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BRIEFS

On the cover:

Cabell Starbucks to stay open all night during exam week.

Photo illustration by Mel Kobran

Local & VCU

Richmond region's jobless rate fell in March

The Richmond area's unemployment rate declined in March, the Virginia Employment Commission reported Wednesday.

The local jobless rate was 7 percent in March, down from 7.3 percent in February and 8.1 percent in March 2010. The figures have not been adjusted for seasonal fluctuations.

Virginia's other major metropolitan areas also generally had lower unemployment rates in March compared with February and a year earlier, according to the commission data.

Jobless rates trended downward in localities within the Richmond metropolitan area:

- The city of Richmond's rate was 9 percent in March, down from 9.2 percent in February and 10.4 percent in March 2010.

- Henrico County's rate was 6.3 percent in March, down from 6.5 percent in February and 7.2 percent in March 2010.

- Chesterfield County's rate was 6.4 percent in March, down from 6.6 percent in February and 7.3 percent in March 2010.

Brief by the Richmond Times-Dispatch

WWBT's Gene Cox to end three decades as anchor

Gene Cox, an institution in more than three decades at Richmond's WWBT-TV, will step down from the anchor chair June 16, a station official said today.

Cox, who went to part-time status two years ago, will remain with the station in a role that is still being worked out, said Paula Hersh, marketing director. Cox, who formerly co-anchored on the 5 p.m., 6 p.m., and 11 p.m. newscasts, is currently featured on the earlier programs.

Cox, whose last day was first reported by Style Weekly, told the publication that at age 70 he is "at peace" with the station's decision not to renew his contract and that he supported WWBT in its move to look ahead.

In the meantime, said Hersh, the NBC affiliate was planning how it would commemorate Cox's tenure, which is among the longest nationally. In addition, his collaboration with co-anchor Sabrina Squire has lasted more than two decades.

"We're going to celebrate our best memories with our viewers," she said.

Brief by the Richmond Times-Dispatch

Richmond considers measures to relieve jail crowding

Richmond's mayor is proposing new funding for several programs that would offer alternatives to traditional incarceration, moving forward with efforts aimed at relieving jail overcrowding and providing better treatment for mentally ill offenders.

Mayor Dwight C. Jones' proposed budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1 calls for \$1.4 million for a new mental-health court docket, assessments for mentally ill offenders, additional substance-abuse services and an expanded home electronic monitoring program. The amount is part of Jones' \$656.6 million plan for next year.

The city plans to allow for the placement of 100 more people on home electronic monitoring, adding to the roughly 40 people currently in the program. The mayor's proposal would allot \$587,700 for next year for the effort.

On average, it costs \$20,294 per year to house an inmate at the city's chronically overcrowded jail, and it would cost less than half that amount — about \$8,117 — to put someone on home electronic monitoring for a year, said sheriff's Maj. Jerry Baldwin.

Nationwide, studies suggest at least 16 percent of inmates in jails and prisons have a serious mental illness, according to a 2010 survey by the National Sheriffs' Association and the Treatment Advocacy Center. The report adds that a similar study in 1983 found that the percentage was 6.4.

Brief by the Richmond Times-Dispatch

National & International

Va. Tech appealing fed fines from '07 mass shooting

Virginia Tech will appeal \$55,000 in federal fines levied against the school for failing to quickly alert the campus during the 2007 mass shooting that killed 32 students and faculty members, the state announced Wednesday.

State Attorney General Kenneth Cuccinelli made the announcement two days before the deadline to file an administrative appeal of the finding that the school violated federal law. He called the findings by the U.S. Department of Education "absolutely appalling," adding that an appeal was necessary to ensure Virginia Tech was treated fairly.

The federal agency imposed the fine in March after finding that Tech had violated campus safety law by waiting too long to notify the campus of a potential threat after two students were shot to death in a dormitory. An email alert went out more than two hours later, about the time student Seung-Hui Cho was chaining shut the doors to a classroom building where he killed 30 more students and faculty and himself. It was the deadliest mass shooting in modern U.S. history.

The department said Virginia Tech deserved a larger fine, but the \$55,000 was the maximum allowed by law for two violations of the Clery Act, which requires campus notification of potential threats to students and employees.

Tech was specifically charged with failure to issue a timely warning and failure to follow its own procedures for providing notification. The law is named after Jeanne Ann Clery, a 19-year-old college student who was raped and murdered in her dormitory in 1986.

Tech officials have denied wrongdoing and said federal bureaucrats with the benefit of hindsight are holding them to stricter standards than those in place on April 16, 2007.

Brief by The Associated Press

Obama releases birth form, decries 'silliness'

Responding to critics' relentless claims, President Barack Obama on Wednesday produced a detailed Hawaii birth certificate in an extraordinary attempt to bury the issue of where he was born and confirm his legitimacy to hold office. He declared, "We do not have time for this kind of silliness."

By going on national TV from the White House, Obama portrayed himself as a voice of reason amid a loud, lingering debate on his birth status. Though his personal attention to the issue elevated it as never before, Obama said to Republican detractors and the media, it is time to move on to bigger issues.

Citing huge budget decisions in Washington, Obama said, "I am confident that the American people and America's political leaders can come together in a bipartisan way and solve these problems. We always have. But we're not going to be able to do it if we are distracted."

Obama spoke shortly after the White House released a copy of the long form of his birth certificate, which contains more extensive data than a version released earlier.

The certificate says Obama was born to an American mother and Kenyan father, in Hawaii, which makes him eligible to hold the office of president. Obama released a standard short form before he was elected in 2008 but requested copies of his original birth certificate from Hawaii officials this week in hopes of quieting the controversy.

Until Wednesday, the White House had insisted that the short form certificate was the appropriate legal document confirming Obama's birth and no further proof was needed.

But so-called "birthers" opposed to Obama have kept the issue alive. Potential Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump recently began questioning why Obama hadn't ensured the long form was released.

Brief by The Associated Press

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NEWS

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Caffeine addictions now satisfied all night at Cabell

Hillary Huber

Staff Writer

Students will now be able to satisfy late-night caffeine cravings in the James Branch Cabell Library.

During the last few weeks of each semester, Cabell Library hosts a program called Library Lite All Nite, in which students have access to the library 24 hours a day, Sunday through Thursday. Although students have utilized the late-night hours, popular coffee chain Starbucks has never been a participant in the program until this semester.

VCU libraries approached the company about extending hours of operation during exam weeks along with the Library Lite All Nite program. When Starbucks was provided with information regarding how many students populated the library over night, they agreed that participating in the program would benefit both parties.

“Not only is (having Starbucks open all night) a convenience, it also provides security enhancement for students,” Teresa Doherty, head of circulation and information services and access librarian, said. “If students wanted to get coffee or food not found in a vending machine, they would have to walk

to sketchy areas late at night. Now they don’t even have to leave the building.”

Zuhra Abbaman, a student library assistant, says she has heard nothing but positive feedback about the new hours.

“Students love it. They’re obsessed. Having Starbucks open all night works out really well for students. If they’re going to be up all night studying, they’re going to need coffee to stay up,” Abbaman said.

Andy Tran, a junior English major, said he wouldn’t mind seeing the extended hours year round.

“Education is important. We’re paying a lot of money to VCU, so in my opinion, Starbucks and the library should always be open,” said Tran. “What if you have an annoying roommate? It’s not like they can just go home. Students

should have places like the fourth floor of the library open at all times to study.”

According to Doherty, the library stays open during hours when students are most likely to use it, which they determine from monitoring library population.

This semester, the Cabell Library, as well as Starbucks will be open from 11 a.m. Sunday morning, until 6 p.m. Friday night, until May 14. **CT**

“Not only is (having Starbucks open all night) a convenience, it also provides security enhancement for students,”



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY MEL KOBRAH

What’s black , white
and red all over?

the
ct



PHOTO COURTESY OF WILLIAM WABBY



Politico's Mike Allen visits VCU

Zarmeena Waseem
Contributing Writer

As part of Mass Comm Week, VCU hosted a speech by Mike Allen, the chief White House correspondent for Politico.com.

Allen walked around to each of the seated guests, shaking hands and introducing himself. About 60 people turned out for the centerpiece of VCU's Mass Comm Week.

Allen was introduced by a man whom he had the opportunity of interviewing several times — Jerry Kilgore, whose 2005 gubernatorial campaign was covered in part by Allen. Kilgore was also the

“The Man the White House Wakes Up To ...”

former Attorney General of Virginia.

“He doesn't let anything go until he has the facts,” Kilgore said.

Allen's journalism career began in Fredericksburg, Va., where he wrote for The Free Lance-Star. He then moved onto the Richmond Times-Dispatch, after which he began covering national politics. Allen spent six years at the Washington Post, writing on everything from campaign finance to both of the Bush campaigns. He became what Kilgore called “a respected reporter where it is hard to be respected.”

Allen has also covered a range of topics for the New York Times and served as Chief White House correspondent for Time Magazine before switching over to Politico.

Since his move to Politico, Allen has become an icon in the Washington political sphere. He was featured in a New York Times Magazine article that dubbed him “The Man the White House Wakes Up To.”

Branding himself as a glass-half-full kind of guy, Allen said that although the media has gone through some rough periods, mass communication majors have a future.

“It is a great time to be a student of mass communications or a consumer of news,” he said.

He spent some time discussing what makes Politico successful and how the organization fosters a wide following in spite of serious challenges. In a day where viral marketing and technology are key, every click is precious and every glance at a banner ad is counted, he said.

Allen said that Politico has never been marketed or advertised. It continues to be read by more than 80,000 subscribers because it serves a demand



PHOTO COURTESY OF LARRY FINK

that already exists. He told the crowds that “the quality of information is high,” and smart consumers are abundant.

Allen closed by saying, “the worst job can be the best job.” **CT**

Movies bring boffo benefits to Virginia

Alexander Chang
Capital News Service

For Clint Eastwood fans in Virginia, it was a thrill to hear that his latest film, “J. Edgar,” is set in parts of Fauquier and Fairfax counties. But for those communities, there's a tangible benefit to playing such a supporting role: They'll enjoy a financial boost from tourism and other economic spinoffs.

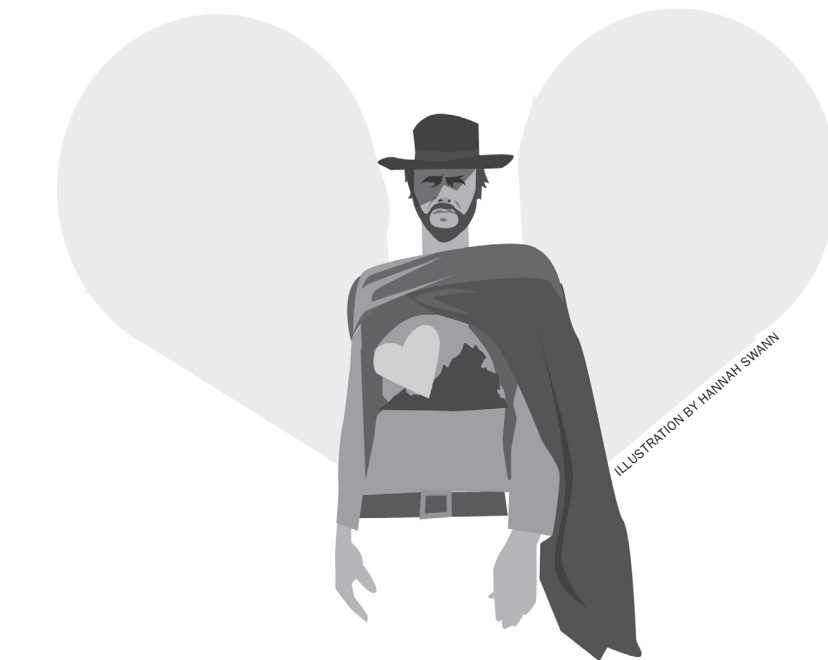
The General Assembly recognized the economic value of enticing filmmakers to shoot movies in Virginia during its “reconvened session” in April. Legislators approved a state-budget amendment to add \$1.5 million to Gov. Bob McDonnell's Motion Picture Opportunity Fund for the 2012 fiscal year.

That means the fund will have \$3 million to provide incentives for filmmakers to shoot in Virginia. Those incentives include an exemption from state sales taxes, an exemption from hotel taxes for stays of 30 days or more in some localities, and grants or rebates for qualified projects, according to the Virginia Film Office.

“For the film office, it's going to allow us to recruit more projects to Virginia and provide more job opportunities for Virginians,” said Rita McClenny, the state's film commissioner.

“The money that companies spend on a variety of goods and services, from hotels to transportation equipment and to construction equipment, it will benefit Virginia businesses from a tax collection standpoint and a business opportunity standpoint.”

In 2009, the direct and indirect impact of Virginia's motion picture and video production industry was about \$346 million and supported more than 2,700 jobs in the state, according to Jeff Caldwell, McDonnell's press secretary.



Caldwell said the films, documentaries, commercials and multimedia productions shot in Virginia contribute to the commonwealth's economy. They provide job opportunities because companies often hire Virginians for their production teams, he said.

“The main priority of McDonnell's administration is to spur economic development, and there are many pieces of that,” Caldwell said. “This film industry program is a major one for him because it attracts filmmakers to use the commonwealth as a location for their movies. And that brings investment in jobs, investment in restaurants, and it can provide significant economic development boost for the community in which the films are made.”

McDonnell underscored that point when he announced that Eastwood, the

famous actor and director, was shooting his movie about J. Edgar Hoover, the former FBI director, in Northern Virginia. The locations included Warrenton and The Plains (both in Fauquier County), Great Falls (Fairfax County) and the cities of Alexandria and Arlington.

“Clint Eastwood is an American legend, and we are thrilled he chose Virginia for his film about the first director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation,” McDonnell said in a press release.

“J. Edgar” stars Leonardo DiCaprio as Hoover, who headed the FBI from 1935 until his death in 1972. Also starring are Dame Judi Dench as Hoover's mother, Naomi Watts as his longtime personal secretary, Ken Howard as the U.S. attorney general, Josh Lucas as aviator Charles Lindbergh and Armie Hammer as the assistant director of the FBI.

“Virginia is an excellent location for film production with its rich history and natural beauty, and we are working diligently to bring more film production like this to the Commonwealth,” McDonnell said.

The state's filmmaking incentives come with strict guidelines.

The Motion Picture Opportunity Fund is not intended to cover 100 percent of the Virginia labor costs for filmmakers. In its application, the production company must show how much economic impact the film will provide for Virginia. The company also must have 100 percent of its anticipated financing in place at the time of request.

Besides the Motion Picture Opportunity Fund, the commonwealth also has the Virginia Motion Picture Production Tax Credit program.

To qualify for tax credits, film companies must spend at least \$250,000 in “qualifying expenses,” film at least 50 percent of principal photography in the commonwealth and agree to include a “Filmed in Virginia” credit and Virginia logo in the final production.

The Virginia Film Office and Virginia Tourism Corp. are pursuing more than 15 active film projects.

Before the budget amendment, Virginia was at a competitive disadvantage because it couldn't provide filmmakers adequate economic incentives, McClenny said. Consequently, Virginia was losing projects to neighboring states.

But now, McClenny said, Virginia is beginning to see results.

“We have to be competitive with whatever financial deal another state offers, so the incentives will allow Virginia to compete with other states like Georgia, New York and almost all neighboring states.” **CT**

CRIME LOG

4/19

At the Kroger Grocery Store, 901 N. Lombardy St., a female student was arrested for shoplifting.

At the 7-Eleven at 1101 W. Main St., a male visitor was arrested for trespassing.

At the corner of Laurel and Franklin streets, a male student was arrested for being drunk in public, underage consumption of alcohol and ID fraud to avoid arrest.

At the intersection of Belvidere and Clay streets, a male visitor was arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol.

At the intersection of Belvidere and Cary streets, a male student was arrested for possession of marijuana.

At the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, 823 N. Cathedral Place, a male visitor advised that an unknown person vandalized private property.

At 723 W. Marshall St., a male student advised that two unknown males had attempted to rob him at an off-campus location.

4/21

At the corner of North Linden and Park avenues, a male student advised that an unknown person removed property from an unsecured location.

At Rhoads Hall, 710 W. Franklin St., a male student advised that an unknown person removed property from a secured location.

At Brandt Hall, 710 W. Franklin St., a male student advised that an unknown person removed various items from an unsecured location.

At Student Commons, 907 Floyd Ave., a female employee advised that an unknown person tried to use a stolen credit card.

Near Chamberlayne Avenue and Fells Street, a female visitor was arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol.

At the Stokes House, 918 W. Franklin St., a male visitor was arrested for indecent exposure.

4/22

At Rhoads Hall, 710 W. Franklin St., a male student was arrested for possession of marijuana.

At the Temple Building, 901 W. Main St., a male employee advised that an unknown person attempted to remove property from their location

At the corner of West Cary and West Cherry streets, a female visitor was arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol.

At the corner of Shafer Street and West Broad Street, a male visitor was arrested for disorderly conduct and obstruction of justice.

Also at the corner of Shafer Street and West Broad Street, another male visitor was arrested for disorderly conduct.

At the Shafer Street Dining Center, 810 N. Cathedral St., a female student advised that an unknown person removed items from an unsecured location.

At the Franklin Street Gym, 817 W. Franklin St., a male employee advised that an unknown person falsely pulled a fire alarm.

At the Biggs Apartment Building, 900 W. Marshall St., a male employee advised that a state vehicle was damaged.

4/23

At the 7-Eleven at 1003 W. Grace St., a male student advised that an unknown person removed property from an unsecured location.

4/24

At the Shafer Court Dining Center, 810 N. Cathedral St., a female student advised that an unknown person removed items from a secured location.

At the Gladding Residence Center, 711 W. Main St., a female student advised that an unknown person removed property from an unsecured location.

At the corner of Boyd and Park avenues, a male student and a male visitor were arrested for possession of marijuana.

At 100 N. Harrison St., a female student was arrested drunk in public.

At 900 W. Cary St., a male student was arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol.

At the EE parking lot, 601 W. Grace St., a female visitor was arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol.



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SPORTS

In this section:

Preview of baseball's weekend series against Delaware • 9

Staff Reports

With just 17 games remaining, the VCU baseball team has begun its venture down the final stretch of the season. Two crucial series against the Colonial Athletic Association's top two teams still remain for the Rams who currently sit in eighth place in the standings. VCU is currently 16-22 overall, and 8-4 in the CAA. Senior John Lenherr leads the team on offense with a .389 batting average and a .544 slugging percentage. Sophomore Kyle Haynes has been the Rams' go-to guy on the mound, holding a 3.42 ERA and a 4-5 record. After having their road game against No. 1 Virginia rained out, the Rams now embark on a five-game home stand against Delaware, Virginia and Norfolk State. **CT**

Right: Freshman infielder Landon Prentiss has a .939 fielding percentage with 29 putouts so far this season.

Bottom: Sophomore Nick Kime and junior Paul Nice complete a double-play against Northeastern.



PHOTOS BY KYLE LAFERRIERE





SPORTS

Thursday, April 28, 2011 | 7

Top Left: Paul Nice completes the closing half of a double-play against Northeastern.



Top Right: Junior pitcher Josh Alford currently holds a 4.15 ERA in 17.1 innings pitched.



Kime and Nice have combined for a .916 fielding percentage and 140 putouts in the 2011 season.

PHOTOS BY KYLE LAFERRIERE





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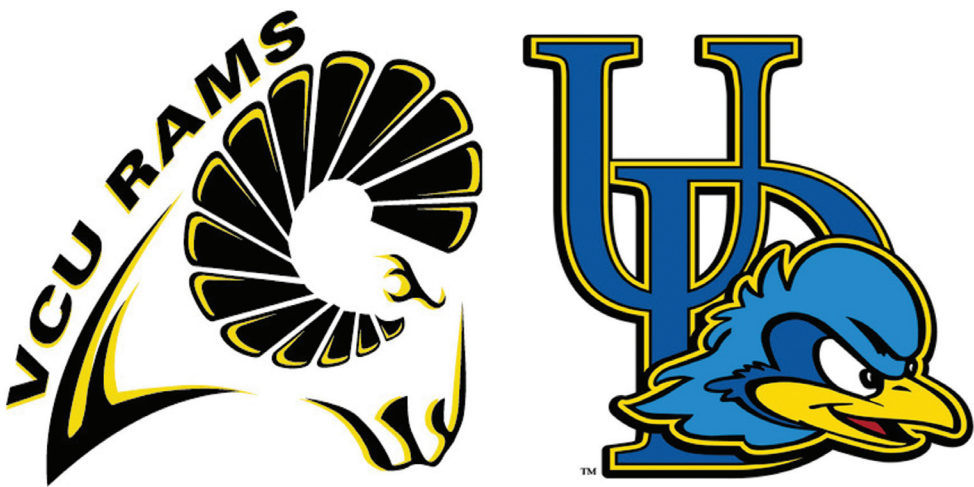
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VCU (16-22, 8-10) VS. Delaware (23-17, 13-18)



Friday April 29, 6 p.m. **Saturday** April 30, 4 p.m. **Sunday** May 1, 2 p.m.

School Facts

VCU
Location: Richmond, Va.
Type: Public
Enrollment: 32,000
Established: 1838

University of Delaware
Location: Newark, Del.
Type: Private and Public
Enrollment: 21,177
Established: 1743

Rosters

John Lenherr, Sr., OF
Taylor Perkins, Jr., UTL
Nick Kime, So., INF
Michael Cheatham, Sr., OF/IF
Joey Cujas, Fr., IF
Bill Cullen, Fr., OF
Paul Nice, Jr., INF/OF
Seth Cutler-Voltz, Jr., RHP

D.J. Long, So., INF
Pat Dameron, Sr., UTL
Steve Ulaky, Sr., 1B
Nick Ferdinand, So., OF
Dylan Shupe, Fr., C
Hank Yates, So., OF
E.J. Stolfus, Fr., INF
Aaron Mascoe, Sr., C
Dave Anderson, Sr., INF
Eric Young, Jr. RHP

Notes

- These two teams meet for the first and only time this season this season with Delaware currently holding second place in the Colonial Athletic Association while VCU rests in eighth place.
- VCU enters having won three of its last five games, including wins over Northeastern, VMI and William & Mary.
- Delaware comes into the series having won four of its last five outings with wins over Saint Joseph's, James Madison and Rutgers.
- This weekend could prove to be crucial for VCU heading down the final stretch of the regular season. The Rams are currently four games out of fourth place in the CAA in what is becoming a tight conference race.
- VCU has gone 2-6 against top-four teams in the conference so far this season (James Madison and Old Dominion).

Upcoming Events

Baseball:
Friday, April 29:
Delaware vs. VCU,
The Diamond,
6 p.m.

Saturday, April 30:
Delaware vs. VCU,
The Diamond,
4 p.m.

Sunday, May 1:
Delaware vs. VCU,
The Diamond,
2 p.m.

Tuesday, May 3:
No. 1 Virginia vs. VCU,
The Diamond, 6 p.m.

Men's Tennis:
Friday, May 13 – Sunday, May 15:
NCAA Regionals First
and Second round

Women's Tennis:
Friday, May 13 – Sunday May 15:
NCAA Regionals First
and Second round

Golf:
Friday, May 20:
NCAA Regionals @ TBD

SPECTRUM

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PHOTO BY CHRIS CONWAY

Sophomore Andy Tran was one of about 15 performers at Poictesme's annual open mic event. Students read original works as well as their favorite writers' short works.

Break out the Moleskines: literary journal holds open mic

Mechelle Hankerson
Assistant Spectrum Editor

VCU sophomore English major Andy Tran read his poem, "Opaque Shades of Richmond," crafted for his contemporary poetry class, to a room of about 20 writers Tuesday night for Poictesme's annual open mic night.

"Are abstract paintings/and basketball supposed to nurture a city/not only Richmond, but also other lonely cities/of misunderstood brunettes, dank weed and dubstep ..." stated Tran in his poem.

The night featured readings of writers' favorite works as well as their original short stories, poems and even sentence-long thoughts.

According to current assistant editor Amy Sailer, who will be filling the shoes of editor-in-chief next year, VCU's literary journal Poictesme has been hosting an open-mic night for the past three years that she has been part of the editorial staff.

Sailer said that typically the event is held more toward the middle of the

spring semester and takes place in the Student Commons. This year, the event was held at the Student Media Center.

"I'm always surprised at how many people are writing poetry, like, in their Moleskines," Sailer said. "I think it's nice for people to have a chance to share it and see what other people are writing."

Sailer opened the night with Kevin Young's "Slow Drag Blues."

Tran followed Sailer, setting the casual mood of the event by warning the audience he has "really bad eyesight and really okay handwriting."

Tran started with his original poem, "No. 6: How to be a Poet," which was written from a prompt given to him by a VCU Writing Center employee. The poem was a list of things one should do to be a successful poet, including "(refusing) to speak during poetry workshops so your crush thinks you're mysterious, (engaging) in a same-sex experience," and "(dropping) acid with a pseudo-hipster."

VCU student and published author Jake Ziemba shared a short story he

titled "Sarah's Potatoes" about a young girl who was deemed to be evil because of her constant digging for food. When the town was digging her grave, they found patches of potatoes that they named after her.

Ziemba said he wrote the story on two envelopes one night when he couldn't sleep while staying with a friend.

"I'm always surprised at how many people are writing poetry, like, in their Moleskines," Sailer said. "I think it's nice for people to have a chance to share it and see what other people are writing."

While Ziemba's story was limited because of his resources, freshman journalism major Alex Carrigan read a longer form short story that he tentatively titled "The Closed Room Killings."

Carrigan, who is also part of Poictesme's editorial staff, explained that closed room killings are murders that seem humanly impossible, a theme that

he continued in his short story as he followed a police officer trying to solve the murder of two people.

"I kind of just thought of examples of (closed room killings) ... and then I just kind of built a story around it," he said.

Participants also shared works that they enjoy, like Sarah Bruce who chose to read two poems ("Wet Snow" and "Crofter's Kitchen, Evening") by Norman MacCaig.

"I have to admit, I'm kind of in love," she told the audience. "Don't tell my fiancé."

Sailer assured the small crowd that next year's event would be held in the Student Commons and announced that the new issue of Poictesme should be available within the next month. **CT**

Poictesme is currently accepting submissions for next year's journal. Submissions can be sent to pwatem@gmail.com. More information about release dates and upcoming events can be found at poictesme.vcustudent-media.com



PHOTO BY CHRIS CONWAY

Sophomore Andy Tran read three poems at Poictesme's open mic event. One was written from a prompt from the writing center, one was for his contemporary writing class and one was written during a bout of insomnia.



PHOTO BY CHRIS CONWAY

Amy Sailer, Poictesme's current assistant editor, will be editor-in-chief next year.



PHOTO BY CHRIS CONWAY

Freshman journalism major Alex Carrigan read his original short story "The Closed Room Killings," which was inspired by the idea of violent crimes that seem humanly impossible.

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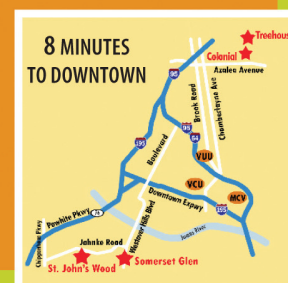
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VCU Opera to take stage this weekend

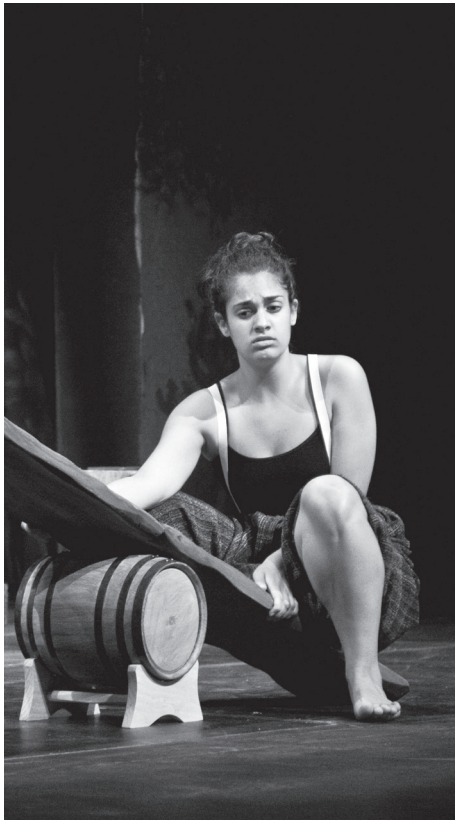


PHOTO BY MEL KOBAN

VCU Opera student **Gianna Barone** contemplates on a see-saw as Gretel during a rehearsal.

Nick Bonadies
Spectrum Editor

VCU Opera and the VCU Symphony Orchestra are set to take the stage again this Saturday, April 30 and Sunday, May 1 at the Singleton Center for Performing Arts with 2011's production of German composer Englebert Humperdinck's "Hansel and Gretel."

The opera, based on the Grimm brothers fairy tale of the same name, will be performed by a full cast of student singers under the direction of Melanie Kohn Day, who has acted as director of VCU Music's opera program since 1983.

Daniel Myssyk, the department's director of orchestral studies, will lead the VCU Symphony as conductor. The symphony collaborates with VCU Opera every spring for a full-scale production, which in past years have included Richard Strauss' "Die Fledermaus," Gilbert and Sullivan's "The Mikado" and Mozart's "The Marriage of Figaro."

"Hansel and Gretel," whose early productions in 1893 and 1894 were conducted by the likes of Richard Strauss and Gustav Mahler, follows the familiar story of two children who are caught

nibbling at the gingerbread house of a cannibalistic witch and must then circumvent her unscrupulous punitive measures.

Day said that herself and Kenneth Wood, VCU Opera's stage director, chose "Hansel and Gretel" during last year's production of "Die Fledermaus."

"(We) realized that we had the perfect makings for a 'Hansel and Gretel' cast ... even for double-casting a number of the principal roles," she said.

"('Hansel and Gretel') follows the familiar story of two children who are caught nibbling at the gingerbread house of a cannibalistic witch and must then circumvent her unscrupulous punitive measures."

While VCU Opera productions occasionally utilize voice faculty or outside professional singers in more mature roles – thus affording students an up-close learning experience – "Hansel and Gretel" is cast entirely by undergraduate students, according to Day.

In conjunction with Myssyk – who Day said "has developed our orchestra

magnificently" – "We felt (the students) were ready for this challenge," she said, adding that the singers and instrumentalists "would grow tremendously from learning this rich, colorful and enormously popular score."

In many cases, Day said, singers in VCU Opera graduate having sung as many as four major roles and many smaller productions, which results in "a very polished 'package'" upon auditioning for graduate schools or competitions. Many alumni – including Matthew Burns of the New York City Opera and Pamela Armstrong of the Metropolitan Opera – have gone on to develop high-profile solo careers, while members of the cast of "Hansel and Gretel" have applied to and auditioned for a number of prestigious graduate programs in the fall, including New England Conservatory and Manhattan School of Music.

VCU Opera and VCU Symphony Orchestra present Englebert Humperdinck's "Hansel and Gretel" this Saturday, April 30 and Sunday, May 1 in Sonia Vlahcevic Concert Hall at the Singleton Center for Performing Arts. Tickets are \$8 for students with an I.D., \$15 general admission and \$10 for seniors and VCU employees. **CT**

Nonprofit gives color to local alleys



PHOTOS COURTESY OF JEANINE GUIDRY

Arts in the Alley has garnered attention from as far as Beijing, where organizer Jeanine Guidry was asked to plan their own similar project.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF JEANINE GUIDRY

"People aren't used to people doing something because they want to make a difference without another agenda," Guidry said.

Danielle Elliott
Staff Writer

Arts in the Alley, a grassroots nonprofit in which volunteers spend a weekend cleaning up an alley and then paint murals on the previously graffiti-ridden walls, has already redone two locations in Richmond and one in Beijing, China.

Jeanine Guidry, the spearhead of the operation, said she started the organization three years ago out of a desire to give back to the community and leave a lasting positive effect.

"We (Greg Collins and I) had thought for awhile we'd like to do something to impact our community positively in a more lasting way," Guidry said. "I remember there were a lot of people saying the city should do this or do that to try and fix up parts of downtown."

Greg Collins, a VCUarts graduate, painted a mural in Shockoe Bottom along with his classmates close to 15 years ago. Guidry fell in love with the idea of art in the streets.

"We decided to take art out into the community to try and make it a little bit better and a little more beautiful and take it outside of the gallery to where people can see it and touch it," Guidry said. "What if we host an art festival? What if we paint murals? What if we find an alley that really needs some care?"

The organization has always been family friendly. The first alley that was restored featured a children's mural which has now become a part of every alley project.

"We paint grass and hills and sky; any kids that come by can put their hand

prints on this field, and we create flowers and tulips out of it," Guidry said. "It just shows that everyone can be a part of it."

Arts in the Alley has gained attention from other cities as well as other countries. Guidry and her band, The Offering, were invited to Beijing for a cultural exchange, where they asked her to help plan an event of their own.

"I told them about Arts in the Alley, and we put it together in Beijing. It was all different but it was all the same," Guidry said.

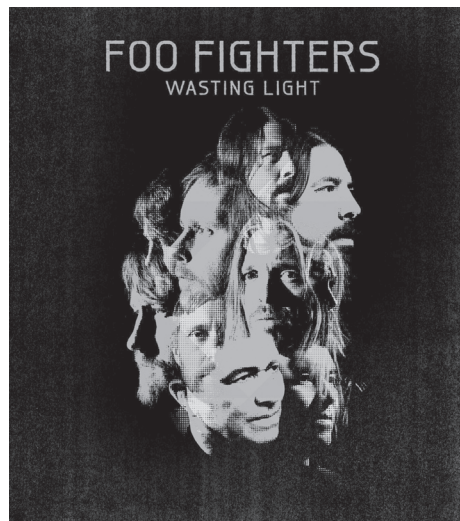
Working to better the community and bringing people together to create a greater sense of community has been the goal for Guidry.

"People aren't used to people doing something because they want to make a difference without another agenda," Guidry said. "I think a lot of people when you ask them to come give their time, and you explain to them that everyone can help – you don't have to be an artist, people will come."

Guidry has a solid team of around 15 people and the organization is currently funded out of pocket or through donations.

"We're doing a few grant proposals. We want to do two more this year, one near VCU and one in Church Hill," Guidry said. **CT**

Album Review: 'Wasting Light' by the Foo Fighters



COURTESY OF RCA

“(‘Walk’) would be an excellent song for Grohl to retire with, but thankfully there’s no sign he intends this to be his last.”

James Klentzman
Contributing Writer

Dave Grohl’s greatest talent in music is being able to collaborate with some of the best musicians in rock.

In the band’s seventh studio album “Wasting Light,” Grohl and company

not only bring back Foo Fighter veteran Pat Smear for another go-around, but they play host to the talented Bob Mould (Hüsker Dü, Sugar) and the legendary Nirvana bassist Krist Novoselic. It’s comforting to hear from Novoselic again, even if it’s an all-too-quick bassline.

The album itself isn’t anything new. The Foo Fighters aren’t branching out into new territory or reinventing the wheel. Since “One By One,” they’ve fit very comfortably in the arena rock role with which they’re most familiar. It’s not bad, by any stretch of the imagination, and let’s face it, if it ain’t broke – don’t fix it.

There is still a noticeable attempt by the band to retrace their roots back to where they came from (a possible Smear influence). From recording the album in Grohl’s garage, to using analog tape instead of computers, and bringing back “Nevermind” producer Butch Vig, there’s a roughness in the sound that early Foo Fighters fans would appreciate, while still being approachable to newer fans not used to the rawness of their self-titled debut.

What’s noticeably lacking from this album are the guitar riffs and melodic

choruses that get sucked into your head and refuse to leave. There aren’t any real earworms that get more and more people hooked on the band. Even with three guitars playing, it doesn’t try to overwhelm you like “In Your Honor” would. Grohl also sounds a lot more reserved in his singing. With the exception of “Bridge Burning” and “White Limo” (which are two of the best songs on the record) Grohl and company don’t seem to intend to fill the stadium with sound.

In the end, what makes this album better than their previous efforts is how every song, flaws and all, cannot be considered filler. Every song is a great effort in its own right, and are unique enough to not just be copies of each other.

“Echoes, Silence, Patience & Grace” suffered from not having many great songs, and “One By One” eventually sounded the same no matter what song you were listening to. It’s a testament to the band’s maturity and talent that they are able to create so many different yet solid songs that still retain that Foo Fighters feel to them.

“Bridge Burning” and “Rope” are the two hit songs that are sure to be played to death on every modern rock station,

and for good reason. They’re that good.

“White Limo” is the band’s recreation of thrash punk and sounds like the first few seconds of a good bar brawl. “I Should Have Known” is Grohl’s version of a ballad, starting off soft and calm before kicking it back up into gear, and somehow managing to make an accordion sound like good music (thank Novoselic for that). “Back & Forth” is the best attempt in the album to come up with that melodic earworm, and will most likely be stuck in people’s heads for weeks. The closer, “Walk” is, quite simply, and awesome way to end an album. It would be an excellent song for Grohl to retire with, but thankfully there’s no sign he intends this to be his last.

Overall, “Wasting Light” is an excellent attempt by the Foo Fighters to go back to their earlier roots without sacrificing what they picked up along the way. “Wasting Light” is going to be on a lot of “Best of 2011” lists come December, and, like so many other albums by Grohl, will be a strong candidate for a few Grammys.

Grade: B

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VCU Department of Emergency Medicine Public Disclosure

Everyone is at risk for Traumatic Brain Injury

Learn about a traumatic brain injury study that may affect you or someone you know. Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) is sudden damage to the brain caused by an outside force to the head — such as a car crash, a fall or from something hitting the head.

ProTECT™ III, a research study conducted by physicians at the VCU Medical Center, is underway and will determine if progesterone, a hormone normally found in our bodies, can reduce the amount of brain damage caused from a TBI. Previous studies suggest that progesterone, given immediately after a TBI, may help treat brain injuries by reducing brain swelling and damage.

Normally, researchers get permission (consent) before a person can be included in a study. A person with a TBI will not be able to give consent at the time of injury. Since TBIs must be treated quickly, there might not be enough time to locate and talk to the person’s legal guardian about the study, so it’s possible that a person might be enrolled in the study without his/her legal guardian’s consent. This is called “Exception from Informed Consent” (EFIC).

If you would like more information about the study or would like to decline participation in advance, please go to the study website or contact us at the VCU Medical Center by e-mail or phone. We would be happy to answer questions or to send you a “ProTECT III Declined” bracelet that you will need to wear for the duration of the study.

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OPINION

In this section:

Our generation telling its own story
'Course-title inflation' at its prime • 15

We must be the autobiographers of our generation

Ashley Major
Columnist

Earlier this week in my Approaches to Literature class, we discussed literary canons.

A canon is a term used to describe a particular grouping of literature, even music and art, that has been influential in shaping culture at that particular time. The discussion revolved around the literary critic Edward Said and his distinction of what makes a particular work of literature significant enough to be added into the canon.

As I thought about all the wonderful words of influential writers from the preceding century such as Virginia Woolf and J. D. Salinger, I couldn't help but compare them to some of the best-sellers of our time, like Snooki.

Yes, it is unfortunately true. Nicole "Snooki" Polizzi (you know, the orange one with the pickles?) has written a New York Times best-selling novel, "A Shore Thing." Her suggested representation of what it means to be young today consists of drinking too much, pursuing meaningless hook-ups and beating up those "dirty beats" in the modern world.

While this is all very worthy of an eye-roll and can be justifiably chalked up to yet another flash-in-the-pan piece of "Jersey Shore" memorabilia, the one thing that Snooki has perhaps unintentionally done is capture our generation in a nutshell. Love it or leave it (I personally am leaning towards the latter), the 23-year-old Snooki has spoken for us as a collective and acknowledges being a member of a

technology-obsessed generation often accused of vanity, over-indulgence, narcissism and ignorance.

Whether this is true for every 20-something, we can all relate on some level because we have all been exposed to this lifestyle.

It can be said that a raw representation from our generation has not been seen for some time and perhaps young people are flocking to their local Barnes and Noble to devour a literary text that can potentially fill the void our generation may feeling.

On the more substantial search for self-representation in literature, we may look towards Holden Caulfield and his

words about the coming-of-age angst and rebellion. While "The Catcher in the Rye" is undeniably remarkable, it is likewise irrelevant to the lives of modern-day youth as it was written nearly 60 years ago.

Furthermore, the majority of literary works marketed to us are written by individuals' years older than us who are often writing in retrospect. This parallel is evident in nearly every publication targeted at our demographic.

While Snooki's stint as an author is not a momentous one, it is honest. Don't let her portrayal be dogma which we should fall into, but rather let it serve as an example that we ought to

be the ones telling the stories of our generation rather than our observers.

It is doubtful "A Shore Thing" will be accepted into the literary canon years from now, as was "The Lord of the Flies" or "Mother Night." But we ought to recognize that the fate of our generation's canon lies in our hands alone. Our complacency with Snooki's representation only makes it easier for further inaccurate and ridiculous depictions to climb the best-seller list. Ultimately, if we refuse to write the stories of our generation, they will be written for us. **BT**

ILLUSTRATION BY MARLEIGH CULVER

Removing semantics from our course titles

Robert Showah
Opinion Editor

According to a recent study by the National Center for Education Statistics, despite the tripling of students taking rigorous-sounding courses over the past two decades, a growing collection of data indicate those students aren't scoring any higher on the National Assessment of Education Progress test.

The reason is because the content of these courses is not as "high-achieving" as their course names. It's the course equivalent of grade inflation, and it shouldn't come as a surprise to anyone.

First, standardized test results are not the prime way to determine whether these courses equate to their advanced titles. A student's performance on the end-of-course exams and the instructor's teaching method also play a large role.

However, one problem is that some schools actually label courses with boasted names because administrators want to help students satisfy tougher requirements, according to a recent New York Times article.

"Course-title inflation" in our high schools and in higher education isn't entirely dissimilar to buying orange juice. I can either choose to buy the off-brand carton with the ironic mascot that offers me plenty of Vitamin C, or I can buy the sleeker and more visually appealing bottle that offers the same nutrients. It's the difference between Chocolate Pebbles and Count Chocula and between honest courses titles and euphemisms.

The same Times article states that

over the past decade, the number of AP exams taken by high school students more than doubled to 3.1 million. Though the proportion of exams earning low scores of 1 or 2 out of 5 rose six percent to 42.5 percent.

Trevor Packer, a vice president of the College Board we all know and love who administer the AP exams, called the 42.5 percent "tolerable." We shouldn't expect anything less from a company

"Course-title inflation" in our high schools and in higher education isn't entirely dissimilar to buying orange juice."

that profits regardless of how students perform, and nickels and dimes families for exam fees and transcripts, not to mention a thick line of test preparation books.

Many high school administrators say that it isn't necessarily about the schools but is about merely exposing students to more rigorous coursework even if they don't perform well.

What? Since when did our philosophy claiming that "tests reflect knowledge" take a backseat to effort?

That doesn't sound like the standards-obsessed education system that I know.

In all seriousness, we should expose students to more rigorous coursework, measure their progress and understanding along the way and ditch the idea that we can judge a student's academic potential and overall knowledge based on a single standardized test conducted by a company that encourages using exams – not to better education, but to weed students out.

Instead of working to keep College Board in business or pretending there are vast differences between students who take AP courses and those that do not, we should be challenging students – regardless of the course's title. The same Times article also reports that SAT scores have dropped or flat-lined since 2000 despite the increased percentage of students enrolling in rigorous curricula.

So either our kids are getting dumber – which is the conventional thought – or standardized tests are just not accurately measuring students' performance because the students see no reason to perform well on a consequence-free federal standardized assessment.

Whatever the reason, College Board's AP test machine and the anxiety students experience in high school, and even into college, revolves in part around the laziness of those in academic community who continue to simplify and compact the transcripts of students into single letters, digits and tests based on false differences between courses. **CT**

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COMICS

"Dam Her" by Rachel Maves






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