



Thursday, December 9, 2010 Vol. 51 No. 29

the  
**ct**

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# briefs

## Local and VCU

### VCU board backs president, issues statement of support

After a four-hour closed session to review his performance, VCU's board of visitors issued a statement of support for President Michael Rao that noted both strengths and "areas for improvement."

"We will definitely move forward with Michael Rao," VCU Rector Anne G. "Panny" Rhodes said Tuesday after the board had concluded its review.

"Several areas of strength were identified, such as building the faculty and enhancing student success. The board and the president agreed on areas for improvement and will work together with the common goal of advancing VCU as a major research university," the board's statement said.

Rhodes declined to characterize the discussions among board members. But she said the decision to conclude the review "was definitely a consensus of the board."

Rao met with the board for two hours to give his response to the findings of an outside consultant hired by the board to conduct the performance evaluation.

"We had a good conversation," Rao said as he came out of the meeting.

*Brief by the Richmond Times-Dispatch*

### Developer eyes Richmond's City Stadium

A developer is eyeing Richmond's City Stadium for possible development, but the community should also consider ways to make the 16.5-acre property near Carytown a better venue for athletic events, City Councilman E. Martin Jewell said.

Jewell, whose 5th District includes the 21,219-seat stadium, would not identify the developer but said the interest helped to spur three recent community visioning meetings. The sessions were conducted by Poole & Poole Architecture of Midlothian. The firm was working with Jewell at no cost, said Nea May Poole, a principal.

A letter sent out after the first meeting Nov. 20 included no specifics but said "the open and collaborative dialogue produced a vibrant set of ideas." Jewell declined to elaborate.

"This is all so speculative at this stage of the game," he said.

Tammy D. Hawley, press secretary to Mayor Dwight C. Jones, said the administration was unaware of the meetings.

*Brief by the Richmond Times-Dispatch*

### Police press search for missing Roanoke girl, 12

Police continued their search Tuesday for a 12-year-old Roanoke County girl believed taken against her will after her mother was found dead in their home.

State police issued an Amber Alert for Brittany Mae Smith on Monday.

Roanoke County spokeswoman Teresa Hamilton Hall said Brittany may be with Jeffrey Scott Easley. On Tuesday, his mother tearfully pleaded with him to release Brittany and "come home."

"I was worried from what I know about you and Brittany," Sallie Martin of Franklin County said during a news conference with Roanoke County police. "I just want you to come home and I want you to be safe. ... We'll help you work this out. I love you."

Salem police issued arrest warrants for Easley after he and the girl were spotted on video shopping in a Walmart on Friday night with the girl's slain mother's credit card, police said.

"We still believe (Brittany's) in danger and we're very concerned," said Roanoke County Police Chief Ray Lavinder.

*Brief by the Richmond Times-Dispatch*

## National and International

### Obama calls Edwards a 'tenacious advocate'

President Barack Obama says he and his wife Michelle were deeply saddened to learn of the death of Elizabeth Edwards.

Obama issued a statement Tuesday calling her a "tenacious advocate" for health care reform and fighting poverty. He said the entire country has benefited from the voice she gave to such causes.

Obama noted that he came to know and admire Elizabeth during the 2008 presidential campaign. Her estranged husband, former Sen. John Edwards of North Carolina, was defeated by Obama in the Democratic nomination process.

The president said he had spoken to John Edwards and their daughter Cate in the afternoon.

*Brief by The Associated Press*

### U.S. Jew who posed as neo-Nazi sues ex-SS officer

An American Jew who says he posed as a neo-Nazi sympathizer to document a 97-year-old German man's part in the Nazi genocide of millions has filed a civil lawsuit in U.S. court against the former SS officer.

Mark Gould, a data broker turned historical investigator, said Tuesday that he went undercover for eight years and filmed hundreds of hours of interviews with Bernhard Frank, who he said was an aide to SS leader Heinrich Himmler.

In a video shown at a Manhattan news conference Tuesday and subtitled in English, Frank appeared to acknowledge his signature was on a document ordering the killing of Jews in newly captured Soviet territories.

But the Simon Wiesenthal Center's top Nazi hunter, Efraim Zuroff, warned Tuesday the report might be overblown. He said there is evidence that Frank was a devoted Nazi, but that he has seen nothing to indicate he was involved in ordering that Jews be killed.

"That's not to say he isn't a Nazi – even a zealous Nazi who still today identifies with the National Socialist movement – but there's a big difference between that and portraying him as one of the key operatives of the Nazi Holocaust," Zuroff said in a telephone interview from Jerusalem.

*Brief by The Associated Press*

### WikiLeaks founder is jailed, secrets still flow

WikiLeaks published a new set of cables Wednesday, and in a defiant message posted online the secret-spilling website promised that the leaks would keep on flowing despite the arrest and jailing of its founder on sex allegations.

WikiLeaks is under pressure on many fronts: its editor-in-chief Julian Assange is in prison fighting extradition to Sweden. Nearly simultaneous moves by credit card companies Visa and MasterCard to stop processing donations to the website have impaired its ability to raise money, and mysterious cyberattacks have periodically crippled its servers.

In a message published to Twitter on Wednesday, spokesman Kristinn Hrafnsson shrugged off the pressure.

On Tuesday evening, "the latest batch of cables were released, and our media partners released their next batch of stories," Hrafnsson said. "We will not be gagged, either by judicial action or corporate censorship. ... Wikileaks is still online. The full site is duplicated in more than 500 locations. Every day, the cables are loaded more than 50 million times."

WikiLeaks has benefited from a massive groundswell of online support. Twitter is choked with messages of solidarity. The site's Facebook page has 1 million fans.

*Brief by The Associated Press*

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**817 W. Broad St., P.O. Box 842010  
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Thursday, December 9, 2010

COVER PHOTO BY KYLE LAFERRIERE



# news

## Tricycle Gardens planting healthy lifestyles

Alice Kemp  
Contributing Writer

When thinking about a city, fresh produce grown in someone's backyard is not usually something that comes to mind.

One organization is trying to change that. Tricycle Gardens aims to grow healthy food and communities by bringing people together. The organization builds community gardens on undeveloped plots of land in neighborhoods around Richmond. Once the garden is cultivated, people are able to purchase a spot in the garden for \$50 a year to grow fruit, vegetables or flowers.

Emily Francis, manager of the Humphrey Calder community garden, said she believes the gardens give people an opportunity to get away from the city and enjoy nature.

"I live in an apartment. I have no patch of grass," Francis said. "So for people like me, who don't own a house with a yard, it gives me an opportunity to be able to grow things and actually eat what I grow."

Tricycle Gardens, founded in 2002, also has an urban farm operating year-round in Carver on Leigh Street, just behind the Siegel Center. Other gardens are

spread across the city in Chimborazo Park, Church Hill, Manchester and the Fan.

The farm sells fruits and vegetables on the spot while also distributing to local markets. In turn, many local markets and businesses sponsor the gardens and farm to make them better known in the community.

"I think it brings people closer to the food in its organic state as it's naturally found," Ellwood Thompson's shopper Tuesday Stodd said. "I think it makes people more aware of what they can get that's close and local and fresh."

There have been a few problems facing the community gardens. People who are not used to gardening notice the tasks required to maintain a garden, like weeding and watering, take time and effort. Also, many plants are neglected during the winter months because people don't want to face the cold.

"I think for plot owners the challenge is just coming out everyday or every other day to take care of the plots," Francis said.

Some plot owners have reported a few instances where fruit or vegetables were stolen from the gardens.

Despite these setbacks, interest con-

tinues to grow in and around Richmond.

Community gardens have a long waiting list of people who want to rent the plots of land. Tricycle Gardens is working hard to add more community gardens to the area to accommodate the high demand for fresh, local food. **CT**

**The local organization works to build community gardens on undeveloped plots. People can opt to purchase a spot in the gardens for \$50 a year.**



PHOTOS COURTESY OF TRICYCLEGARDENS.ORG





# VCU parking lot sparks controversy, student protest

news

Jamie Trice  
Contributing Writer

Monroe Park is a spot frequently used for relaxation. But when a group of students laid on the ground in Monroe Park last month, their motives were clear: They lay in silence, drawing attention to the plight of their ancestors' burial ground.

The protest was a silent demonstration for ancestors buried underneath a slave burial ground at VCU parking lot on the MCV campus. It was organized by VCU students Amie Tudor, Donald Hawkins and Chazity Jones.

"We each had the task of reaching out to our friends and organizations and getting them to come to a secret meeting," Jones stated in an e-mail. "My main part in the whole thing was bringing a lot of people to the meetings and film viewings; we watched Dr. Utsey's documentary 'Meet Me in the Bottom.'"

Dr. Shawn O. Utsey, Chair of African-American Studies and director of the Institute for African-American Health Research said the burial plot issue is important to him. He has spoken out and raised awareness in the documentary film called "Meet Me in the Bottom," which has aired on Richmond's PBS station,

WCVE.

Earlier this year, former Richmond City Councilman Sa'ad El-Amin filed a second lawsuit against VCU regarding the cemetery. The group wanted people to see VCU's role in the modification of a burial ground.

"We are standing for justice, yet we understand the significance of this stance for people of color and marginalized people," protester Kiara Green stated in an e-mail. "We are silent for our ancestors buried beneath the VCU parking lot."

"It's important because all cemeteries and burial grounds have certain sacredness to people with whom they're connected," Utsey said. "Particularly for people who were not valued in life to find some value and their dignity in death is important."

During the mid-1700s to early 1800s, the parking lot was known as the Negroes' Burial Ground.

The cemetery was discovered on a map made in 1810. When the map was found, Interstate 95 was already built over a main portion of the land, but VCU had not yet constructed a parking lot on the site. The burial ground is becoming more of an is-

PHOTO BY SCOTT ELMQUIST FOR STYLE WEEKLY



Former Richmond City Councilman, Sa'ad El-Amin, has filed two lawsuits against VCU in an attempt to cease development of the slave burial ground, which is located on the MCV campus. The second suit is still pending.

sue because VCU is parking cars over top of what some consider sacred ground.

Sa'ad El-Amin is asking a judge to order a ban to prohibit cars from even parking in this lot.

Currently, VCU still is battling a lawsuit over a parking lot at Shockoe Bottom

located North of Broad Street, between 15th and 16th streets that served as an African-American slave-burial ground.

VCU representatives declined to comment on the pending litigation. **CT**

## Restaurants offer late hours for finals cram

Kayla Wamsley  
Contributing Writer

This week, Cabell Branch Library is packed with students cramming in study time before final exams. Along with the library, some restaurants and local businesses are staying open later to accommodate busy students' needs.

Local pizza places such as Extreme Pizza located on Broad Street and Piccola Italy on Main Street are helping students fulfill their late-night cravings while they study. Extreme Pizza stays open until 3 a.m., and Piccola is open until midnight during the week.

Students anxious to ace their exams might crowd the library and these restaurants.

"If there are some nervous eaters during final exams, these places will probably be the busiest during this time of the semester," VCU junior Betsy Rosnick said.

The 3rd Street Diner located on East Main Street is open 24 hours. Its proximity to campus offers students a way to take advantage of the all-night menu.

"Some of the restaurants are pretty close to campus so it's very helpful when I'm in the library for extensive amounts of time," VCU senior George Sullivan said. "I like 3rd Street Diner just because I love eating breakfast at any time of the day."

Some students would rather save their money and grab a bite to eat earlier in the



PHOTO BY KYLE LAFERRIERE

Restaurants such as Extreme Pizza and Piccola Italy are now staying open later to feed students' late-night cravings as they study for exams.

evening before cracking open the books.

"A lot of students will be coming out and it's nice that these places are staying open later," VCU freshman Owen Payne

said. "But I only eat at places that accept meal swipes or dining dollars."

Late-night craving or not, these restaurants will be open into the late hours

of the night to help fuel the brains of students while they hit the books. **CT**



# Suicide recognized as second-leading cause of student deaths

Michael Johnson  
Contributing Writer

Suicide rates among young adults ages 15-24 have tripled in recent decades, and suicide is now the second most-common cause of death among college students, according to the American College Health Association.

The ACHA takes a survey of college students each year, and the 2010 results show indications of increasing mental health problems. The spring 2010 survey found that in the previous 12 months, 45.6 percent of students felt things were hopeless, 6.2 percent had seriously considered suicide and 1.3 percent had attempted suicide.

“I think it’s very important for students to realize that it’s okay to seek help,” Dr. Linda Hancock, director at the VCU Wellness Resource Center, said. “Suicide is the only mistake you can’t learn from.”

The difference in suicide rates among males and females is drastic, with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention stating that males are three to five times more likely to die from suicide than females.

The nonprofit website [www.suicide.org](http://www.suicide.org) states that the number one cause of suicide is untreated depression. VCU’s University Counseling Services participates in National Suicide Prevention week, which consists of training workshops on depression as well as classes fo-

cused on detecting mental health issues in students.

“We also have therapists available for students in crisis 24/7, 365 (days a year),” Dr. Jihad Aziz, director at UCS said. “During the day if a student is in crisis (e.g. thinking of suicide), we can have

**“Suicide is the only mistake you can’t learn from.”**

a therapist see him/her that day. Also, if it’s after hours, weekends or holidays students can reach a therapist by contacting VCU police at 828-1234 and requesting to speak to the counselor on call.”

The notion that suicide is more prevalent during the holiday season is just a myth, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The CDC states on its website that the suicide rate is actually lowest in December and peaks during the spring and fall seasons. The site also states that suicide is the 11th leading cause of death among Americans, with more than 33,000 people committing suicide each year. **CT**



PHOTO BY KYLE LAFERRIERE

Each year, The Well administers the National College Health Assessment, which examines students’ health behaviors and needs.

Virginia Commonwealth University

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# sports

## A step ahead of the rest: VCU defeats Virginia Military Institute in fast-paced battle

Jim Swing  
Assistant Sports Editor

Troy Daniels has a long-range jumper that he has hidden all season. Just ask teammate Brandon Rozzell.

"We've been waiting on it all season," Rozzell said. "He does it to us in practice every day and it's worse than that, I'm talking about when we're in his face. We knew it was coming and today was the day, we give him all the credit in the world."

The sophomore shooting guard drained four 3-pointers for a career-high 12 points to help VCU to a 86-80 victory over the Virginia Military Institute Keydets, who rank second in the nation in scoring, averaging 95.1 points per game.

In a first half that would consist of quick transition on both sides of the floor, VMI began on the better foot; jumping out to a 12-4 lead less than four minutes in.

After having seen enough Smart went to his bench and replaced four of the Rams' starting five.

The move had immediate impact for the Rams who capped off a 8-0 run with back-to-back 3-pointers from Bradford Burgess and Rob Brandenburg to tie the game at 12.

Enter the Troy Daniels show. Daniels, who has shot 1-13 from beyond the 3-point line so far this season, managed to hit four treys, including a shot that topped off a 10-0 VCU run to put the Rams up 35-25 with just under four and a half minutes remaining in the first half.

VCU would finish the half on a positive note with a 7-0 run highlighted by a layup off a steal from the hands of Brandenburg to put the Rams ahead 46-35 at the break.

"I thought we did pretty good on transition," head coach Shaka Smart said. "I was really proud on the offensive end, we talked about getting great shots and I thought in the first half every shot we took was a high-level shot."

The Rams shot 18-40 from the field in the first half along with 6-of-11 from

beyond the arc.

At the start of the second half, the Keydets would once again ride a strong start on a 9-0 run finished by a commanding dunk by Keith Gabriel.

VMI's well-structured shooting performance would help cut the VCU lead to two, 60-58 on consecutive 3-pointers from Michael Sparks and Autin Keenon with 11:47 remaining in the second half.

The Rams would not be stymied by the Keydets' persistence however, with help from Rozzell who scored seven points on three consecutive VCU drives to build a 63-58 lead with a little more than 10 minutes to go.

"Brandon made some huge plays down the stretch," Smart said. "I think a huge difference with him between his junior year and senior year, he's developed a terrific poise under pressure and he's demonstrated that here (at the Siegel Center) and also away from home and that's what we needed tonight when the game got tight."

The Keydets would come as close to within one-point of the VCU lead four times in the remaining 10 minutes but the Rams would not break, winning their 14th straight game at the Siegel Center to improve to 6-2 on the season.

"Congratulations to VCU, they're as good as advertised," VMI head coach Duggar Baucom said. "We thought coming into the game they were every bit as good as West Virginia who we played earlier in the year, they have a lot of weapons."

The Rams head into Saturday's match against the cross-town rival Richmond Spiders having won their past two games by an average of 5.5 points.

"I think being in tight games and coming out ahead it's obviously something you can learn from and something you can build on and experience you can draw on when you're in tight games down the road," Smart said. "As far as Saturday we just need to get right into our preparation and start focusing on Richmond, and I don't think that will be hard for our guys to do." **CT**



PHOTOS BY KYLE LAFERRIERE



**ABOVE:** Junior guard Bradford Burgess; six points and two steal vs. the Keydets.

**LEFT:** Senior guard Ed Nixon had eight first half points before leaving the game because of a hamstring injury.



# Men's basketball notebook

## Black and Blue Classic preview:

When VCU takes the short trip over to University of Richmond's campus for a nighttime game vs. The Spiders Saturday, they'll be carrying with them a six-game winning streak over their cross-town rivals.

However, that will count for very little when the ball tips off. Head coach Chris Mooney's side is one of the hottest teams in the commonwealth right now with a record of 7-2. The Spiders have already downed big-name teams this year in Arizona State and No. 8 Purdue. They've also received three votes in the ESPN/USA Today Coaches Poll.

Richmond also was one of only two teams to have defeated CAA nemesis Old Dominion thus far this campaign.

Richmond is also 4-0 at home at the Robins Center while VCU are 1-1 on the road (or 3-2 if including neutral site games).

## New community outreach program for Rams:

- When second-year head coach Shaka Smart was an assistant at Clemson, he took part in a holiday event that involved taking local children out for a shopping spree.
- Now leading his own program, he decided to have his players and staff participate in a similar event.
- Last Sunday, Smart and the team met with 24 members of the Boys and Girls Club of Metro Richmond at the Libbie Place Target in Henrico County and traveled around the store as the children were allotted \$100 each to shop with.
- The event is not the first community outreach program the Rams have participated in this season; a few weeks ago, players accompanied Smart to VCU's MCV Campus to meet with children staying in the hospital for care.

## How VCU's out-of-conference opponents are faring:

- Many bracketologists and prognosticators are predicting a multiple-bid year for the CAA come Selection Sunday, but if VCU wants to have a chance at an at-large bid, they'll need their out-of-conference opponents to have as good of seasons as possible the rest of the season.
- VCU's biggest out-of-conference win thus far is undoubtedly their victory over 11-time National Champion UCLA in the NIT Season Tip Off at Madison Square Garden. So for the Rams, the better the Bruins do the rest of the way, the better for them.
- Unfortunately for VCU, UCLA isn't looking too good early on. The Bruins – who feature one of the youngest lineups in the country and have no seniors on their roster – are 3-4 thus far on the season. UCLA was, however, picked to finish third in the PAC10, which would be no easy feat in one of the nation's most competitive conferences.

# Breaking balls in the Commons

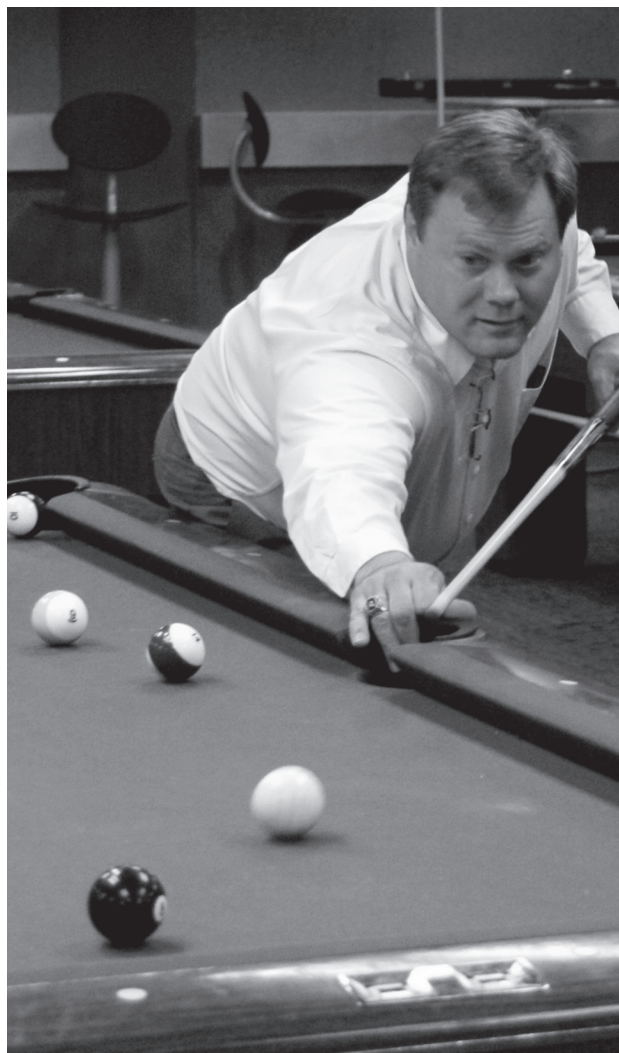
Jeffrey Knight  
Contributing Writer

On Dec. 6, the annual 8-ball tournament held at the Break Point Games room in the Commons featured six competitors shooting for the chance to compete in the ACUI regional 9-ball tournament at East Carolina University in February.

Sam Rosenberg, a mass communications major at VCU, was the victor of this double-elimination showdown and walked away with half of the \$10 entry fee. Rosenberg said he plans to compete in the regional tournament in February.



ABOVE: VCU graduate student Kevin Mason makes it to the finals against Rosenberg.  
BELOW: Rosenberg lines up for a tough shot in the corner during the final heat.



LEFT: Kevin Mason goes for the 8-ball in the corner pocket.

ABOVE: John Kim, a VCU graduate student studying urban planning, competed in the regionals last year in Tennessee.



# WE'VE GOT VCU BY THE BALLS.



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# spectrum

## R.A.M.ifications alleviates cram week funk

Nick Bonadies, *Spectrum Editor*  
Melissa Anderson, *Contributing Writer*

At the Commons Theater last Sunday night, student a cappella ensemble R.A.M.ifications set out with their first annual “c(RAM) jam” to provide what they felt was a much-needed service.

“We’re a week out from finals,” Britt Smith, a junior advertising major and R.A.M.ifications director, said. “And ... *oh God.*”

The official R.A.M.ifications Facebook page explains further: “So you know that week before exams when you want to rip your hair out and punch the person closest to you if they drink the last cup of coffee? We know what you’re going through. That’s why we’re here: to help you, and those around you, to tolerate the exams a little better.”

The 19-member ensemble, including two female tenors, performed for a nearly packed Student Commons Theater, sporting a black and green color scheme and eager smiles. Why green? According to Smith, green compliments every imaginable skin tone – and gold feels “cliche.”

Selections included a cappella renditions of “Poker Face” by Lady Gaga, “Used to Love You” by John Legend and Paramore’s “Misery Business.”

The ecstatic audience at “c(RAM) jam” had the privilege of enjoying R.A.M.ifications’ very first solo concert. Past performances have been either collaborations with other a cappella groups – such as representatives of William & Mary’s 11 working ensembles or JMU’s seven – or their sporadic and much welcomed appearances in the Compass. (Smith originally coined the name “Compass Singers” when he founded the group last spring.)

“It was scary,” R.A.M.ifications president and junior elementary education major Amy Girardi said. “We had no idea who was gonna actually show up, so we were blown away when the majority of the theatre was full – it was awesome.”

Sunday night’s smart yet electrifying music choices – even an Ingrid Michaelson medley made an appearance – were made entirely democratically: R.A.M.ifications selects their repertoire in a voting process.

“(The music) definitely reflects (all of) our tastes, because we choose it,” Girardi said.

“This is what makes members want to kill each other,” Smith said, noting a recent heated discussion on the inclusion or non-inclusion of Lady Gaga’s “Teeth” (“take a bite of my bad girl meat / take a bit of me, boy / I’m a tough bitch”).

“Long story short, we’re doing it,” he said.

In fact, the majority of R.A.M.ifications decision-making – including selection of soloists or even new members – is done democratically, taking each member’s ideas and opinions into account.

“It really is like we’re a family,” Brenna Boynton, senior English major and R.A.M.ifications alto, said.



**The R.A.M.ifications are a 19-member ensemble with only one music major. The group chooses the songs they perform and their choices range from Lady Gaga to John Legend. Currently, the group is raising money to record and release their debut CD.**

“It’s more than you could ask for with a small group of people who sing together three (or) four times a week.”

“It would be kind of hard if you hated each other,” she said.

“That’s definitely the reason I say we’re a family, because we love each other,” Smith said. “We care very much about each other and that’s what keeps us going more than anything else.”

Smith founded R.A.M.ifications in spring of 2010, following an “itch to direct” after a brief stint with the Notochords, VCU’s other well-loved a cappella ensemble.

“I realize that every group has their own chemistry, (but) I think that ... our chemistry is really what sets us apart. Even though other groups have feelings of fraternity and of being in a family, I think that R.A.M.ifications sort of takes it to the next level.”

Contrary to what their stunning vocal prowess would have you believe, only a single R.A.M.ifications member – soprano Anneliese Grant – studies music as a major. Other members are drawn from all different fields of study, including advertising, film, theater, mass communications, and social justice.

“I came here as an elementary education major (but)

I couldn’t live without music – I couldn’t not sing,” said Girardi. “So I first joined one of the traditional choirs here, but then I was like – I want something more *fun*. So I saw posters everywhere for the Compass Singers ... and the rest is history.”

“We get a lot of that,” Smith said. “We get a lot of people who are really into music and just have to find an outlet for it. This becomes their outlet.”

In addition to the performance on Sunday, a silent auction followed to raise funds for the R.A.M.ifications semester budget, which goes towards funding performances and getting the group’s name out in the public.

According to Smith, each semester’s activities amounts to about \$5,000 in expenses.

Funds are being raised in particular for R.A.M.ification’s upcoming debut CD – which music lovers can expect to see in the near future, said R.A.M.ifications members, pending the collection of four to \$6,000 in recording costs. **CT**

Visit R.A.M.ification’s Facebook page (under “R.A.M.ifications of VCU”) for more information on upcoming performances, as well as links to videos and mp3s.

# Skankin' around the Christmas tree



ILLUSTRATION BY DOMINIC BUTCHELLO

Danielle Elliott  
Staff Writer

On Saturday Dec. 18, some of Richmond's most popular punk and ska bands, including VCU's own No BS! Brass, will play the 11th annual "Skalidays" at the Canal Club.

The proceeds from this year's show go to Art180, a local art outreach program that provides a healthy means of self-expression to kids in need in the form of art program. The line up this year includes Murphy's Kids, No BS! Brass, Race The Sun, Patent Pending, Capital 7 and Tsunami Rising. There is also a canned food drive that aids the Central Virginia Food Bank and Food Not Bombs.

John Charlet is the vocalist for Murphy's Kids, the masterminds behind the annual benefit.

"I've never done anything voluntarily longer than this," Charlet said. "It's really cool to kind of look back and see how these scrubby punk rockers from the suburbs have more or less been able to raise tens of thousands of dollars for local charities."

In the past, the show has raised money for numerous local organizations including Outreach for Sexual Minorities, Queer Space, Food Not Bombs, Central Virginia Food Bank, Emergency Shelters Inc. and WRIR.

Charlet said that one of the biggest challenges in planning the event every year is choosing which charity to honor and which bands to ask to play.

"It is tough because there are so many great organizations in and around the Richmond area," Charlet said. "There are so many people that need recognition and need the help that it's difficult to narrow it down to just one."

"We're also really lucky to have a lot of friends that are in fantastic bands," Charlet said. "We can't put them all on the bill every year so one of our biggest struggles is narrowing down the show so that it's the best it can be every year."

Charlet recognizes the negative image most bands in the punk genre have, but is adamant that it is a misunderstanding.

"We received so much from ... the Richmond community," Charlet said. "We think it's the responsible thing to create a positive environment for people to come together and share ideas, but also to give back in a monetary and material way."

"It's important to build up what you have as opposed to tear down what someone else has," he said. "You will (typically) find (in) the scene people who care a lot because they are thinkers."

This sentiment rings true in Charlet's favorite story from a previous event: A guest speaker from the teen center Queer Space was speaking and someone in the audience was heckling him. The surrounding attendees made it obvious that disrespect was unacceptable by silencing him.

"Immediately, all the people around him shushed him and told him to be quiet so they could finish listening," Charlet said. "That really spoke to the idea that we are creating a place where people can share their ideas freely, right or wrong." **CT**

*Tickets for Skalidays 2010 can be purchased in advance from participating bands for \$8. Tickets can also be purchased at the door for \$10 with a canned good, or \$12 without a canned good.*

spectrum

## Winter movie preview: Five films you shouldn't miss



PHOTO COURTESY OF FOX SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES

Natalie Portman stars as Nina in "The Black Swan" as an innocent ballet dancer chosen to play the swan in a production of "Swan Lake." Mila Kunis' character, Lily, is the opposite, epitomizing the personality of the black swan.

Jordan Wilson  
Staff writer

Moviegoers and film critics alike have a lot to look forward to over the last three weeks of December – check out these brief previews of five upcoming premieres that might just be worth the price of admission.

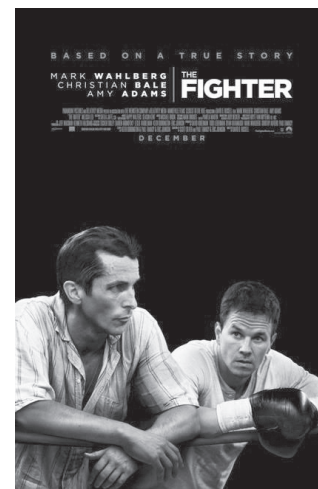


PHOTO COURTESY OF MANDEVILLE FILMS

**"The Fighter"**  
(Dec. 17 – Wide Release)

Director David O. Russell ("Three Kings," "Flirting With Disaster") takes on a boxing drama about "Irish" Micky Ward (Mark Wahlberg), a fighter who experiences the "Rocky" road of failure, resurgence and underdog triumph.

His success is nearly derailed by his drug addict half-brother Dicky, played by Christian Bale in what is already one of the most acclaimed performances of the year. Bale has once again stripped himself down for the part and lost a significant amount of weight (a la "The Machinist"), while Wahlberg, conversely, has been training for two years to beef up for this role.

"The Fighter" shows a lot of promise, as it boasts an excellent cast, also

including Amy Adams and Melissa Leo, and a director who already has one masterpiece under his belt with 1999's "Three Kings."

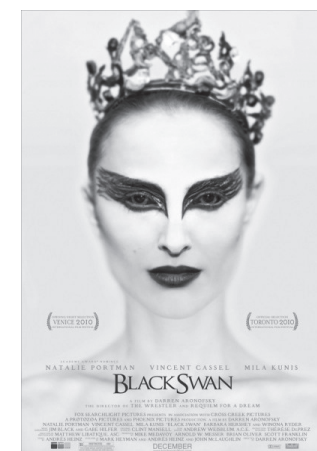


PHOTO COURTESY OF FOX SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES

**"Black Swan"**  
(Dec. 17 – Wide Release)

A warped blend of Dario Argento's "Suspira" and Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger's "The Red Shoes," "Black Swan" centers on Nina Sayers (Natalie Portman), a ballet dancer who is technically proficient, but lacks the raw emotional element of the craft.

After a rival dancer (Mila Kunis) threatens her part in a New York production of Tchaikovsky's "Swan Lake," Nina slowly begins to deteriorate mentally and physically, as she descends into a downward spiral that only Darren Aronofsky could possibly envision.

Portman has received much acclaim for what many film critics have called the performance of her career. Aronofsky has called his new film "a perfect companion piece" to his previous film, "The Wrestler," which, along with his previous three ("The Fountain," "Requiem for a Dream," "Pi") also dealt

**Story continued on CT11**

with obsession and addiction. Here, Aronofsky tackles the obsession with perfection, with Portman as his puppet.

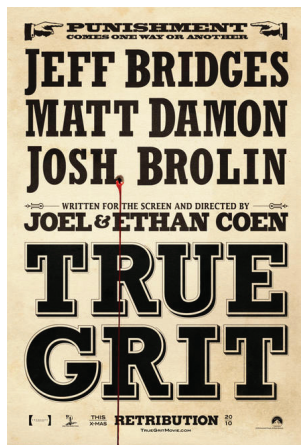


PHOTO COURTESY OF PARAMOUNT PICTURES

**“True Grit”  
(Dec. 22 – Wide Release)**

Transitioning again from comedy to drama, but never losing sight of either, Joel and Ethan Coen return to the silver screen with a remake of 1969’s “True Grit,” the movie for which John Wayne won his first and only Academy Award.

Jeff Bridges, who won an Oscar last year for the film “Crazy Heart,” takes over the iconic role of Reuben J. Cogburn, a tough, one-eyed U.S. Marshal whose career has claimed many men’s lives. A young girl named Mattie Ross (Hailee Steinfeld) asks him to help her seek vengeance on her fathers’ killer (Josh Brolin). Matt Damon also stars as a Texas Ranger who joins them on their quest for retribution – a great improvement over country singer Glen Campbell, who played the part in the original.

The Coen brothers have yet to deliver anything short of fascinating: From “Blood Simple” and “ Fargo” to “No Country for Old Men” and “A Serious Man,” they have time and time again proved that they are filmmakers to be reckoned with. “True Grit” looks to be a shoo-in for nominations in the upcoming awards season.

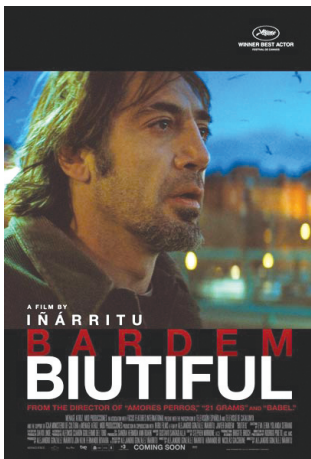


PHOTO COURTESY OF HUNTING LANE FILMS

**“Biutiful”  
(Dec. 25 – Limited Release)**

Alejandro González Iñárritu’s new film “Biutiful” is a love story between a father and his children.

Academy Award winner Javier

Bardem plays Uxbal, an afflicted man who struggles in dealing with fatherhood, love, spirituality, corruption, remorse and morality while surrounded by the dangerous criminal world of present-day Barcelona.

A deeply complex drama, Iñárritu once again explores the farthest boundaries of human emotion, and the delicate fabric that composes the human soul. His previous films (“Amores Perros,” “21 Grams,” “Babel”) also examined these types of ideas, and Iñárritu has each time managed to redefine how far a film can go artistically in exploring these themes of humanity and conscience.

Critics are hailing Bardem’s performance, and the film is already a top contender for best foreign film in the coming awards season. “Biutiful” is in Spanish with English subtitles.



PHOTO COURTESY OF IKIRU FILMS

**“Blue Valentine”  
(Dec. 31 – Limited Release)**

Hailed as a modern day John Cassavettes film for its raw and seemingly improvised dialogue, “Blue Valentine” stars Ryan Gosling and Michelle Williams.

The two are some of Hollywood’s most talented and courageous actors, in a very small, non-Hollywood film that centers on the rise and fall of a young couple’s relationship, as they fall out of love after years of marriage.

The film skips around through time, showing them at different times in their relationship, from the first time that they met to their doomed and dissolving marriage.

“Blue Valentine” is the first film from writer/director Derek Cianfrance, and it is stirring up quite a controversy in the movie world, earning an NC-17 rating from the MPAA for a scene of explicit sexuality.

Unfortunately, this will hurt its chances to be seen by a wider audience, but if it is released near you, and you are 17 or older, it is a film that you shouldn’t miss. **CT**

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spectrum

# INTERESTING PEOPLE

## CODY HAMILTON FIELDS *freshman, undeclared*

**CT** *Has anyone ever told you you look exactly like Paul McCartney?*

**CHF** Actually this one kid, that's all he calls me. Like I would just be walking down the street, and he'd be like, "Sup Paul McCartney." And I'm just like, "Alright."

**CT** *You didn't know him?*

**CHF** I didn't; that's the weird thing. I didn't for like the first 10 times he called me that, and finally I was like, "Wait. I need to talk to you."

**CT** *And now you're best of friends.*

**CHF** Um, we're acquaintances. We hang out.

**CT** *Where do you shop for clothes?*

**CHF** Back home we have a bunch of Goodwills, and then a DAV, (Disabled American Veterans) which is like a more trashier form of Goodwill ... Basically everything I'm wearing is pretty much from there.

**CT** *Do people ever comment on your mode of dress?*

**CHF** Um, comments and then stares ... These pants, I'm wearing these until the end of the semester, for holiday cheer. And then, um, I have a lime-green blazer, and ... that's probably the most commented thing I have, is the lime green blazer ... I try not to take life too seriously, so like dressing goofy is one of the main components of that.

**CT** *Sounds like a good personal philosophy.*

**CHF** I would say so. I mean like – you take yourself too seriously, it's just gonna bog you down. I mean, life's here to enjoy it. It gets kind of annoying when people are like, "Oh, my life sucks." It's like – your life is the greatest thing you have. So.

**CT** *This is CT's last issue before winter break – what are your plans?*

**CHF** Sleep. Can't wait to just ... I mean I love Richmond, and I love, you know, being off doing my own thing, whatever. But nothing's better than my mother's sub-par cooking. And a lot of sleep. Yeah. I love her.

**CT** *Any advice for our readers re: surviving finals, in the meantime?*

**CHF** Be goofy. **CT**

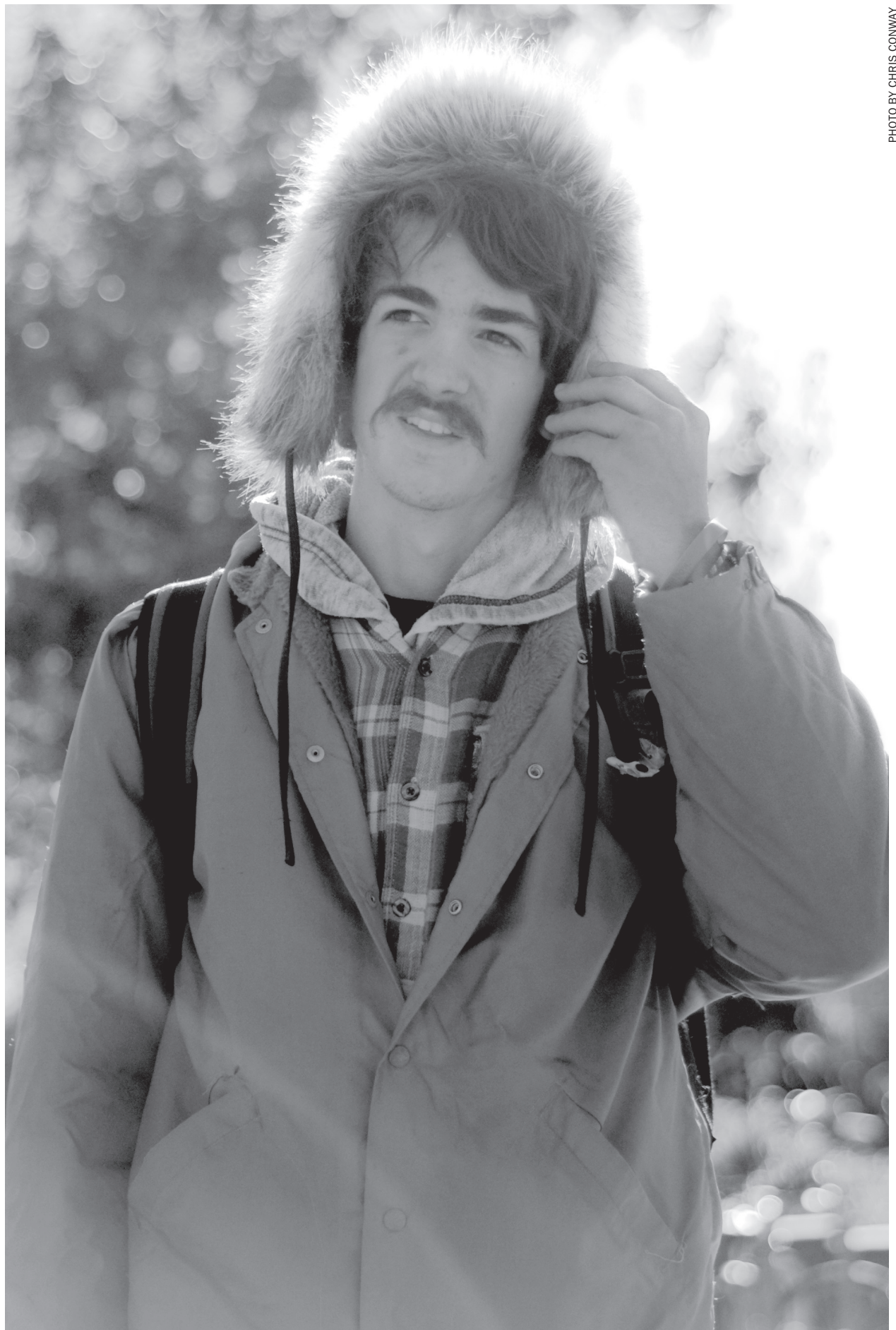


PHOTO BY CHRIS CONWAY

**“I love Richmond, and I love, you know, being off doing my own thing, whatever. But nothing's better than my mother's sub-par cooking. And a lot of sleep. Yeah. I love her.”**





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VCU

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# opinion



ILLUSTRATION BY MARLEIGH CULVER

## The gilded age of VCU: 2005-2020

John Richardson  
*Columnist*

VCU is Virginia's fastest growing four-year institution, but as it grows further into Richmond, public backlash grows as well.

"Richmond be warned, VCU does not care what citizens and residents want!" declared an Oregon Hill newsletter, and their warning was not without cause. When former President Eugene Trani created the "VCU 2020" expansion plan, he submitted it for state review without approval or feedback from the surrounding community. When VCU broke ground for the first time in two neighborhoods – Oregon Hill and Monroe Ward – VCU campus began its long-term expansion plan, and its public relations nightmare.

The most notable public offenses caused by VCU's expansion include moving the historic Jacob House, tearing down Green Alley's historic livery stable, building a Shockoe Bottom parking lot over a slave burial ground that dates back to Gabriel's Rebellion in 1800, and most recently supporting the city's plan to entirely close Monroe Park for renovations next year (and the consequential displacement of Richmond's homeless population) has all reinforced VCU's stigma as the local big bad wolf, coming to blow your house down, even if it's just a blanketed refrigerator box.

What scares many is that VCU seems to exist in a

different economy. Its expansion started as the recession emerged, and remains unaffected to this day. Its student body has gained a quarter of the size it was 10 years ago, while Virginia's population growth rate dropped to half of what it was between 2000 and 2005. It seems as the recession deflates property values and causes businesses to downsize, VCU inversely inflates its property value with structural upgrades, grows in size as it buys new property, and acts as if it's "too big to fail." And who's to say it's not? It hasn't failed yet.

VCU is a business, and like any business venture, VCU anticipates its massive expansions to create massive profit and anticipates little else, certainly not the destruction of historical sites with modern architecture, the suffocation of local businesses with RamBucks and corporate partnerships (i.e. Starbucks, McDonalds, Pepsi), or the tainting of its own academic reputation by necessitating lower admission standards for higher acceptance rates to fill the new facilities.

Personally, I cannot recall a time when there weren't numerous large-scale construction projects in progress on campus, or when there wasn't a new property opened on campus when I returned for a new semester. It is as if VCU had completed another trip around the Monopoly board, upgrading its buildings, buying every property it

comes across, and waiting for people to come around once again to stay and pay.

As long as Virginians pay the tuition (which rose more than 20 percent last year), VCU will expand straight into 2020, by which time VCU might be feeling strong enough to draw up another expansion plan. I for one hope it doesn't. But if VCU should insist on more capital ventures, it should rather purchase and renovate abandoned properties situated between VCU buildings within the campus. That, or vertically expand onto existing university buildings. This would greatly please Richmond citizens who don't enjoy their neighborhoods being filled with buildings they aren't permitted to use.

Secondly, by filling the property gaps on campus, a closer-knit community would emerge and foster a collective school spirit. Maybe it's just me, but VCU campus presently feels like a large community college instead of a large college community.

Lastly, commuting between classes in under 10 minutes is currently difficult enough without the campus spreading any further. A tight, unified campus is more practical, more efficient, and would go a long way to combat VCU's negative stigma as a colonizing force in Richmond. **CT**



# Bipartisan Senate produces safer foods

Shane Wade  
Columnist

Amid the myriad of controversies that occurred last week was the Senate passage of a historic piece of legislation that significantly alters the America food industry: the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act.

The bipartisan piece of legislation gives the FDA the power and authority to increase federal inspections of food processing plants and directly order recalls, among other powers. While some far-right conservatives decry this "intrusion" into the lives of American citizens, I applaud the actions of the Senate.

Over the past decade, food safety in America has gone to pot: 2006 had us fearing the E. coli bacteria in spinach, in 2008 the USDA conducted the largest beef recall in U.S history, 2009 had salmonella scares in the milk and peanut products, and 2010 saw the re-emergence of E. coli in romaine lettuce, salmonella in hydrolyzed vegetable protein and eggs and the banning of the popular alcohol/caffeine drink Four Loko.

Before any of the recalls occurred, hundreds of people were already hospitalized and even killed. According

to a report published by the Produce Safety Project in March 2010, food-borne illnesses cost the United States an estimated \$152 billion every year in healthcare, workplace and other economic losses.

This legislation, which focuses more on preventative measures rather than reactionary measures, has been a priority for some for a long time. The previous system of voluntary recalls by food companies has negatively affected our wellness, in terms of both health and economics. Self-regulated industries and laissez-faire capitalism have left us quite literally ill.

The passage of this legislation also has a symbolic meaning. The food safety reform bill was one of the few bills passed with bipartisan support. Although the Congress is in a lame-duck session, this bill gives us hope that both parties can work together and find real, effective solutions to national problems.

One of the core principals and duties of the government is to protect the well-being of its citizens; for far too long the controlling parties have ignored this imperative in favor of divisive politics

that highlight the objectives of those on the far right or far left. Two heads think better than one, and this act shows that American government is in need of greater compromise in order to work more efficiently. Perhaps Democrats and Republicans can indeed work together for the well-being of the American people and accomplish the duties of government.

While it largely remains the duty of government to ensure our foods are safe to eat, individual consumers must not rely solely on government agencies to protect our health. Consumers have the ultimate power and responsibility in changing the practices and behaviors of industries, including the food industry. We can choose not to buy certain foods or support certain companies.

Even if the legislation does create a slight increase in food prices, there's no price on peace of mind. The savings in fewer trips to the hospital will outweigh the costs. This legislation isn't perfect and arguably does harm small farmers, but at the end of the day large corporations are slaves to profit, and the actions of consumers in boycotting products will force companies to produce healthier foods. **CT**

## CORRECTION

In The CT's Dec. 6th issue, it was printed that film director Crispin Hellion Glover presented his film "It is fine! EVERYTHING IS FINE" at a fundraising effort for the Byrd Theatre on Dec. 3rd, and several quotes were attributed to Glover on that evening. In fact, the film presented was "What is it?", and the quotes are accurately attributed to Glover's statements on his website, [crispinglover.com](http://crispinglover.com).

## comics

"It's a Bird, It's a Plane"  
Now Press Repeat  
By Christine Skelly

the  
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Thursday, December 9, 2010



opinion commonwealthtimes.org CT15



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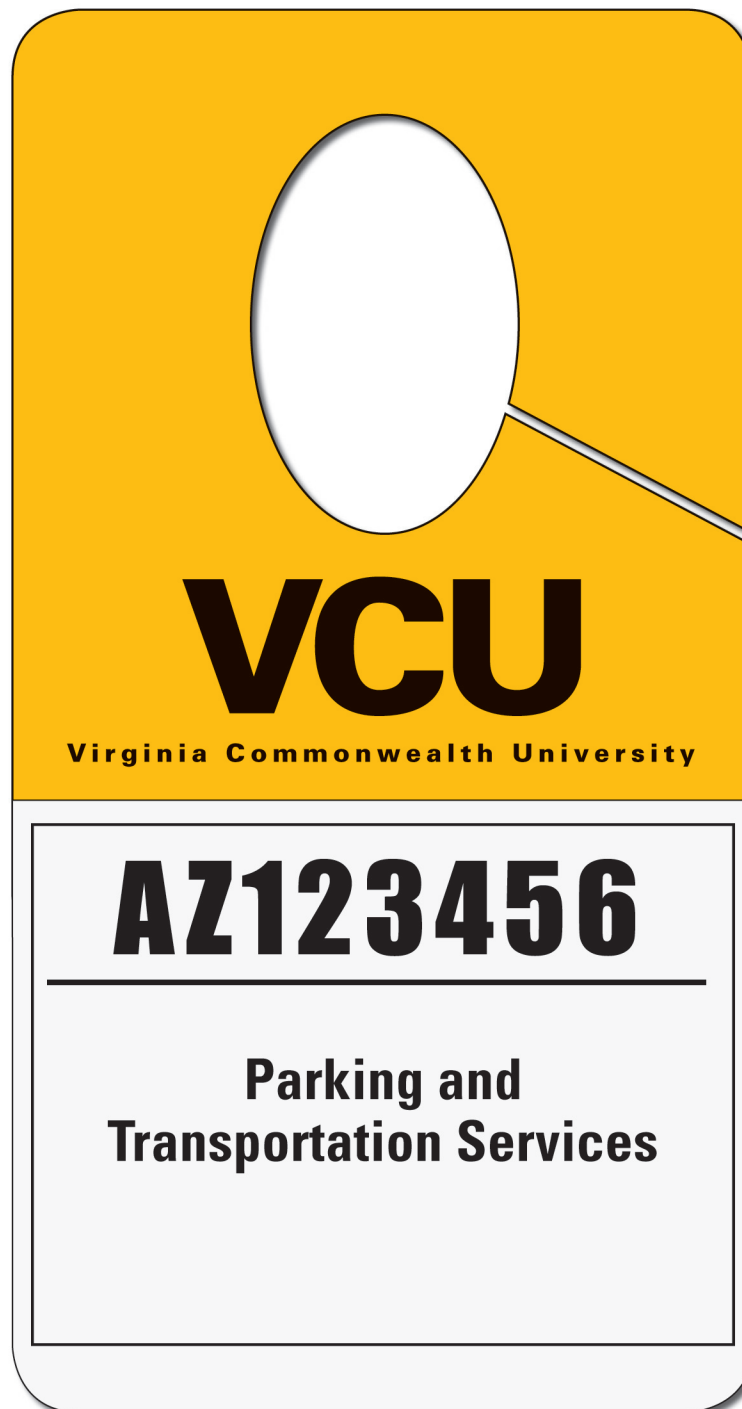
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