cost-saving measures such as changes in Medicare. Much of their savings seems to come from taking more money from companies and taxpayers—and these numbers only hold true if all current legislation is implemented on time, and no legislation in the coming months changes law. It would seem that these decreases in the deficit have little to do with the actual cost of health care—in any event, while the CBO was reporting savings of more than \$130 billion, according to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (under the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services), national health expenditures in 2008 totaled \$2.3 trillion dollars—more than 16 times the projected savings.

Are there savings to be had? Evidence suggests that, yes, savings are to be had—and to get an idea of where, we have to look no further than Appleton, Wisc.

In Appleton, ThedaCare – a four hospital–health care system – could be on the front of a revolution that could shake the entire health care industry. They have found a way to reduce costs while increasing quality by taking cues of one of the most successful companies in the world of manufacturing: Toyota (from Wall Street Journal Online, “To Fix Health Care, Hospitals Take Tips From Factory,” April 9, 2004).

After World War II ravaged Japan, Toyota rose from the ashes and quickly grew to be one of the best car companies in the world, known for their quality, low price and fuel efficiency. They did this using what would come to be known as the Toyota Production System, also known as just-in-time or lean manufacturing. This process is marked by elimination of inventory, which is viewed as waste. There is a constant push to improve processes, make them



Caroline Evertz illustration

more efficient, and eliminate defects. These strategies have been adapted the world over by good manufacturers—and members of the service sector are starting to listen too.

To move from traditional health care practices to leaner, more efficient ones is not easy. There are many differences between the Toyota and the patient. But as ThedaCare CEO emeritus John Toussaint saw, there are many similarities. In both scenarios, the customer—be it a car buyer or a patient—wants the top quality for the least amount of money. Time wasted by the professional in either case—be they blue collar factory workers or white-coat doctors—is money lost and efficiency out the door.

The most difficult process, according to Dr. Toussaint, is getting the staff on board. Health care professionals are skeptical to begin with, as similarities between the factory floor and the hospital seem sparse. Doctors are especially difficult, as they do not appreciate being told what to do—especially by consultants from the manufacturing sector (Wall Street Journal Online; Harvard Business Review, “Getting Physicians to Buy in to Lean Health Care,” March 22, 2010).

After convincing the staff, the rest is relatively easy. It's a matter of structuring the work area to work for the employee. It has taken years of small improvements, such as lowering the inventory on hand and placing it closer to where it will be used. Shifting where IV's are inserted to minimize infections and training employees to be able to perform multiple processes to avoid pigeonholing (Wall Street Journal Online; “What is ThedaCare?” interview with Dr. Toussaint by FOX News) are small steps on their own, but added together, they spelt a dramatic change for ThedaCare.

THEDACARE continued to CT19





Letter to the editor

We are becoming a nanny-state; it has happened under the last several presidents. And to top all of this off, where in God’s name is the money for all these worthless social programs? If a politician can tell me that, I would be amazed.

Social welfare does not improve anyone’s quality life; if anything it makes it 10 times worse. Social welfare’s goal is to make everyone equal; it takes away personal initiative to better you and succeed in life. It’s not the government’s job to give me food stamps or provide me with healthcare. It is my job to provide myself with the goods and services that I either want or need to survive. The problem with welfare now is that it has become a way of living and not a temporary thing, which was its original intent. People who are perfectly able to work aren’t because they are just being handed free stuff, so why would they work?

When I go to the store around the first of the month and

see how much food families are buying with the welfare card, it’s straight ridiculous. It is more food than my family goes through in two months, and I have also seen these people driving BMWs and Jaguars. I think if you are driving a BMW you can afford your own food. It also infuriates me to the core because I have been working since I was 13 and I am still working now, with two jobs, and still managing to go to school; so if I can do it, I know everyone else can. Now the three exceptions for using welfare, is if you are mentally or physically disabled, a veteran of the armed forces, or if we hit tough times like this and need temporary help. I have no problem with welfare, but it’s the people who are living on it because they are too lazy to work. Hard work is what built this country; it wasn’t handed to them on a silver spoon.

—Joshua Kramer

THEDACARE continued from CT18

Numbers suggest that the changes have worked for ThedaCare. According to JSOnline (the online branch of the Milwaukee Wisconsin Journal Sentinel), ThedaCare estimates that because of an increase in work efficiency in 2005 and 2006, they managed to cut costs by \$22 million a year, while reducing errors. Because of this, costs for the patients are routinely significantly lower at ThedaCare than at competing hospitals (“Tending to improvements in health care,” March 31, 2008).

Toussaint has been to Washington, D.C. several times, and has hosted law-makers as well as other health-care professionals at his hospitals (“What is ThedaCare?”) Other health care systems have noticed and begun to follow suit. According to BusinessNorth.com, St. Luke’s Hospital in Duluth, Minn. has also taken up lean health care practices—and they’re only one among several in Northern Minnesota to adopt the practice (“Health care

is going lean,” March 25, 2009).

Health care is a \$2.4 trillion industry, but up to 40 percent of that cost may be waste, according to Dr. Berwick, President and CEO of the Institute for Health care Improvement (“Improvement Tip: Find ‘Muda’ and Root it Out,” ihi.org). Change has been slow in coming, but savings have been realized in small health care systems around the country by a shift toward leaner service. If ThedaCare, a small health care system, can see such savings, how much could America benefit if the entire country adopted such practices?

Hope may finally be coming. The aforementioned Dr. Berwick, a supporter and believer of lean service practices, was nominated by President Obama to be administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services this past Monday, April 19 (New York Times, “President Nominates Professor to Health Job,” April 19, 2010).

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