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Full head of steam

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BRIEFS

On the cover:

Junior forward Aisha Allen celebrates VCU women's soccer's 1-0 victory over Georgia State Sunday.
Photo by Chris Conway

Local & VCU

VCU Police seek unknown woman in relation to stolen credit card

VCU Police are searching for an unknown woman in relation to a case of credit card theft and fraud.

A wallet containing credit cards was stolen from a VCU student on the Monroe Park Campus on Sept. 8. Since then, the cards have been used to make purchases in several Richmond locations.

VCU Police Chief John Venuti said the card was used almost immediately after it was reported missing.

Police do not know if the woman using the card was the same person who stole the cards.

Venuti said larceny is not out of the ordinary at VCU, though most larceny cases involve electronics, not wallets. He advises students to keep their items secure, report any missing items to police and if the theft involves credit card, contact the bank immediately to cancel any cards.

Brief by Mason Brown

McDonnell announces sale of bonds to benefit VCU

Governor Bob McDonnell announced the sale of \$167 million worth of bonds to help finance some dormitory projects at five state schools, including VCU.

The sale will take place Oct. 12 and 13 and will open first to state retail investors on Oct. 12. Any unsold bonds will become available in a competitive sale on Oct. 13. Typically, bonds sold competitively go to larger, institutional supporters. The sale will also go towards financing projects at Christopher Newport University, the College of William and Mary, George Mason University, Virginia Tech and Virginia State University.

Brief by Mechelle Hankerson

U.S. denies Va. request for aid after quake

Federal authorities have denied the state's request for assistance with damage from the August earthquake that started in Louisa County.

Gov. Bob McDonnell's office announced Friday that the Federal Emergency Management Agency denied Virginia's request to aid individuals who were affected by the magnitude-5.8 earthquake Aug. 23.

"We are very disappointed in FEMA's decision, and we will immediately appeal," he said.

The declaration would have made federal grants and low-interest loans as well as unemployment assistance and crisis counseling available to homeowners, renters and businesses.

Damage assessments for residential properties are nearly \$15 million, mostly in uninsured costs, McDonnell said.

This is the second time this year the state has been denied disaster aid for individuals. In May, FEMA denied requests for help for areas hit by tornadoes in April, and McDonnell is appealing that decision as well.

Brief by The Richmond Times-Dispatch

Richmond Fed won't fly gay-pride flag in 2012

The Federal Reserve Bank in Richmond will not fly a rainbow flag in recognition of Gay Pride Month next year, as it did in June.

The bank's display of the flag drew complaints from social conservatives, including Del. Robert G. Marshall, R-Prince William, who wrote bank officials demanding that the flag be removed, but it remained in place until the end of the month.

Bank employees received an internal memo Friday defending the decision to fly the flag, but saying future recognitions of Gay Pride Month will not be so publicly visible.

Brief by The Richmond Times-Dispatch

National & International

3 women share Nobel; led change in Africa, Mideast

Leymah Gbowee confronted armed forces in Liberia to demand that they stop using rape as a weapon. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf became Africa's first woman to win a free presidential election. Tawakkul Karman began pushing for change in Yemen long before the Arab Spring. They share a commitment to women's rights in regions where oppression is common, and on Friday they shared the Nobel Peace Prize.

The Norwegian Nobel Committee honored women for the first time in seven years, and in selecting Karman it also recognized the Arab Spring movement championed by millions of often anonymous activists from Tunisia to Syria.

Prize committee chairman Thorbjørn Jagland said it would have been difficult to identify all the movement's leaders, and that the committee was making an additional statement by selecting Karman to represent their cause.

Karman is the first Arab woman ever to win the peace prize, which includes a 10 million kronor (\$1.5 million) award that will be divided among the winners. No woman or sub-Saharan African had won the prize since 2004, when the committee honored Wangari Maathai of Kenya, who mobilized poor women to fight deforestation by planting trees.

Brief by The Associated Press

Dutch classify high-potency marijuana as hard drug

The Dutch government said Friday it would move to classify high-potency marijuana alongside hard drugs such as cocaine and ecstasy, the latest step in the country's ongoing reversal of its famed tolerance policies.

The decision means most of the cannabis now sold in the Netherlands' weed cafes would have to be replaced by milder variants.

Possession of marijuana is technically illegal in the Netherlands, but police do not prosecute people for possession of small amounts, and it is sold openly in designated cafes. Growers are routinely prosecuted if caught.

Economic Affairs Minister Maxime Verhagen said weed containing more than 15 percent of its main active chemical, THC, is so much stronger than what was common a generation ago that it should be considered a different drug entirely.

The Cabinet has not said when it will begin enforcing the rule.

Brief by The Associated Press

Thai floods kill at least 253

Thailand's prime minister warns that rising floodwaters that have wreaked havoc across the nation now threaten Bangkok, the capital, as the death toll from the worst monsoon rains in decades rose Saturday to 253.

Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra said flooding, which has severed rail links with the north, shut dozens of highways and swamped ancient Buddhist temples in the city of Ayutthaya, has reached a crisis level.

Bangkok has been spared serious damage, but many fear it could be inundated as large amounts of water flow from submerged northern rice fields toward the Gulf of Thailand. That critical runoff is expected to be impeded by high ocean tides in mid-October. Also, Tropical Storm Nalgae is forecast to bring new rain in the days ahead.

The Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation said 253 people have been killed in the disaster, mostly from drowning, since a series of tropical storms began hitting Thailand at the end of July. It said 8 million people in 60 of the country's 77 provinces have been affected by floods and mudslides during that time, and 3 million acres of agricultural land have been damaged.

Brief by The Associated Press

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NEWS

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VCU Police officer promotes new campus bike policy

BIKE LIGHTS

AFTER DARK, ALL CYCLISTS ARE REQUIRED TO HAVE A FRONT, WHITE LIGHT AND A RED REAR REFLECTOR. THE WHITE LIGHT MUST BE VISIBLE FOR 150 METERS AND THE RED REFLECTOR MUST BE VISIBLE FOR 100 METERS.

REFLECTIVE MATERIALS

IT IS IMPORTANT TO WEAR REFLECTIVE CLOTHING AND USE REFLECTORS ON BIKES. THE CITY OF RICHMOND RECOMMENDS USING REFLECTIVE BANDS TO MAKE HAND SIGNALS MORE VISIBLE.

HAND SIGNALS

MAKE SURE TO LEARN AND USE CORRECT HAND SIGNALS. CYCLISTS SHOULD USE HAND SIGNALS IN ADVANCE AND ALWAYS CHECK OVER THE SHOULDER FOR TRAFFIC BEFORE SIGNALING.

CORRECT BIKE SIZE

THE CITY OF RICHMOND SUGGESTS TO ALWAYS USE A CORRECTLY SIZED BIKE. IT WILL BE EASIER TO CONTROL AND OPERATE AND WILL MAKE IT MORE COMFORTABLE.

SAFETY TIPS FROM THE CITY OF RICHMOND

PHOTO BY CHRIS CONWAY

VCU Police officer Matthew Ruland proposed a new bike policy that would restrict bicycle use in busy parts of campus, like Shafer Court.

Amir Vera
Contributing Writer

Residents know that Richmond's roads aren't the safest, and residents who venture onto the VCU campus have probably also noticed how unsafe even sidewalks can become with the flood of students and bicyclists.

Pedestrians on campus might be able to avoid bicycle traffic on the sidewalks in some parts of VCU because of a revised bicycle policy.

VCU Police officer Matthew Ruland has reconstructed a 10-year-old bicycle policy that will change how some of the busier sections of campus conduct traffic, specifically in regards to bike use.

The main difference in the revised policy looks to make Shafer Court (the stretch of sidewalk between Franklin Street and Floyd Avenue) and Linden Court (the stretch of sidewalk from

Cary Street to Floyd Avenue) a "pedestrian way."

People will still be able to bring a bicycle through those areas, but they will have to dismount them and roll them as they walk through the proposed pedestrian ways.

"It's the heart of the Monroe Park campus," Ruland said. "Between classes there are tons of pedestrians, and it really doesn't make sense to try and navigate your bike through a crowd like that, but people do it."

Another part of the initiative includes a change in officers' process of referring people, pedestrians and bicyclists.

Ruland said there are no such things as the rumored "jaywalking tickets," but VCU police can refer students, faculty and staff to Judicial Affairs, where student misconduct is handled. Officers typically refer pedestrians who ignore

traffic officers who, according to the law, replace traffic lights when present at an intersection.

The cutting of bicycle locks on campus property is also a part of the new policy Ruland is promoting. Ruland said if a bicycle is chained to a trashcan, handicapped ramp or private facility, the facility management has the authority to cut the lock off the bicycle and turn it in to the proper authorities.

"In theory, they can do that already, but now it will be well-written and well-articulated in the new policy so it's beyond the shadow of a doubt what we can and cannot do," Ruland said.

Ruland also said if the policy becomes official, more signs would go up instructing riders when and when not to be on their bikes as well as where they can lock up their bikes.

"We won't be out writing people up and throwing them in jail, but we'll be

out there periodically just checking it. We'll try to get the message out there," Ruland said.

According to Ruland, it is very likely that the changes to the bicycle initiative will be passed within the next year. Making changes to a policy must go through a panel of people, which then critiques the policy before it is approved.

In addition to safety, Ruland's main goal is the education.

"We'll try to get the message out there. The more you do that, the more you educate people, the more it becomes habit for people," Ruland said. "And that's the thing, just changing the habit of people and making them more conscientious about pedestrians and ... when a motor vehicle is on the street too." **CT**



Richmond Copwatch

Copwatch patrols

First Friday's comeback



Mason Brown
Staff Writer

Stiofan Loughman is a resident of the northside of Richmond. He is politically active with numerous organizations and is involved with helping the homeless and hungry of Richmond. He is also considered a terrorist.

Stiofan Loughman is an anarchist.

"I'm a terrorist. I'm on a list," said Loughman while training fellow "cop-watchers" in Monroe Park on Friday, Oct. 7.

"Copwatch is basically a tool to observe and report police activity for hopes of police accountability," Loughman said. "The two major functions are a deterrent to police brutality or to catch them in the act and serve infractions upon them."

Richmond Copwatch is an organization that meets during the First Fridays art walk and patrols for actions they consider heinous committed by police. The main goals of the group are to reduce police violence, empower and unite the community to resist police abuse, encourage problem-solving without the use of police and to encourage communities to exercise their rights to observe the police. Richmond Copwatch exists without leadership in order to follow the anarchist ideals in which the organization is based.

According to Richmond Copwatch members, in the past they have had tasers put into their face and been arrested on charges that later got dropped as they entered court.

Richmond Copwatch's goals are not exclusively to observe and report police misconduct, but also to distribute information regarding rights people have with the police.

With the return of First Fridays this past weekend, Copwatch was present to lookout for police misconduct and to distribute information.

According to Loughman, the police presence was markedly lower compared to other recent events.

"We just want this to be a success,"

Commander Michael Snawder of the Richmond Police Department said. "This is the return of First Fridays; we're simply here to deter any actions that could happen."

"I personally have never had issues with Copwatch," Snawder said. "I've made it clear to them that if they want to show me anything, my doors are always open. I like the idea; I support the idea of having checks and balances. I don't have a problem with a citizenry watching what we do ... because if we're not doing anything wrong there is nothing to hide. I don't like when that good intention turns into distraction from my officers."

According to Snawder, Copwatch sometimes forms a distraction to investigations.

This month's Copwatch focused on information distribution.

Although the organization is open to anyone, many of the members of the Richmond Copwatch are also associated with the local anarchist collective, The Wingnut.

"They all kind of happen out of the Wingnut. It's really just a shared membership thing. We're all anarchist," said Cameron Coleman, an 18-year-old member of the Wingnut.

"I moved into Richmond from the suburbs, and I started seeing cops perform a lot of f---ed up s--- happening to young black people in our neighborhood. It's one of those things you are taught not to believe, and you see it for real and it makes you really ... angry."

Christina Newton of Cultured Creations, the organizer of First Fridays, said she thinks the actions of Richmond Copwatch are good for the community and the message is important, but the methods by which they communicate their message are, at times, excessive.

"It seems like they aggravate the police just waiting for something to happen," Newton said. **CT**

For more information on Richmond Copwatch visit wingnutrva.org.



"I like the idea; I support the idea of having checks and balances. I don't have a problem with a citizenry watching what we do ... because if we're not doing anything wrong there is nothing to hide."



Richmond Copwatch members, like Stiofan Loughman, primarily focused on information distribution during this month's First Friday Art Walk but also consider themselves a deterrent for any potential incidents of police brutality.

Occupy Richmond begins organizing on VCU campus



PHOTOS COURTESY OF DAVID MARTIN OF MARTIN IMAGES NEWS



VCU students and Richmond residents who live close to campus were encouraged to attend Friday's rally where participants planned for the larger Occupy Richmond Rally scheduled for Oct. 15.

Jessica Dahlberg
Contributing Writer

Students gathered behind Hibbs Hall on Friday, Oct. 7 for an awareness rally for Occupy Richmond. The main purpose of the rally was to get contact information from students who were interested in participating and to set up committees for the larger Occupy Richmond rally slated to happen Oct. 15.

The committee names are issues that students feel the government needs to address. Such titles as media, sanitation, medical and environment were written on white poster board and taped to the wall with a sheet of paper underneath for other students to write in their contact information.

"The committees are for volunteers for various jobs to keep the fluidity of the movement," said Josh Kadrich, a VCU alumnus.

According to Kadrich, there will be a global occupation of cities worldwide to

show a symbol of solidarity to the Occupy Wall Street Movement on Oct. 15.

The participants in the Occupy Movement are protesting against issues like social and economic inequality, corporate greed and the influence of corporate money and lobbyists on the government. The movement started on Sept. 7 at Liberty Park in New York City.

"The Occupy Richmond rally is all about acting locally and thinking globally," VCU student Julia Arnone said.

The Occupy Richmond movement is a leaderless movement with no one making decisions for the group as a whole. Instead, the decisions are made by a general assembly by a show of hands and a grand majority.

"The whole movement is an evolutionary process to show solidarity against the issues," Kadrich said.

The grand majority will decide what the group is most passionate about, and what issues they want to address as a whole at the Occupy Richmond rally. **CT**

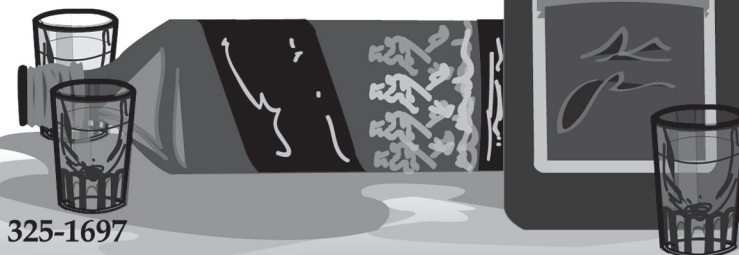
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SPORTS

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VCU has now won three straight games in the month of October.



PHOTOS BY CHRIS CONWAY

Granados lifts women's soccer over Georgia State

Amir Vera
Contributing Writer

Cristin Granados scored the game-winning goal off a corner kick with 10 seconds to go, vaulting VCU to victory over Georgia State on Sunday.

Granados, along with her teammates, was thrilled about the ending of the game. She said she was just glad she could help out.

"I could just see Cris is going to keep improving because she is very coachable, and she's a great player," said co-head coach Tiffany Roberts Sahaydak on Granados.

Besides the last minute action, Sunday's game was a scoreless one in which the Rams fought every second against the athleticism and aggressiveness of GSU.

"The first thing I think about is Georgia State and how athletic and physical they are," Sahaydak said. "They disrupted our style of play, so we give them a lot of credit to be able to do that. I'm proud that our players were able to battle through it and put our

stamp on the game, which was very difficult to do, but they stuck with it."

Sahaydak said the team was able to adapt to the Panthers' style of play. However, she believes that because this style of play was so new to the Rams, they weren't able to handle it as well as they could have.

"We did OK; next time if we play a team like that, we'll be better," Sahaydak said. "I think it was a little bit new to us to be so man-marked around the field."

While they adapted to GSU's style, VCU also had difficulty penetrating the GSU defense to make a goal. In total, VCU had 23 attempts against Georgia State.

"I think that is definitely something we need to work on, finishing our chances," said sophomore center forward Courtney Conrad. "We had a lot of missed opportunities, but it's something we can definitely look forward to."

Sahaydak said the team needs to be more mentally tough if they are to continue to win games.

"Our team tends to turn into individuals when things are not going our way,"

Sahaydak said. "What we spoke about after the game was we congratulated the team for winning, but when there's adversity, we still have to use each other to win games. I think it's just being a team, continuing to be a team and (working) together, those are things we still need to get better at."

The Rams will travel to Delaware on Friday, Oct. 14. Delaware is ranked sixth in the CAA right behind VCU. **C7**



Top right:
Freshman Cristin Granados celebrates her game-winning goal in VCU's win over Georgia State.



Middle right:
Senior Molly Allen glides past a defender.

Bottom right:
Senior Heather Hovanesian had one shot in the Rams' win over Georgia State.



Top: Senior forward Azania moves past a defender.
Bottom: Junior midfielder Gabby Wilson vies for a loose ball.



PHOTOS BY CHRIS CONWAY

Weekend scoreboard

Men's soccer

Saturday, Oct. 8
VCU 3, Hofstra 0

Women's soccer

Friday, Oct. 7
VCU 1, UNC Wilmington 0

Sunday, Oct. 9
VCU 1, Georgia State 0

Field hockey

Friday, Oct. 7
James Madison 2, VCU 1, 20T

Sunday, Oct. 9
VCU 3, Pacific 0

Volleyball

Thursday, Oct. 6
VCU 3, William & Mary 0



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3:30 p.m. S P O R T S

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8 p.m. O P I N I O N

**For more information, contact
executive editor, Adam Stern
at editor@commonwealthtimes.org**



Field hockey cruises past Pacific 3-0

Quinn Casteel
Assistant Sports Editor

The VCU field hockey team snapped a three-game losing streak on Sunday afternoon, shutting out non-conference foe Pacific 3-0.

Haley McBee scored two goals in a span of 27 seconds just before the end of the first half, and from there the Rams were in control.

"We've been working on offensive execution, and it was great to see (McBee) put it together back-to-back," said Kendell Combs, who scored VCU's third goal. "She's been working so hard, and I was so proud that she got those two goals; they were amazing."

Combs, who is having a breakout freshman season, scored the third goal of her career on a sharply executed play late in the second half. Aerial Hess streaked down the middle of the field and made an on-point pass to a wide open Combs. With Pacific goalkeeper Ashlee Schlesier caught way out of position, all she had to do from there was roll it in.

Combs and the rest of the Rams' offense had their way with the Pacific defense down the stretch, finding gashing holes almost at will. Head coach Kelly McQuade attests that domination to her team's fitness level, which allowed them to outlast the Boxers.

"I felt bad for Pacific; this was their third game in four days, and it looked like they were tired toward the end," said McQuade. "And our girls are very fit. We really put an emphasis on conditioning, and (Combs) especially is in the top level of shape."

Team captain Kelsey Scherrer had a big game as well, facilitating the offense and controlling the ball for VCU. With time running out in the second half, Scherrer ripped a shot which deflected off Schlesier's leg pad, right to McBee who had the opportunity for a hat trick. Her shot was stopped by yet another Schlesier pad save, who had a solid game despite allowing three goals. She racked up nine saves on 12 VCU shots on goal, but the defense let her down consistently.

Pacific found scoring chances as well, but the VCU defense would bend and not break. Throughout much of the first half, a lack of initiative on defense opened the door for several Boxer scoring opportunities, but they were unable to finish when they got in deep.

McQuade and several players agreed that Sunday's win will be critical in helping them find confidence once again.

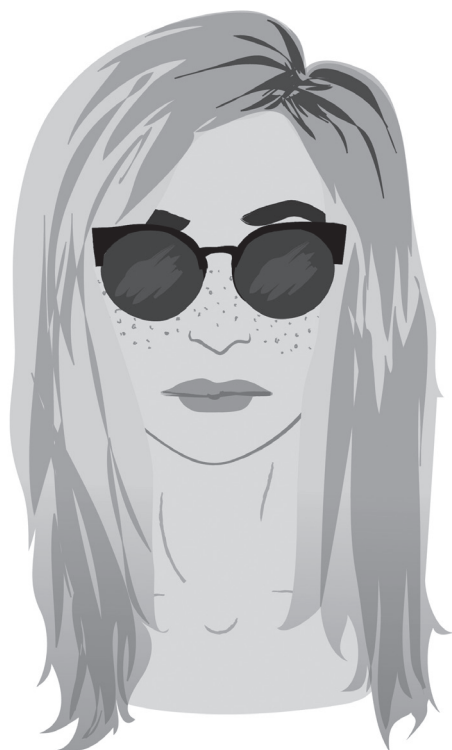
"We needed to get the momentum back, and I think this was a good way to do it," said Scherrer. "We proved that we can score goals and string together passes, which was huge, so this was a great win for sure."

VCU will play Ivy League program Columbia on Oct. 16 before returning to conference play when they take on William & Mary on Oct. 21. The Rams are currently 1-4 in the CAA with just three conference games remaining. Combs said the upcoming matches against William & Mary, Old Dominion and Delaware are "must win games," and if the Rams still have postseason aspirations, that is exactly what they are. **CT**



PHOTOS COURTESY OF VCU ATHLETICS

Top: Freshman Kendell Combs scored her third goal of the season in VCU's win over Pacific.
Bottom: VCU snapped a three-game losing streak Sunday afternoon.



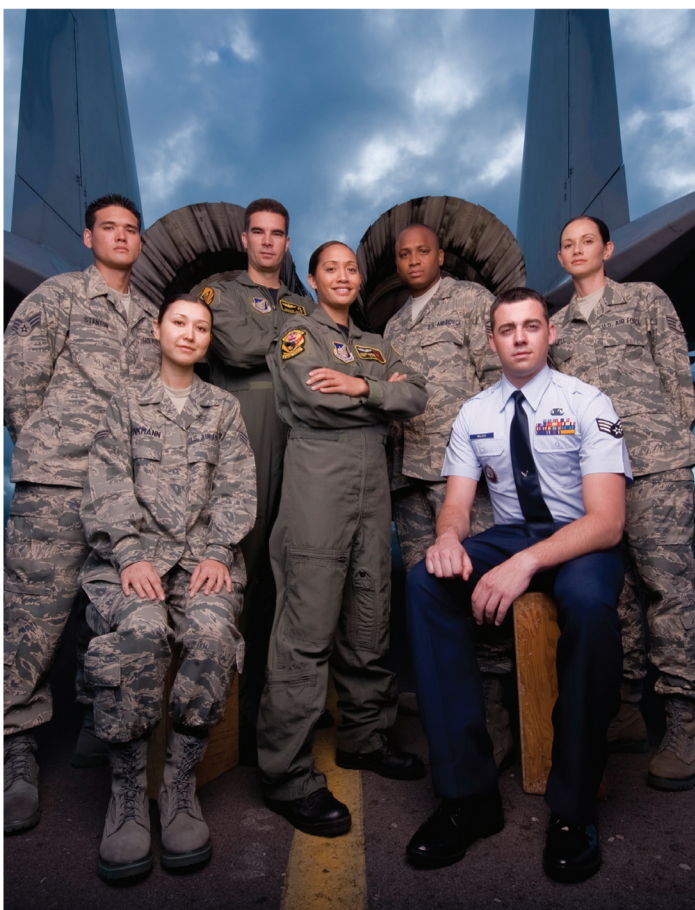
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Monday, October 10, 2011

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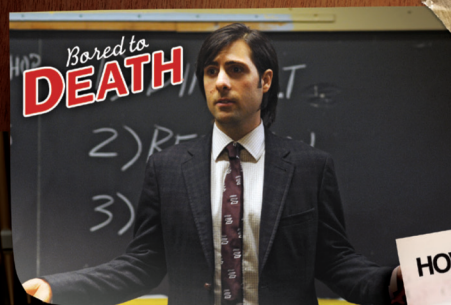
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SPECTRUM

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Fifth-annual Richmond Zine Fest doodles and staples its way to stardom

Mark Robinson

Assistant Spectrum Editor

What's in a zine?

For Megan Osborn, a junior statistics major at VCU, it's a chance to fight the stereotypes associated with mental illness.

A member of The Icarus Project, Osborne represented the grassroots mental health organization at the Richmond Zine Fest this past Saturday at the Gay Community Center of Richmond.

The group has produced numerous zines aimed at destigmatizing mental illness, including "Friends Make the Best Medicine," a do-it-yourself guide to creating mental health support groups within a community.

"We're just trying to get the word out that people with mental health difficulties are not odd; they're not weird; they're not scary; they're people like you and me," Osborn said.

The Icarus Project was one of the more than 40 tablers at the fifth-annual festival. Zine-makers, traders and fanatics from New York City, Philadelphia and Portland, Ore. made the trip to display their self-published work.

Despite the influx of out-of-state contributors, both Richmond and VCU were well represented at the Fest.

"Quail Bell," a zine described as combining the "imaginary, the nostalgic and the otherworldly" by its art director, senior creative advertising and art history major Virginia Nickerson, is a conglomerate of photography, poems, comics and short stories.

As a result of "Quail Bell's" success, Nickerson and her partner, Christine Stoddard, will host the "Once Upon a Dream" fairy-tale fashion show at Barnes & Noble on Sunday, Oct. 16.

"We want to get people to be more aware of 'Quail Bell'; we have a lot of staff that we've taken on for the fashion show, and even them helping has gotten the word out," Nickerson said. "We went from 73 followers on Twitter to more than 300 in the past five days because of Zine Fest and the fashion show."

Though many tablers at Zine Fest were small groups with big aspirations, personal expression from individual contributors was not obscured.

Mara Hyman, a junior painting and printmaking major at VCU, took up zine-making as a result of her interest in the do-it-yourself (or DIY) aspect of Richmond's punk community.

Although her zine series "You Are Not Alone (In Feeling Alone)" started as a hobby, Hyman believes it can function as an outlet to display her art. "Being an artist, it's really difficult to get your work out there," Hyman said, "so it's kind of a way for me to get people to look at my drawings."

Planned workshops for Saturday's Fest included zine design strategies, the history of zines and DIY knitting lessons.

Patrick Costello, a five-year zine veteran, hosted the "Zines 101" workshop, which covered the history of zines and zine design. "We just wanted to give an idea for the range of zines out there and maybe leave people with some ideas of what they can do," Costello said.

VCU sophomores Harry Stewart and Rellie Brewer produced their first zine and tabled for the first time at Saturday's Fest. Their recounting of the gym class experience of Parly Pork, a half-pig, half-girl, struggling through the absurdities of middle school, was one of the Fest's more quirky contributions.

"It's kind of a satire in the regard that it's about middle school, but not really," said Stewart of his and Brewer's work.

As there is only loose guidelines for what comprises a zine, and no restrictions on content, contributions at Saturday's Fest ranged from worker's rights pamphlets to vegan recipes on folded 8-by-11-inch paper, and everything in between.

So what's in a zine? Whatever you want there to be. **CT**

For more information about Richmond Zine Fest, visit their website at <http://www.richmondzinefest.org>.



PHOTOS BY CHRIS CONWAY

Over 40 zine artists and distributors registered to table at the fifth-annual Richmond Zine Fest.



What's in a zine? That which we call a zine/ By any other name would cost as cheap/ To make, and still be published independent(ly).



IMAGE COURTESY OF BROADWAY IN RICHMOND

Tiffany Haas as Galinda and Anne Brummel as Elphaba in Broadway in Richmond's production of "Wicked" at the Landmark Theater.

Totally 'Wicked' Broadway show comes to Richmond

Michael Todd
Contributing Writer

This past Friday marked the opening weekend of Broadway sensation "Wicked" at the Landmark Theater. Though "Wicked" is a very "Popular" show, it came close to, but fell short of, its goal of "Defying Gravity."

Taking place in the merry ol' Land of Oz – complete with emerald city, wonderful wizard, talking animals, munchkins and yellow brick road –

"Wicked" actually has next to nothing to do with Dorothy and her odyssey to return home to Kansas, and everything to do with the witches who supposedly help shape her journey.

Instead, act one details a type of prequel into the lives of Elphaba and Galinda, including how they met and how they became known as the Wicked Witch of the West and Good Witch of the North, respectively. Except in this show, as is often the case in reality, it's a little bit more complicated than good

and evil.

Act two follows a parallel universe that provides alternative stories to the origins of familiar characters, with quirky references to Dorothy's version of the story scattered throughout.

Over the course of the entire play, the show offers answers to questions the audience might not have even thought to ask, including the source of the Witch's greenness, the Tin Man's absence of heart, and the wings of Elphaba's flying monkey henchmen.

At the beginning of the show, Galinda poses to the audience, "Are people born wicked? Or do they have wickedness thrust upon them?"

Historical references such as these appear repeatedly throughout the show as little clues to what may be the play's overarching theme: the subjectivity of truth and history, with their respective accuracies and fallacies.

"Where I'm from, we believe all sorts of things that aren't true – we call it 'history.'" This line, spoken by the fraudulent Wizard, perhaps best speaks to this idea that titles such as "Wonderful" and "Wicked" don't always tell the full, or in any sense legitimate, story but instead what the masses are both made and willing to believe.

Moreover, sometimes people with the best of intentions, or who are in any sense different from the majority, are outcast.

The show's extravagantly constructed

set, intricately detailed costumes, and seamless transitions succeeded in leading audience members further down the yellow brick road. Unfortunately, these were the primary elements that disguised this supposedly Off-Broadway caliber show as anything more than a glorified college performance.

Tiffany Haas (Galinda), a Virginia native, seemed much more bubbly when she was out of character in her post-bow speech than she did during the actual performance, when she constantly sounded as if she were about to burst into tears.

Meanwhile, between bouts of sulking, Anne Brummel (Elphaba) flew dangerously close to a certain tugging of the corners of the mouth that some might consider a smile during what were obviously intended to be scenes of frustration for her wickedly misunderstood character.

These and other lapses keep the audience held just beyond the fourth wall and remind all viewers that the performance is just that – acting.

A final but significant difference was the lack of adherence to the original soundtrack for what was probably the performers' lack of vocal dexterity.

Despite its handful of shortcomings, "Wicked" nonetheless exceeded the expectations of a majority of viewers and satisfied the criteria for a show that is both entertaining and thought provoking. **CT**

Second-annual a cappella invitational draws university groups from across Virginia

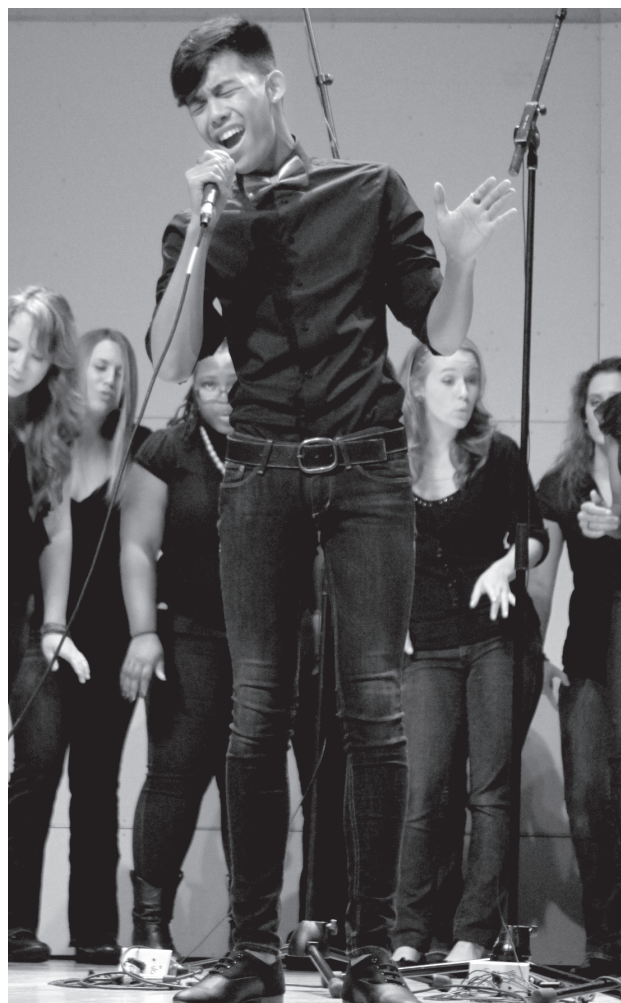
Alex Carrigan
Contributing Writer

Last Friday, 10 a cappella groups from four different universities, including VCU's RAMifications and Notochords, gathered at the Singleton Center on the Monroe Park campus for the second Richmond Rhythm Invitational. The groups gathered to perform songs from artists like Muse, John Legend, Sara Bareilles and many more in the spirit of collaboration and community through vocal harmony.

"It took months and months of preparation," said event organizer and RAMifications president Amy Girardi. "There are just so many details."

The event began with an introduction by Riley Reed, a former RAMifications member and the emcee of the invitational. First to perform was James Madison University's Overtones, an eight-member group that has been featured in the reputable CD "Best of College A Cappella (BOCA)" several times. Their performance included a version of Katy Perry's "Firework," which began slowly and soothingly before becoming as energetic and upbeat as the original.

University of Mary Washington's Symfonics came next, a 20-year-strong



PHOTOS BY AMBER-LYNN TABER

Ensembles from colleges across the state performed top-40 hits from artists such as Katy Perry, John Legend and Destiny's Child.

'A Cappella' continued on pg 12



'A Cappella' continued from pg 11

a cappella group which sang Muse's "Feeling Good" and Mumford and Sons' "Timshel." They were followed by George Mason's all-male group GMUnit, who pleased the female members of the crowd with a mashup of Bruno Mars's "Grenade" and "Just the Way You Are" before the lead singer and beatboxer jumped into the orchestra pit and performed in the aisles.

UMW's all-female group BellACapella was next with a performance of Destiny Child's "Say My Name," with the singers posing and dancing to the rhythm of the song. JMU's all-male group Exit 245 amazed the audience with a medley of songs from Bruno Mars, the Black Eyed Peas and Taio Cruz.

After several additional visiting groups, including JMU's Low Key and UMW's One Note Stand, the final groups to perform were VCU's own. The first to perform were the Notochords, who were originally

formed in 1992 as an outlet for MCV students and now include students from both campuses. They showcased alto singer and associate director Elise Patterson, who sang the lead in Lady Gaga's "Telephone" and "Love the Way you Lie" by Eminem and Rihanna while sporting her dreadlocks in pigtails tied with yellow ribbons.

"We love Lady Gaga," Patterson said. "We sing Lady Gaga every semester, and 'Telephone' is one of the few Lady Gaga songs with a duet."

RAMifications performed last. Being the final act, they performed three songs, singing Ben Folds' "Not the Same," Christina Perri's "Distance" and Chicago's "25 or 6 to 4". This was preceded by the presentation of banners to each of the schools that participated with the years they performed at Richmond Rhythm.

"Everyone was so amazing, and everyone who participated was so talented," Girardi said. "It was beyond what we could have even hoped for." **CT**



Guest groups from JMU and UMW joined VCU a cappella groups for an evening of non-competitive performances.



PHOTOS BY AMBER-LYNN TABER

Movie Review | 'Real Steel': A mystic Americana in the not-so-distant future

Cory Johnson
Staff Writer

Hugh Jackman is driving an oversized truck to a carnival. The darkness of his cabin and the anxiety on his face heavily contrast the playful hue of the lights and sounds that encompass his destination.

As his car stops just outside the festive event, its image reflected in the windshield, you can see the juxtaposition of the two worlds.

And then the Robots appear.

Welcome to "Real Steel," the newest movie by "Night at the Museum" director Shawn Levy, where giant-sized robots aren't just a reality, but one of the biggest forms of entertainment.

In the near future, 2,000-pound bodies of steel and circuitry have taken the place of humans in the ancient sport of boxing because humans can't dish out the pain that people want to see.

Now, inside the ring, metal titans go blow for blow, taking out appendages and turning their opponents into scrap metal as their trainers command them from outside the ring.

Jackman plays Charlie Kenton, a robot-fighting good-for-nothing with an illegitimate child and a prideful streak.

His 11-year-old son is Max (Dakota Goyo), who Charlie thinks is 9 years old. Abandoned by his father from birth, he has acquired a love for robot boxing and swearing like a sailor. He is thrust upon Charlie after the child's mother dies and the aunt and uncle that have custody of him are going to Italy for the summer.



IMAGE COURTESY OF DREAMWORKS PICTURES

And finally, there are the robots Atom and Zeus. Atom is the Kenton family robot, a second-generation sparring robot found on a father-son forage through the scrap yard; Zeus is the World Robot Boxing league Real Steel champion.

Sound simple? That's because it is. "Real Steel" is similar to countless

other father-child bonding movies, where a mutual love brings the two together and forms a bond that the two have been missing all along.

But the bonding forces in this movie are robots. Robots beating the axel grease out of other robots.

That's what brings this duo together, and what makes this movie as fun as any

movie with robots should be.

Yes, there is a backstory, and yes, it's cute and heart-warming, but it's been done before – and much better. What saves this movie from being an average, dull movie is the pure fun that comes from watching a robot decapitate another via double uppercut.

Compared to other dysfunctional family movies, this is low on the totem pole, but compared to robot movies, this is really good. The characters aren't just plot vehicles without personality but real people. Even the robots, uncanny as they may be, gain personality as they develop fame in the movie.

You begin to feel for these characters, which only makes it more entertaining when their robots get wrecked.

But with all that's going right for the movie, there are some major flaws that only propel its overused, poorly executed formula.

Useless characters and dead and pointless scenes are some of the things that drive the movie to its minimum run time of two hours and push it to the edge of average.

The movie also has some wonky design choices. The fight scenes are jumbled waves of loud, cringe-inducing metallic noise, and some of the robot design rests heavily in a valley of just human enough to be creepy.

The product placement is so obvious it makes the audience laugh but also want a Dr. Pepper and HP computer.

All in all, "Real Steel" isn't a bad movie, but it's no "Field of Dreams" or "Super 8," as both it and "Real Steel" were produced by Spielberg.

With some bad choices to balance out the epic enjoyment of live action Rock 'Em Sock 'Em Robots, this movie is worth two viewings: one with a group of friends at the theater and a \$1 Redbox rental when you have a nostalgia fit in the near future. **CT**



Album Review | Youth Lagoon: 'The Year of Hibernation'

Brian Charlton
Contributing Writer

There are a couple of things one can expect from the growing genre of indie-pop home-recording, among them low production values, shoddy vocals, a good amount of reverb and lyrics of halcyon days in the past.

Youth Lagoon, the bedroom project of Boise, Idaho's 22-year-old Trevor Powers takes all the greatness of this intimacy, places it in a toy box of sounds and melancholy, then shakes in just the right mixture of childhood nostalgia.

His debut album "The Year of Hibernation" perfectly describes its overriding theme: Each track contains a story of how one becomes who they are through occasional hiding, then exploring of the world, then hiding again. The immediate appeal of each song, detailing such themes as heartbreak on the Fourth of July in the song "July," is that it is instantly relatable to anyone who has felt heartbreak, alienation or ambivalence as to their relationship with the external world.

Powers seems to be a scientist of sorts, messing with concoctions of warbled synthesizers, slow-building intros to their swelling conclusions. Many of the environments he picked

as recording locations are intimate and secluded, and the album should be listened to that way. With its room-filling sounds and style, "Afternoon" is the album's stick-out song that demands closed doors and loud speakers.

Powers has discovered a new element on the periodic table of home-recording, but it won't win him the

Nobel Prize. He seems to have his own say when it comes to the genre, but he has not done anything too radical. The album is simple and beautiful – not perfect, but great. This album should bring him great recognition with the coming months and anticipation for what he might invent in the future. **CT**



IMAGE COURTESY OF FAT POSSUM RECORDS



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Virginia Commonwealth University

Student organizations, Greek organizations and other student entities are invited to be part of the first annual VCU Sportsfest! Teams of 10-20 will participate in a variety of events and earn points. The team with the highest score at the end of SportsFest will be invited to a lunch with Dr. Rao, earn an entry on VCU SportsFest plaque, receive SportsFest champion T-shirts, and recognition at the November 3rd VCU Men's Basketball game at the Siegel Center!

SportsFest registration is open from October 10 through October 21 at www.myOrgs.vcu.edu. The team fee is \$30. Once your team is registered, payment will be taken at Breakpoint Games Room in the University Student Commons or at Hunton Student Center. All proceeds from SportsFest registration will fund the Opportunity VCU scholarship fund.

For more information, contact VCU Recreational Sports at 804.827.1100 or visit RECSports.VCU.EDU



OPINION

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Student activism A dying art



Shane Wade
Opinion Editor

Every time an organization at VCU or around Richmond attempts to drum up support for a cause, I'm inevitably disappointed.

Today's student activism is mostly student inaction. Whereas in the 1960s and '70s, students literally took to the street in droves to advocate for their rights and causes, our generation creates Facebook events and throws down flags on the campus lawn. When we do decide to take action, we assemble at a location, passively chant and hold up signs, as if the might of our voice alone would carry through to state legislatures. Even last week's "Occupy Richmond" event displayed a disappointingly low amount of controversy and confrontational action.

When I read a report by the Southern Poverty Law Center that found the average American college student's knowledge of civil rights history had significantly worsened



over the passed decade, I wasn't a bit surprised. Compare today's rallies with comical signs and the rare protest march to the sit-in movements, boycotts, strikes, walk-outs and all the great acts of civil disobedience created by civil rights activists in the South.

If students actually knew about the history of public protest in America, I have no doubt that they'd be much more effective and persuasive in both getting their message across and achieving their desired goals. Just talking to students around our campus, I know that college students aren't the apathetic archetypes that we've often been painted as by both media figures and ourselves in comedic sketches, opinion pieces and daily conversation.

We're anxious. We're ready to rally to support a cause. And we're secretly disappointed in ourselves. We want to be Rosa Parks and become the symbol of a movement. We want to be Chris Jeon, the UCLA student that went to fight with rebels in Libya. We want to be leaders, but we're too afraid to lead.

For the past few years, students have been captives of a catch-22. They're not allowed to advocate for themselves against high tuition and post-graduate debt because they're too busy working

multiple jobs and maintaining their statuses as full-time students so they can graduate within four years and find a job that pays minimum wage. It's nearly impossible to fault someone

“Our students need to be reminded that actions speak louder than words and fortune favors the bold. The time for rallies is over, and the time for marches is here.”

for not joining a pseudo-legal protest against a 7-percent tuition raise when the possibility of spending a night in jail could get you fired from the job that keeps you from becoming homeless.

But we shouldn't allow ourselves to

become passive and complacent in the face of bureaucracy and government, whether it be federal, state, local or collegiate. Student organizations need to become more efficient and outspoken in the methods they choose to spread their message if they are to be taken seriously. Instead of techniques that are visible but passive, they must take dramatic actions that gain the attention of onlookers, even if it does not bring them applause. That doesn't mean staging a “flash mob” dance routine; it means becoming overtly crafty in the delivery of a message, but not so much so that it can be dismissed as cliché.

Whether that means dousing someone in paint or reenacting “The Hunger Artist,” isn't for me to say, but it is for you to do.

Our students need to be reminded that actions speak louder than words and fortune favors the bold. The time for rallies is over, and the time for marches is here. Whether you're boycotting textbook prices, joining the Occupy movement or trying to raise awareness about sexual assault, be active in your activism. **CT**

There's a bad sheriff in town

Ben Arancibia
Columnist

It's no secret that Richmond isn't the safest city in the U.S., but the citizens of Richmond do their best in selecting people to help make Richmond a safer place.

By electing Sheriff C.T. Woody, Jr., Richmond voters made an unfortunate mistake in trusting someone who has abused the power of his position. Under his leadership, the sheriff's department has made some serious mistakes. Richmond city officials need to demand that Woody fix his mistakes, and when election time arrives, Richmond voters need to elect a new sheriff for the city.

According to a Richmond Times-Dispatch article published on Sept. 29, Sheriff Woody has hired at least 10 family members since being elected: two sisters, a daughter, a son, a nephew, a niece, three granddaughters and a brother-in-law. Woody has been facing political pressure from the Richmond City Council saying that hiring relatives reflects poorly on the city, especially since the three other constitutional officers have agreed to comply with the nepotism policy.

Woody has responded by asserting that since he is an elected constitutional officer, he answers to Richmond voters

and not the city council. Woody is not complying with the nepotism policy and he is using his position of power to exploit the sheriff position in order to help his relatives. According to a Times-Dispatch analysis, his hired relatives earn a combined annual salary

“It's no secret that Richmond isn't the safest city in the U.S., but the citizens of Richmond do their best in selecting people to help make Richmond a safer place.”

of \$442,584. Granted, times are tough because of the economy, but this level of nepotism is unacceptable.

At a news conference on Sept. 27, Woody said that if the Richmond City Council asks him to comply with the

city's nepotism policy that he would so. However, the council should not have to ask Woody to comply, he should do so on his own accord.

Woody has not only exploited his position of power, but he has also failed in leading the Richmond City Sheriff's Office.

Two weeks ago, a suspected bank robber was “inadvertently released” from the Richmond City Jail as he awaited transfer into federal custody. Since the inmate had already dressed in civilian clothes, he was mixed into a group of inmates who were to be released, and he was freed. The inmate was apprehended within two hours and charged with a second bank robbery. If not for the inmate's decision to rob the same bank twice, the inmate could have been free much longer.

Mistakes like this cannot happen.

Woody has been a disgrace as sheriff so far by exploiting his position of power and being a poor leader for the Richmond City Sheriff's Office. If Woody does not step down, the Richmond City Council should look into ways to relieve Woody of his command and replace him. If there is no way to cut the sheriff's term short, Richmond voters must elect a new sheriff to replace him because of his mistakes in office. **CT**

the
ct

ADAM STERN

SHANE WADE

Executive Editor

Opinion Editor

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