



VCU BRACES FOR FLORENCE

Basic necessities at local grocery stores have been flying off the shelves, pending Hurricane Florence's arrival. Photo by Erin Edgerton

Central Virginia residents prepare for first category four hurricane in decades

NIA TARIQ
News Editor

VCU will remain open Wednesday, but will close Thursday and Friday in anticipation of incoming category four Hurricane Florence — VCU Medical Center will remain operational.

A VCU Alert was sent out on Tuesday that the university will shut down for the inclement weather, and will remain closed until Sunday, Sept. 16.

Hurricane Florence is the first hurricane threatening Virginia to peak at category

four since Hurricane Hazel in October 1954.

“I urge members of the community to use caution when traveling,” said Meredith Weiss, vice president of VCU administration in a newsletter emailed to the VCU community. “Heavy rain can cause flooding on streets and in low-lying areas. Do not try to walk or drive through these areas. And if conditions worsen, there could be downed power lines.”

Some of the worst storms to affect the Central Virginia region in particular have been Hurricane Camille in 1969 — peaking at category five and weakening to a tropical

depression over Virginia; Hurricane Isabel in 2003 — peaking at category five and maintaining category two status over Virginia; Hurricane Gaston in 2004 — peaking at category one and weakening to a tropical depression over Virginia; Hurricane Ernest in 2006 — peaking at category one and weakening to a tropical storm over Virginia; and Hurricane Irene in 2011 — peaking at category three and weakening to category one over Virginia.

Bryan Youmbi-Kemeni, a senior, tweeted his opinion about the incoming storm. The post, garnering hundreds of likes and

retweets, mocked the “VCU logic” behind cancelling the traditional block party event during welcome week due to light rain, while taking their time to cancel class for Florence’s impending threat.

Other students, such as senior Marni Gaw, say they are thankful Richmond is not in an evacuation zone.

“I guess I would care if I was in Virginia Beach with my family because it’s close to the water,” Gaw said. “But since I’m in Richmond and it’s more inland as opposed to the beach, then it’s not as scary.”

—See **HURRICANE** on page 2

From refugee to VCU alumnus to international politician

LOGAN REARDON
Staff Writer

Never has a former VCU student been an international presidential candidate — an alumnus is changing that in his home country.

Bol Gai Deng, who graduated in 2008, is running for president in South Sudan as a member of the Kush Democratic Majority Party. Deng earned a double major in political science and homeland security at VCU.

According to Deng, he is the most qualified candidate to be President in South Sudan because he can relate to the common person and did not descend from royal ancestry.

“My family has never been a part of the leadership in Africa before — I come from the village,” Deng said.

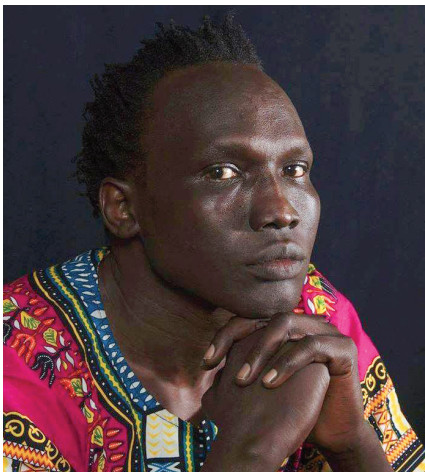
Deng grew up in South Sudan, but in 1987 he was one of the more than 700 children taken from their village by a radical Arab Islamic militia. Deng spent years in shackles before escaping to Egypt.

There, Deng found U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Services — which has since changed to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services — and was eventually sponsored by a Christian church in Richmond. The hardships he faced in Africa and what he learned in America, Deng said, gave him a humanitarian approach to the world, which is a central part of his platform.

“I believe in humanity more than the politics,” Deng said. “Humanitarian means that you try to help everyone. I see myself qualified to do that, to try and treat everybody with the dignity they deserve to live with as a human being.”

Deng said he wants to change South Sudan’s educational standards. He said free education for children is a necessary step to improve life for the people in his home country.

“The reason America became sustainable is because they’re giving a chance to the youth to go to school for free before they go to college,” Deng said. “I feel like I have to do something like that.”



Bol Gai Deng. Courtesy of Bol Gai Deng

—See **BOL GAI DENG** on page 4

VCU organization provides support, trains allies for undocumented students

SAFFEYA AHMED
Copy Editor

At least 70 VCU students are undocumented — Yanet Limon-Amado is one of them.

Arriving to the U.S. at 8-years old from Puebla, Mexico, Limon-Amado is now pursuing her college education as a recipient of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, program.

Alongside three other students — Nicte Díaz, Estefania de La Rosa and Haziel Andrade — Limon-Amado founded UndocuRams, an on-campus organization dedicated to creating a more inclusive university environment for undocumented students through two key tools: education and advocacy.

“It’s important to realize undocumented students are in the classrooms with you, next to you,” Limon-Amado said. “It was an appropriate move for us to start educating VCU’s staff, students and community members of the obstacles many face on a daily basis to have access to higher education.”

Launched by the Obama administration in 2012, DACA is an immigration policy that protects children coming to the U.S. without documentation, providing access to health care, driver’s licenses and higher education at an in-state tuition rate. The program also provides undocumented youth work permits and protection from deporta-

tion. More than 800,000 minors — 12,000 of whom reside in Virginia — qualified for DACA in 2017, according to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

In 2017, VCU had 70 self-reported DACA students, according to the Division of Student Affairs.

In light of the Trump administration’s decision to phase-out of the DACA program as of September 2017, UndocuRams promotes proactive immigration policies and methods for making resources of higher education available to all undocumented students.

“Currently, there are no policies protecting immigrants, or specifically undocumented immigrants,” Limon-Amado said.

In her eyes, the Trump administration is destroying policies that have made certain resources more accessible to immigrants.

In a 2016 report by the Institute for Immigration, Globalization and Education at UCLA, 85 percent of participants said DACA had a positive educational impact — including higher employment rates, transportation access, stable housing and better financial support.

From removing policies that make it harder for green-card holders to obtain citizenship to slowly taking down DACA permanently, Limon-Amado said, at the federal level, the immigration crisis has not been handled well.

Starting out as a new organization founded last spring, UndocuRams is work-



ing to provide resources to undocumented students at VCU in light of the current political climate.

“Creating this organization [can] lead to other students continuing with their educations,” Limon-Amado said. “And having something, or someone, to uplift them.”

With immense support from the university administration, Limon-Amado said, UndocuRams is focusing its efforts this semester toward a series of “UndocuAllies” trainings for VCU students, faculty and staff. The four-hour trainings will be designed to educate participants on the experiences of the undocumented community through interactive and informative activities.

“Our goal is to cultivate a more supportive environment for undocumented students through education,” Limon-Amado said. “UndocuAllies serve as [a] knowledgeable campus resource for students seeking support.”

Despite DACA’s uncertain future, UndocuRams is working to create a safe, protected university for undocumented stu-

dents. Limon-Amado said there are many steps Virginia can take to aid the lack of federal action.

“At this moment, at the federal level, there’s really nothing [that can happen] unless Congress acts. And as you can see, Congress is not acting,” Limon-Amado said. “But there are a few things that can be done at the state level to protect undocumented immigrants.”

Some of the state-level action Limon-Amado suggested includes access to tuition equity, driver privilege cards and policy changes in detention centers.

UndocuRams plans to tackle the school year by offering support to VCU’s undocumented students while also educating VCU’s students, faculty and staff on the realities of the undocumented community.

“It’s very important to take action,” Limon-Amado said. “To make sure we can all demand for more protected classrooms and a more inclusive university.”

To learn more about UndocuRams, visit facebook.com/undocurams.

Construction on MCV classroom building to complete in summer

EMMA GAUTHIER
Contributing Writer

The College of Health Professions is set to open a new eight-story technologically advanced classroom building in the fall of 2019, which will combine the school’s nine academic units under one roof.

The 154,000-square-foot building is under construction across from the Larrick Center at 600 N. 10th St. which was previously occupied by four low-rise residence halls. Construction began in June 2017 and is expected to be finished in June 2019.

The building was first introduced in the 2004 Master Plan, according to Richard Sliwowski, associate vice president of VCU Facilities Management. In the past 45 years, the College of Health Professions — formerly known as the College of Allied Health until May 2018 — has occupied 13 different buildings on both campuses. The \$87.3 million project is funded primarily by the state, with \$10.8 million from university-supported debt.

“The new building honors and elevates VCU’s Allied Health Professional programs by offering them the best available facilities to continue serving as leading programs in their fields and at the university,” health professions student Dennis Atanassov said.

VCU Public Relations Specialist Anne Dreyfuss said in a news release the building will feature “cutting-edge” learning laboratories designed for human simulation, diagnostic technology, rehabilitation and counseling

education. “Flexible classrooms” will also be designed to promote student engagement and to foster distance learning opportunities.

The College of Health Professions building will include the Virginia Center on Aging. Also included in the building is a simulation nurse anesthetist operating room, which will include an observation space for instructors. Near the new building, VCU will also operate an adult outpatient facility in place of what was formerly the Virginia Treatment Center for Children.



The College of Health Professions building will open in fall 2019. Photo by Myles Francisco



The storm began as a tropical depression near Cape Verde, an island country off the west coast of Africa, and sparked mandatory evacuations in southeastern Virginia.

VCU to close Thursday, Friday as Hurricane Florence approaches

HURRICANE—Continued from front page

Along the coasts of the Carolinas and in some parts of the Tidewater region, mandatory evacuations have been issued. Although Richmond Mayor Levar Stoney and Virginia Governor Ralph Northam have both declared states of emergency, neither the MCV nor the Monroe Park campuses are located in evacuation zones.

According to VCU Parking and Transportation services, starting Sept. 12, the gates on the West Broad Street and Bowe Street decks will be open for students to park their vehicles until the storm concludes. For MCV commuters, M Lot and R Lot subscribers should park in Eighth Street Deck on Thursday and Friday, while A Lot subscribers should park in the N Deck.

According to the VCU Alert, residence

halls will remain open and essential personnel should report to work. Shafer Court Dining Center and Jonah’s will remain open, while RamSafe and GRTC buses will continue to run unless street conditions become dangerous. RamRide, which includes the Campus Connector will not be in service from Thursday to Sunday, with the exception of the I Lot shuttle.

“The specific impacts of Hurricane Florence remain uncertain in Central Virginia but residents can expect the possibility of strong winds and heavy rain, which could produce flooding,” Weiss said. “We encourage our community to monitor local weather forecasts closely or visit the National Hurricane Center for the latest information.”

A list of hurricane preparedness tips can be found at ready.gov/hurricanes.



Photo of Elias Khoury, who is still missing after more than two weeks.

Local man still missing after two weeks of searching

LOGAN REARDON
Staff Writer

Richmond local Elias Khoury has been missing for two weeks and there is still no information on his whereabouts, according to Richmond Police.

Khoury is described as a white male, 5 feet, 9 inches tall and about 170 pounds. He has curly brown hair, a short beard and a scar on the right side of his neck.

Khoury was last seen Aug. 27 leaving his home on the 1700 block of East Main Street.

According to the Missing Persons of America website, Khoury’s family said they are thankful for the community’s “overwhelming support and continued thoughts and prayers.”

“The search continues and we will update everyone on any new developments,” Khoury’s family said. “Keep the faith alive, we greatly appreciate all of your concern and prayers.”

Police say anyone with information on Elias Khoury is asked to call Crime Stoppers of Metro Richmond at 804-780-1000.

Expansion plan will present to executive board, accepting student feedback



The Engineering Research building, originally part of the 2004 Master Plan, is scheduled to be completed in 2020.
Photo by Teresa Bricker

NIA TARIQ
News Editor

The most recent draft of the VCU master plan will be presented to students on Sept. 17 and 18 for feedback.

The plan, called ONE VCU, is guided by VCU’s Quest 2025: Together We Transform strategic plan and VCU Health’s Vision by Design strategic plan, according to Director of Communications for VCU Administration Carolyn Conlon.

Meredith Weiss, vice president for VCU Administration, said the BOV has been regularly briefed on the progress of the master plan since the process began last fall. A presentation of the draft plan was scheduled to be given to the BOV on Friday, but due to inclement weather warnings has been rescheduled. The final plan, however, is scheduled to be completed and presented to the BOV in December for approval.

The master plan is the document that identifies which facilities are needed to support the strategic visions of the university and VCU Health System, which is why Weiss said it is important for students to take an interest in the plan.

“For the master planning process to be successful, it is vital that we hear from all university stakeholders — most im-

portantly our students,” Weiss said. “It is important that we hear from students throughout this process to make sure that we are providing the types of facilities that you need and want.”

Two examples of ONE VCU implementations can be seen in the construction of a new Engineering Research Building and the updated crosswalks to be placed throughout campus.

The Engineering Research Building was proposed in the 2004 VCU master plan and construction will be completed in 2020. The building will include new construction of research laboratories and related support space, career services, a collaboration hub, makerspace and a vivarium — an enclosure for keeping animals and plants and studying ecosystems — Weiss said.

The crosswalks at Linden Street and Floyd Avenue on the Monroe Park campus at 12th Street between Broad and Marshall streets are the product of the university working with the city of Richmond to increase safety for pedestrians and bicyclists, while still accommodating vehicular travel, according to Weiss.

A Front Doors Committee was created to identify and confirm VCU’s “front doors” — locations that are hubs for people arriving on campus. Accord-

ing to Weiss, the components identified by the committee for defining the front doors include improving intersections, landscape and streetscape elements and architecture.

Students can provide more feedback at the upcoming open houses to preview the draft. The draft plan will also be posted to the VCU master plan website with provisions for feedback for students who are unable to attend the sessions.

“We are committed to a collaborative and inclusive process,” Weiss said. “These sessions are an important opportunity for the community to share ideas and offer feedback.”

Urban institutions like VCU with limited space and resources, Weiss said, have to be intentional in its growth, and the framework for that growth comes from its master plans.

“Whether realized or not, everyone on campus is impacted by one of the master plans that has been conducted over the 50 years since VCU was formed,” Weiss said. “The dorm that you live in, the library that you study in, the classroom that you learn in, the recreational facility that you exercise in; at some point each of those facilities was a concept in a master plan that has since been made real.”

Virginia law does away with university directories for student privacy

NIA TARIQ
News Editor

Gone are the days of typing the beginning of a colleague’s VCU email address into Gmail and the result conveniently popping up.

Effective July 1, a law passed by the General Assembly restricts universities from disclosing personal information about students without written consent — meaning the VCU directory, also known as the “phonebook” no longer

shares student information.

This legislation also includes the auto-complete feature of university addresses in Gmail, according to a Virginia House Bill 1 web page provided by the Office of the Provost. Protected information also includes a student’s name; sex; address; phone number; date and place of birth; and major field of study.

“VCU is committed to following all Virginia and federal laws,” said Bernard Hamm, university registrar and director of the Office of Records and Registration.

To some students, like senior Jordan Glisan, there is an opinion that emails should be allowed to be shared, but other personal information should be kept safe.

“With there being over 30,000 students at VCU, it’s getting very hard to search for students by email,” said Glisan, president of the VCU chapter of Phi Beta Sigma fraternity, who relies on emails to send out important information to his peers.

University faculty and staff also cannot share student information with colleagues or other students, unless provided written consent.

“I know professors and teachers don’t like it,” Glisan said. “In one of my first classes this semester, my teacher made it clear for us to go into myVCU and give the university permission to share contact information in order to make class communications easier.”

Students who wish to make their information public can consent by simply logging into myVCU, clicking the “Student” tab at the top of the page and toggling the switch in the upper left corner.

The CT remembers the innocent, brave lives lost in the tragic attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.



Illustration by Mai-Phuong Bui

Despite high number of minority graduates, mostly-White faculty still an issue for students

GEORGIA GEEN
Managing Editor

VCU was named a top-100 degree-awarding institution for minority students based on the number of graduate and undergraduate degrees awarded to Black, Asian-American and multiracial students.

“But the numbers don’t tell the whole story,” said Asian-American & Pacific Islander Student Alliance President Tamanna Kaur. “One thing I fear is that people will see the ‘100 best schools for minority students’ and they’ll come here and be disappointed.”

Kaur, who attended a majority-white high school, said VCU’s diversity was a factor in her decision to attend the university. She said having diverse numbers is a “start,” but sees the low number of racial-minority faculty members as an issue for students of color as this can limit allyship and professional opportunities.

As of the 2017-18 school year, racial minorities represented about 20 percent of the school’s 2,152 faculty members, according to university data, while 55 percent of the most recent freshman class are minority students. But having a diverse student body and lacking diverse faculty is better than not having diversity in either group, Kaur said.

A lack of diverse faculty is particularly

impactful for students looking to pursue activism, Kaur said.

“To believe in such an idealized [diverse] place and then go there and have those hopes crushed, it would take a lot to recover from that,” Kaur said. “It would take a lot to still be able to give back to the community.”

Racial minority student organizations like AAPI Student Alliance serve to build community and connections for students. It’s something Kaur said she hopes she can carry with her after graduation, though minority students are “separated from avenues that will get us places.” Studies have shown that the absence of teachers of color has a negative impact on minority students’ learning.

“A lot of what you do in the future has to do with networking, and a lot of those skills — and just the way that networking and making these sort of meaningful connections is framed — is really sort of white-man capitalist,” Kaur said.

Austin Chavez, another AAPI Student Alliance member, said he’s glad the university can give itself a “pat on the back” for its diverse numbers — though factors like lower average socioeconomic status, in addition to a lack of minority faculty, provide challenges for students like him.

“The one thing that does keep me going about VCU is the students, the population,

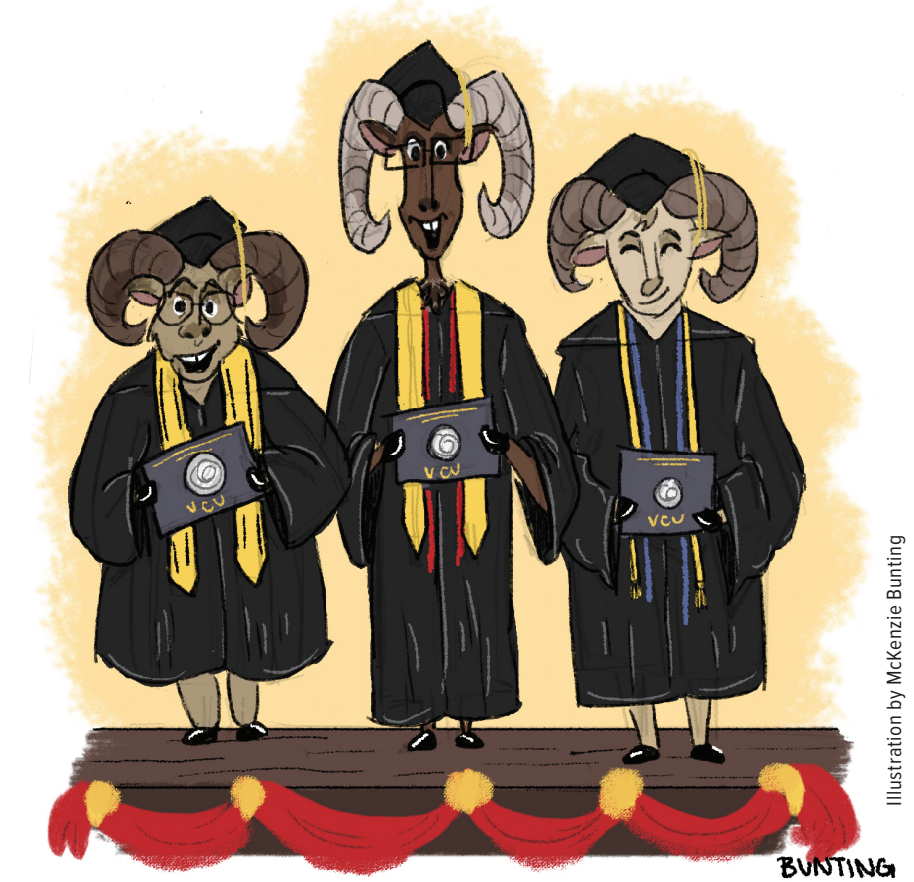


Illustration by McKenzie Bunting

particularly the pipeline of being a person of color and handing off a guidebook to, ‘Oh, here’s how you survive higher institutions,’” Chavez said. “I just have more of a

reason to keep going because I know there are a lot of people of color that are going to come after me.”

Alum runs for South Sudanese presidency

BOL GAI DENG—Continued from front page

Deng said U.S. Immigration Services letting him into the country when he was a child exposed him to the outside world, and is a huge part of why he is able to run for president now.

“America turned my life around — to be someone that can go back and try to liberate those individuals,” Deng said. “If I was not given an opportunity as a young boy to come to this country, [and be able to] see the world in a bigger picture, I wouldn’t get a chance.”

Deng said the U.S. allowing entry to legal immigrants can have a positive effect on the countries of the refugees.

“[Immigration] made me to be a leader that can go back and change the lives of 14 million people; that is huge for America,” Deng said. “For America’s immigration system, they should be thankful that they brought people like me now going back to form their country and set up a democratic system.”

Deng’s campaign manager and fellow VCU alum Donald Blake said VCU provided the support and motivation Deng needed to accomplish his goals.

“He will tell you that he would not be where he is today if it were not for VCU,” Blake said. “[VCU] opened their doors and their hearts to him and they gave him an education. With that education, ever since he’s gotten out of college, he’s been working on the issues in South Sudan.”

To watch the full video interview with candidate Deng, visit www.commonwealthtimes.org.

Congressional campaign under fire for falsely attributed posters around Richmond area

CHIP LAUTERBACH
Contributing Writer

Congressional candidate Abigail Spanberger and her team have been thrust into the spotlight this past week in light of posters that were falsely attributed to her campaign.

Statements such as “Impeach Trump,” “Abolish ICE” and “Open Borders” decorated the posters which Spanberger’s campaign claimed were not sponsored or authorized by Spanberger or her staff.

Spanberger, a former CIA agent, is the Democratic candidate running in the 7th District congressional race against Republican incumbent Rep. Dave Brat. The upcoming election will be Brat’s second time defending his seat; he defeated Democrat Eileen Bedell in 2016.

“

The fact that they would break campaign finance laws to post these signs shows the strength of our campaign and how we are resonating with voters across the 7th District.”

Justin Jones, communications director for the Abigail Spanberger campaign

The “Open Borders” slogan in particular is counter to Spanberger’s platform — she paints herself as a moderate who opposes the idea of open borders.

The signs began popping up around Courthouse Road and Hull Street in Chesterfield County. Some appeared in southside Richmond during the last week

of August. The signs — which, contrary to campaign finance law, didn’t include any information as to who paid for them — were taken down by angered constituents once it became apparent they were fraudulent.

To some residents, there is a mixture of astonishment and anger because no one knows who is responsible for the signs.

“I don’t know which side did this, but it seems like a strange tactic to sway moderate voters,” said Erin Poburka, a Chesterfield resident.

Supporters of Abigail Spanberger were quick to defend the candidate and her campaign.

“I find it uncharacteristic of Abigail Spanberger’s central message, which is to bridge the partisan divide and do what’s right for the 7th District, despite the vitriol and polarization of the contemporary political climate,” said Jeremy Thomas, a Spanberger supporter who works in Chesterfield. “I just can’t take it seriously.”

Justin Jones, communications director for the Spanberger campaign, said the “fictitious signs are nothing but a desperate smear tactic by those opposed to sending an accountable voice to Washington.”

“The fact that [the responsible party] would break campaign finance laws to post these signs shows the strength of our campaign and how we are resonating with voters across the 7th District,” Jones said.

Jones said the campaign does not know who was responsible.

“That’s why the law was broken,” he said. “Political signs are required to include who paid for the signs. The disclosure was not on the sign.”

The Brat campaign released a statement distancing themselves from the signs.

“These were unauthorized campaign



It is still unclear who put up the signs falsely linked to the Spanberger campaign.

Photo courtesy of WTVR.com

signs posted by an unknown third party that the Brat campaign had no knowledge of,” said Katey Price, a spokeswoman for the congressman’s campaign.

The posters have been one of the more recent incidents in a series of accusations surrounding the Spanberger campaign. In late August, the U.S. Postal Service was forced to apologize for accidentally releasing a confidential file on Spanberger.

An attack ad released Thursday about Spanberger being a teacher at a Saudi-funded, Islamic high school — dubbed “Terror High” due to incidents with students believed to be terrorists — has added friction to the heated race.

CORRECTION

In the Sept. 5 issue, the artist credit for the comic titled, “V.I.P. Sour Patch Kids” did not include a last name. Adam Goodman was the creator of that comic. In addition, the photo for the story “New sorority and fraternity chapter expanding to VCU” was credited in error to Mikey Maulding. Fionna Umphlet provided the photo.

Stat of the week

Junior golfer Alston Newsom placed fifth at the season-opening Joe Feaganes Marshall Invitational, making his best finish in his collegiate career.

Ram in Action: Biska Biyombo

NOAH FLEISCHMAN
Contributing Writer

Junior forward Biska Biyombo's path to Richmond is not like most of his teammates' on the Men's Soccer team — it began in Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of the Congo.

“

My goal was to be a student-athlete first and then from there see how I am doing throughout the season. I came here with the objective of being a professional player. I can train hard and try to be the best player I can be on and off the field.”

Biska Biyomba, junior forward

Biska Biyombo grew up playing soccer wherever he could in Congo's mining capital of 2 million people.

“It was a little bit difficult,” Biska Biyombo said of his childhood. “To get the chance to play the game of soccer was hard, we played barefoot and didn't have good facilities. People didn't have cleats, playing

without shoes which was so hard.”

Biska Biyombo's older brother, Bismack, moved him and five other siblings to the U.S. to receive a high school and college education.

“He always is trying to push us as hard as he can,” Biska Biyombo said of his older brother. “He works hard and he's going to tell you the same, work hard for something that you want in life.”

Bismack Biyombo is entering his eighth season in the NBA. Currently with the Charlotte Hornets, he was drafted seventh overall by the Sacramento Kings in 2011. Bismack Biyombo has also played for the Toronto Raptors and Orlando Magic.

“I am lucky to have someone in the family to play professionally,” Biska Biyombo said. “He sits with me to talk to me about what it takes to accomplish your dreams. Over the summer I had a conversation with him before coming (to VCU) to tell me what to do to be successful and to try and become a pro.”

Biska Biyombo attended high school at Montverde Academy in Florida where he became a sought-after soccer recruit in the class of 2016. After graduation, Biska Biyombo went to Trinidad State Junior College in Colorado for two years before transferring to VCU.

While playing at Trinidad State, Biska Biyombo scored 38 goals in his two-year tenure. He ranked No. 36 in the Premier Development League.

“In junior college, the level is a little bit slower, not as physical or fast but when you come to Division One everybody is phys-

ical and knows the game better,” said Biska Biyombo, who was a two-time NJCAA All-American at Trinidad. “In the first couple games I got used to the speed of play.”

Biska Biyombo entered the 2018 campaign on a slow start as he injured his foot last October and rehabbed over the summer. He has started every match and recorded an assist in the 3-0 win over Radford Aug. 26.

“[Biska Biyombo brings] a physicality that I think opens spaces and causes problems for the opponents,” Rams head coach Dave Giffard said of the forward's playing style. “Now those guys aren't in college as

much anymore, they're mostly going to the pros. You don't really deal with a guy that athletic and that big quite as often and when you do it's very, very dangerous.”

Biska Biyombo came to VCU with the goal of eventually earning a spot at the professional level.

“My goal was to be a student-athlete first and then from there see how I am doing throughout the season,” Biska Biyombo said. “I came here with the objective of being a professional player. I can train hard and try to be the best player I can be on and off the field.”



Junior forward Biska Biyombo is a two-time NJCAA All-American at Trinidad State Junior College. Photo by Teresa Bricker

Volleyball wins two in Tallahassee

JESSICA WETZLER
Sports Editor

Over the weekend, Volleyball swept a double-header against the University of Southern Mississippi and Florida A&M University, 3-0 and 3-1, respectively, after dropping a late match the previous night against Florida State University, 3-0.

SOUTHERN MISS.

In their second game of the day, the Rams swept the Eagles of Southern Miss. in all three sets with the help of junior outside hitter Vicky Giommarini and junior opposite hitter Gina Tuzzolo.

The first set began as Tuzzolo hit a kill shot to score the first point for VCU. The Rams tallied two more points before the Eagles' first. VCU took hold of the game until the end of the first set and

came away with a 25-19 win.

The Eagles took the lead in the second set — after USM's Kellie Garraway hit a kill shot — which they kept until VCU caught up halfway into the set, ending 25-17 in the Rams' favor.

The last set ended the same way the first set started. The teams went back and forth until VCU won the final set 25-22, marking their second win of the day and completing the Saturday sweep.

Giommarini notched a total of 10 kills on 22 swings and hit .409 in addition to a solo block. Tuzzolo also clocked in 10 kills and hit .316, while junior libero Madalon Simpson picked up 16 of VCU's 35 digs during Saturday's game.

FLORIDA A&M

Coming off a loss from the first day of the Invitational, Giommarini continued to make moves with a double-double and 12 kills.

The Rams fell short to the Rattlers 25-27 in the first set, but they bounced back in the second, quickly taking back the lead. Giommarini, Tuzzolo and senior middle blocker Tori Baldwin made several kills which pushed the Rams to a 25-23 win; VCU won the third set 25-17 and the final set 25-15.

Baldwin hit .300 with nine kills and four blocks while sophomore outside hitter Paula Neciporuka hit seven kills,

five digs and committed only one error in 19 swings.

FLORIDA STATE

VCU hit the road to attend the Home2Home Suites Tallahassee Seminole Invitational, starting the weekend against Florida State.

The Seminoles started the game with momentum and left the Rams — who couldn't keep up — in the dust. FSU hit .475 in the match while the Rams hit .096.

The Seminoles dominated the first set, taking the lead early with two kills from Ashley Murray and one from Tiana Jackson. VCU's Neciporuka added the first point for the Rams after hitting a kill shot. The effort wasn't enough as the Rams lost to the Seminoles in the first set, 25-12.

The trend continued as VCU fell behind and lost the second set, 25-17, and the final set 25-16.

The Seminoles won a side out 72 percent of the time and out dug the Rams 32-16.

The Rams return home to host the VCU Invitational, going up against the University of Virginia Sept. 14 at 7 p.m. The Rams will then face the University of Toledo and the University of South Carolina the next day.



Senior middle blocker Tori Baldwin (15) earned two A-10 Defensive Player of the Week honors last year. Photo by Elizabeth Humphreys

Established tennis coach takes on new title, adding new leadership to men’s team

Jessica Wetzler
Sports Editor

Longtime tennis coach Paul Kostin has stepped up and taken on the position of VCU’s newest tennis director, leaving Anthony Rossi to lead the men’s team after spending one season with the Rams as an assistant coach.

Kostin has been with the Rams for 29 years, holding the second-most wins in NCAA history with 1,155. He spent nine years previously with the University of Arkansas before taking on a position with VCU. Rossi, a former VCU tennis player, came back to the university due to his established relationship with Kostin and the program as well as the potential to win the conference.

Last year you were the Head Coach for the men’s and women’s teams. What was the shift in jobs like?

Paul Kostin: Well, you know, I felt it was time to, for me, to just concentrate on one team. I think times have changed, so everybody needs more individual attention. It’s kind of hard for me to be with two teams, when one is playing at one place, and the other one is at a different place. Anthony [Rossi] did a good job, so I didn’t have any problems to just say, “Hey, you know, why don’t you take over the men?”

What are your goals for the new season, now that you’re the head coach of the men’s team?

Anthony Rossi: Well, the goal, I think, every year for us is to [be] number one, win the conference, the A10, so we can go to the NCAA. Then, the goal for us is to make the top 50, and then in two years, to be in the top 30 if possible.

PK: For the team, we always want to keep on winning the conference. We try to go a little bit farther in the NCAA tournament. And last five, six, seven years, we haven’t done that. So that’s the goal. I look at this, that you play the whole schedule, and you take it one match at a time or one game at a time and see how that goes.



Head Coach Anthony Rossi led his alma mater, Kentucky University, to the SEC Tournament semifinals. Photo courtesy of VCU Athletics

What are your coaching methods? How would you describe the way you coach the team?

AR: I always put myself in the players’ situation because I was a player not so long ago. And then, most of the guys that we get are international students. So I know that for them, it’s a little bit different, the way it works here in America with the fitness or just the practices and all that. So I try to understand and see where they come from a little bit. I treat everybody [differently] even though it’s a team sport. Tennis is still an unusual sport.

How would you compare the difference between you and coach Kostin?

AR: We’re different. Paul is from Sweden, I’m from France. We get along pretty well. I don’t know how [many differences] we have. He’s probably a little bit more laid back, but he has so much more experience than I do.

Do you think that the change with the coaching staff would affect the team at all?

PK: I don’t think so. I don’t see any reason why. I have full confidence in Anthony to do a good job. I think if we do our job well, we’ll be okay, both the men and the women.

What is a typical day like coaching with the team?

AR: On season, we have one [team] practice every day for about two hours. Then they have one hour of conditioning or weight lifting. Then we try to have them do one or two hours of individual [practice] per week. That’s for each player. And then we have the tournaments and all that.

What made you want to get involved in tennis?

AR: Well, I played since I was probably eight or nine, and then I loved the sport and I liked it better when it’s a college environment. It’s not just about tennis; it’s a little bit of everything involved. Taking care of a player for four years, so you can see how he progress and if he gets better, and then you have to take care of his classes, too, and then his career. It’s not just four years and then you’re out. It’s [seeing] how they grow and what they do in the future. I think it’s pretty interesting.

If you could go back to last season, would there be anything that you would change at all, or do differently?

AR: No. Because when I arrived, the team was pretty much set. It was more like a transition year. I think we could have done better on some stuff, but nothing’s perfect. But overall, I think we did pretty good. Not the best one, but a positive one.

PK: No, I’m not much for regretting things. We had such a young team last year with five freshmen and we did well. We just

hope they keep going. We’re working hard at it, and we stay healthy. Besides that, I never have any regrets. Whatever happens, happens. And I don’t believe in any excuses either, because it’s so easy to use excuses for anything you do in life and that’s not reality. I feel I’m trying to teach that to today’s generation, too.

Throughout your tennis career, would there anything that you would go back and change? If you go back all the way in time.

AR: If I look back, I wish I had a coach in France who was a little bit tougher on me. You know, sometimes when I would just be messing around too much, and this is what happened in college, at Kentucky. They were a little bit more strict and firm on me and it worked. So I wish I had that knowledge 10 years ago.

What are you looking forward to the most with the new season coming?

AR: Playing the spring season. Get out there, play those matches. It’s good to practice, but I already know my players. We don’t have anybody new right now. Sometimes practice, when it’s day after day and you don’t have any tournaments, it gets a little boring. So just go out there on the court and see how we can do. I know it’s still early; we just started the year, but that’s what’s the most exciting.

PK: It’s another year. You try to do the best as you can and kind of forget what happened last year and go on. You always start from scratch every year.

And is there anything that you would want fans to know?

PK: You want them to come out and support as much as they can. I think last couple of years we had little decline in that. It’s always good to have people coming out.



Tennis Director Paul Kostin guided the men’s team to 22 NCAA tournament appearances in 28 seasons. Photo courtesy of VCU Athletics

Press Box: Lessons from Jordan McNair's legacy

ZACH JOACHIM
Executive Editor

The administrative culture of the football program at The University of Maryland, College Park has come under fire since the death of 19-year-old offensive lineman Jordan McNair in June.

McNair collapsed during an outdoor workout May 29. The teenager's body temperature reached 106 degrees after running a set of 110-yard sprints. He passed away in the hospital two weeks later as a result of heat exhaustion suffered during the workout.

“

When we lose a student, any student, I personally I feel that loss, I feel that grief, which I realize is nothing in comparison to the parents and the family of the student we have lost.”

Pamela Landford, UMD Senate Chair-Elect

ESPN reported several players and people close to the program described a “toxic

culture” under head coach D.J. Durkin. The complaints depicted a “coaching environment based on fear and intimidation” exemplified by the “belittling, humiliation and embarrassment of players.”

Examples included a player being forced to eat candy bars while watching teammates workout because coaches wanted him to lose weight, a player being forced to overeat to the point of vomiting and routine verbal abuse designed to mock players' masculinity when they were unable to complete a drill or lift a weight.

In one instance, a player was belittled after passing out during a drill.

Durkin has been on administrative leave since McNair's death. Jordan's father, Martin McNair, said on Good Morning America that Durkin “shouldn't be able to work with anybody else's kid.”

It's no secret toxic masculinity permeates college football programs across the country — see the ongoing investigation into alleged domestic violence by an assistant coach at The Ohio State University. Although the severity of the situation at Maryland is indeed abnormal, McNair's death should serve as a reality check for not just football programs, but athletic departments throughout the U.S.

These coaches exist around the country in myriad athletic institutions — this is much more than a football problem. I had one such coach myself playing baseball in high school. He was no D.J. Durkin, but verbal abuse and belittlement was a norm that caused a handful of my friends to quit our junior and senior years

after the coach in question took over the program.

I persisted because I loved the game and the comradery that came along with it too much to let his bullshit make me walk away. Perhaps I should have.

In middle school, one of my soccer coaches was fired for telling a player to “take the skirt off” after shying away from a header. Instead of using the moment to teach the player how to properly head a ball, the coach attacked his masculinity. Again, I played through the controversy despite multiple teammates boycotting the program. Today, I'm left wondering if I failed my teammates and school in that regard.

Players, parents, boosters, fans and the many coaches who are cherished mentors around the country — don't stand for this like myself and many at Maryland did. Call it out. When you're a kid, it's difficult to stand up to the machismo underlying the issue. Know that you have resources around you. Players have the autonomy to refuse to comply with this sort of behavior.

The University of Maryland Senate voted Sept. 5 to have its executive committee review the results of an investigation by the Board of Regents into how the culture under Durkin may have contributed to McNair's death.

The Diamondback, the independent student newspaper at UMD, spoke to senate chair-elect Pamela Lanford last week. Lanford proposed the motion to review the investigation.

“When we lose a student, any student, I personally feel that loss, I feel that grief,



CT Executive Editor Zach Joachim.
Photo by Erin Edgerton

which I realize is nothing in comparison to the parents and the family of the student we have lost,” Lanford said. “I want to understand how we got here, and how we move forward.”

The nationwide athletic community must strive to make sure Jordan McNair did not die in vain. We must ask ourselves — as Maryland does now — how did we get here, and how do we move forward?

Because coaches like D.J. Durkin are working with somebody's kid right now.

Women's Soccer trumps Monarchs

ADAM CHEEK
Staff Writer

In their first win of the season away from home, Women's Soccer improved to 4-2 with a 2-1 overtime triumph against Old Dominion University Sept. 6.

Monarchs sophomore forward Amanda Nhek opened the scoring in the first half with a goal against VCU senior goalkeeper Audrey Sanderson. After junior midfielder Rachel Hardy tallied the first shot for VCU in the 41st minute, freshman forward Idelys Vazquez netted VCU's first score of the match at the end of the first half.

Vazquez's goal tied the game 1-1. Taking advantage of a rebounded shot from junior defender Amanda Tredway, Vazquez notched her second score of the season. Old Dominion's junior goalkeeper Erin Davidson saved Tredway's attempt, allowing Vazquez a clear shot past Davidson to tie the game.

Vazquez's shot seemed to shift the momentum of the match over to the Black and Gold, as VCU's defense held the Monarchs scoreless throughout the second half. As overtime loomed, the two teams prepared to play into extra time, but it would not be long until sophomore midfielder Samantha Jerabek broke through.

Jerabek netted the game-winner two minutes into overtime on a high shot that sailed beyond Davidson's reach from about 25 yards out. The walk-off goal gave

the Rams a 2-1 victory. Jerabek also recorded two shots on the night to lead the team, and her overtime goal was her third of the season.

VCU now averages 1.5 goals per game and an even 14 shots per match. The

Rams are 1-1 in official road matches, while they retain a 2-1 winning ratio in home games.

This week's forthcoming matches see the Black and Gold taking on two teams at home, with the Howard University

Bison visiting on Thursday, Sept. 13 for a 7 p.m. match. The University of North Carolina-Greensboro will play the Rams on Sunday, Sept. 16 at 1 p.m.



Sophomore Midfielder Kimberly Ito (30) appeared in all 20 games as a freshman and scored the game-winning goal against Richmond last season. Photo by Jon Mirador

Rams fall to #4 Hoosiers

NILE MCNAIR
Contributing Writer

Coming off a winning streak, Men's Soccer fell 5-0 Friday after a dominant first half from the Hoosiers of Indiana University Bloomington, ranked fourth in the country. Not only did VCU have to face a top-five team, they also had to do it away from their home turf. In this matchup the Hoosiers showed exactly why they rank number four in the country.

Ram Fact

Prior to VCU, freshman midfielder Yugo Suzuki earned U.S. Soccer Academy North Atlantic Division "Best 11" in 2015 and "Best 11" in the winter showcase for the 2018 class in 2016.

Feeding off the home energy, the Hoosiers scored back-to-back goals within minutes of each other. Indiana scored the first goal of the game when midfielder Spencer



Sophomore forward Jared Greene (14) had six appearances off the bench during his first season with VCU. Photo by Teresa Bricker

Glass hit an unassisted left-footed shot on goal in the 19th minute. A second goal came in the 22nd minute from sophomore forward Justin Rennicks. Following Rennicks' goal, senior defender Andrew Gutman fired from the top of the 18 into the left side of the net just one minute later, marking the third goal for the Hoosiers. To close out an explosive offensive half,

the Hoosiers scored two more goals in the first 45 minutes. Both A.J. Palazzolo and Rece Buckmaster joined in on the scoring action with goals of their own. Palazzolo was assisted by Trevor Swartz and Buckmaster was assisted by Joe Schmidt and Glass. The second half remained scoreless, as the Hoosiers sat back to protect their advantage. VCU's inability to take shots and shots

on goal derailed them — the Rams only had one shot on goal and two shots overall compared to the Hoosiers' seven shots on goal and twelve shots altogether. The loss dropped VCU to 3-2 for the season. The Rams return home Sept. 19 to compete against Old Dominion University at 7 p.m. The following week, VCU will go up against No. 14 Akron University on Sept. 26 at 7 p.m.

Golf welcomes largest freshman class

RODNEY ROBINSON
Contributing Writer

Just a year ago, four seniors led VCU's Golf team to finish fourth at the 2018 A10 Conference Championship. However, the Rams look a little different this year with freshmen taking over the team and leaving the leadership in the hands of two sophomores and a junior. "We got so many young guys at the same time," said Golf coach Matt Ball. "But

“

The big thing is just going to be to have fun. I want them to have fun, going out and being really aggressive, We're going for it.”


Matt Ball, VCU Golf coach

I think the talent level is very good.” VCU added four freshmen to this season's roster of three returning players. Cam Barackman from Virginia Beach, Clifford Foster from Richmond, Ian Peng from Chang Hua, Taiwan and Adrian Vagberg from Sollentuna, Sweden will trade-in their previous schools' colors for the Black and Gold. Barackman won the 2017 Tarheel Junior Challenge, the 2017 VHSL 6A Regional and the 2014 Chesapeake Amateur. Vagberg won the Magnus Jakobsson Memorial in 2017. Without any seniors this season, the Rams will look to sophomores Kristian

Donaldson and Sachin Kumar, as well as junior Alston Newsom, for leadership. "He had an outstanding summer, really came into his own," Ball said of Newsom, "He has shown a lot of leadership and a lot of confidence." Newsom was voted captain by the team during the offseason, and the Rams will look to him for veteran leadership and guidance. When Donaldson fully heals from a surgery that took place at the end of last season, he will look to add to his 2017-2018 campaign when he was named to the All-American A10 Conference Team. Donaldson will sit out the first few tournaments but will not miss the entire season. Kumar hopes to improve upon his first tournament victory at the Cape Fear National Intercollegiate, as the first player in 18 years to win a tournament as a freshman. "Even when they [Kumar and Donaldson] got here last year, we thought that those would be two great players," Ball said. With the Rams' young team, the freshmen will have a lot of opportunities to contribute and play in key matches throughout the season.

"They got to contribute right away, especially with [Donaldson] being out, there's three of them that will be starting every tournament," Ball said. "I'm looking forward for them to step in and contribute right away." VCU hopes to use their young talent and successful previous season to spur them toward the A10 tournament at the end of the year. "The big thing is just going to be to have fun. I want them to have fun, going out and being really aggressive," Ball said. "We're going to go for it."

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On this day

The US Supreme Court ordered the all-white central high school in Little Rock, Arkansas to intergrade on September 12, 1958.

Shy Lennox delivers unforgettable “Audition”



Lennox's EP features “Afterblunts” and five new tracks. Photo by Adam Olsen

QUENTIN RICE
Contributing Writer

Donning a rain coat and shorts adorned with green sequins, Shy Lennox, backed up by his frequent producer captain pizza, opened his EP release show at Flora with “Afterblunts,” the single that put him on the map with almost 300,000 streams on Spotify. The crowd swayed and sang along to the familiar tune.

“

The commonality of the heartbreak in the song paired with the uber-emotional performance created an energy of solidarity that swept over everyone in attendance and made for more than a few leaky eyes.”

Quentin Rice,
Contributing Writer

The Sept. 7 show celebrated the release of “Audition,” Lennox’s aptly named debut EP. It features the known and loved “Afterblunts,” as well as five all-new tracks.

Lennox treated the crowd to the first new song of the night, “Hennything” featuring backup vocals from Alivia Lassiter. It needed no time to grow on the crowd; the track’s lo-fi keys and Lennox’s low, slurred delivery had everyone in the dark, sweaty room on their feet.

The first half of the set featured more familiar tunes like “Blue Velvet” and new,

unheard tracks like “Tuesday,” which Lennox said he wrote when he was 16 years old.

After these tracks, captain pizza retired to the crowd and a band featuring bass, drums, keyboard and saxophone set up to treat the crowd to more new music.

The band opened with “Better Man,” the EP’s closer. The live performance was a bit more dynamic than the studio version, with a more organic feel thanks to the driving drums and rumbling bass.

Many of the songs Lennox played with the band were extended versions that allowed for solos and gave the crowd time to pick up on the lyrics so they could sing along. Lennox made sure to share the spotlight, as he introduced all the musicians backing him and gave them a few bars to solo.

After a moment of silence for the late Mac Miller, Lennox and the band capped off the night with a track that did not make the final cut for the EP. Lennox, over gorgeous soaring piano chords, crooned about the all-too-familiar act of “scrolling through your timeline.” The commonality of the heartbreak in the song paired with the uber-emotional performance created an energy of solidarity that swept over everyone in attendance and made for more than a few leaky eyes.

“Audition” is a slow, dreamy, cloudy EP that is sensual and passionate in most places, and sadly retrospective — even angry — in others. It doesn’t necessarily aim to reinvent rhythm and blues, but it doesn’t follow the formulas that a lot of popular R&B does. It’s a debut anyone would be proud to have their name on.

As the final chord of the night died slowly, Lennox departed with a statement: “I’m Shy Lennox and I’m just getting started.”

Bluegrass Festival beats rain, marks start of fall

ANDREW RINGLE
Contributing Writer

Beer flowed and banjos sang as guests of all ages streamed into Hardywood Park Craft Brewery for their sixth annual Richmond Bluegrass Festival on Saturday, Sept. 8.

In defiance of the usual gloominess that comes with an overcast day, the atmosphere at Hardywood was vitalized with games, music, food and dogs.

“Hardywood’s annual Richmond Bluegrass Festival is a wonderful tradition that marks an exciting seasonal shift for us

toward heartier soul-warming beers like our seasonal Farmhouse Pumpkin Saison,” said Hardywood’s marketing manager, Matt Shofner.

The event began on the “jam stage” where guests were invited to bring their instruments and play music with others in attendance.

The Hot Seats, a self-proclaimed “stringband” from Richmond, opened up the festival. The group of five has played together since 2002 and their performance at Hardywood was the most recent of their frequent hometown appearances.

Following was the River City Band, another group hailing from Richmond with instrumentation including bluegrass staples like mandolin, banjo, fiddle and bass.

The next act, Big Boss Combo, closed the series of local bluegrass groups performing at Hardywood. They were followed by the Georgia Crackers from Atlanta, Georgia and the High and Wides from Chestertown, Maryland.

“

Despite the threat of rain, we saw thousands of enthusiastic music lovers visit the brewery. The rain kept things cool and provided some awesome puddle jumping.”

Matt Shofner,
Hardywood Marketing Manager

Amy and John Kennedy, a Richmond couple who attended the festival at Hardywood, said they were enjoying the “food,

the music and the people” on Saturday.

“I’m from Kentucky,” Amy Kennedy said. “So I’ve been listening to bluegrass my whole life. So far the bands here have been great.”

The festival closed with a performance from The New Smokey Valley Boys, a group which started in Surry County, North Carolina in the 1970s, and has since evolved through various combinations of members and instrumentation.

Although the forecast warned of scattered showers, the day persisted with an audience of family members, couples and friends. Rain tents and an indoor area were prepared in the event of heavy rainfall.

“Despite the threat of rain, we saw thousands of enthusiastic music lovers visit the brewery,” Shofner said. “The rain kept things cool and provided some awesome puddle jumping.”

Between acts, guests enjoyed beers on draft from Hardywood’s taprooms or a meal from food trucks including Smokie Joe’s BBQ, Arroz RVA, Hollywood Cheesecake, Slideways Mobile Bistro and BoDillaz.

The event closed at 10 p.m.

Those interested in future events at Hardywood can find more information at www.hardywood.com.



The festival featured local and out-of-state bands. Photo by Elizabeth Humphreys

Richmond immigrants face higher levels of exclusion, panel says

GEORGIA GEEN
Managing Editor

Unlike cities with historic immigrant populations like New York and Boston, immigrants in Richmond are often less accepted into the city’s society, according to a Sept. 6 panel.

The Broad — a women’s gathering and workspace —hosted “Immigration as a Womxn’s Issue,” whose panelists touched on themes including immigration in Richmond and issues faced by female immigrants.

Richmond’s Latin-American immigrant population includes a wave of well-established immigrants from Mexico and Cuba who arrived in the 1960s, in addition to newer groups from Central America, said panelist Del. Debra Rodman. Rodman represents the 73rd District in the House of Delegates and has worked as an advocate for Central American immigrants, serving as an expert court witness for asylum seekers.

“When I moved here 15 years ago — even though there was this long-established community of Latinos — the newer wave of Latin American immigration was definitely new for Richmonders,” Rodman said. “And I definitely felt when I moved to Richmond, you could see that there was more fear (in immigrant communities), and I think it became very intensified in the last decade.”

That fear has also increased for immigrants living in larger cities, but the presence of several generations and a broad sense of community improves conditions in those areas.

“I think when you have police forces, when you have communities that have a long history of immigration, it’s different than these non-traditional (locations),” Rodman said.

One of those non-traditional locations is the southern U.S., which saw a 60 percent increase in its foreign-born population between 2000 and 2014, according to data from the Center for American Progress. Additionally, immigrants in the South account-

ed for about half of the overall change in the foreign-born population across the country.

Panelist Tamana Radmanish — who worked for nongovernmental organizations and as a journalist prior to moving to the U.S. a year and a half ago — is one of a number of Afghans who recently arrived in Richmond. She said she attributes the rise in Afghan immigration to the U.S. War in Afghanistan — the conflict created unfavorable conditions in Afghanistan, and many military workers, such as translators, obtained special visas.

“I came over here because my sister was here,” Radmanish said. “I know 10 more people that came over here because of me. I was here, I could help them.”

Despite the arrival of diverse migrants, faith-based activist Lana Heath de Martinez said she’s witnessed the erasure of the Richmond immigrant community.

“Richmond is the capital of the confederacy and there are a lot of conversations that happen about race and white supremacy and suppression,” Heath de Martinez said. “I have not been to any of these conversations where there’s representation from Latin America or from the Middle East.”

Leonina Arismendi, an Uruguayan-born artist, said she agrees that immigrants are often not heard in the Richmond area.

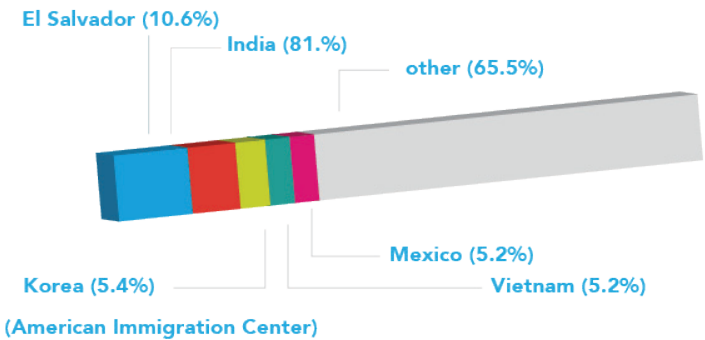
“But I also see a community that’s resilient and not only loves the community around us, our neighbors and our families, but also really loves Richmond, being here, working here, having friends in the community here,” Arismendi said. “I think there’s a mixture of feeling like this is home, but also feeling like you don’t belong.”

12.2%

In 2015, 1 million immigrants made up 12.2 percent of Virginia’s population. (American Immigration Center)



Top countries of origin for Virginia immigrants:



Infographic by Kim Peters

“Peppermint” is devoid of sweet thrills

SAMUEL GOODRICH
Staff Writer

The past few years have seen many great action films met with audience and critical acclaim. The “John Wick” films, “The Raid” series and both “Equalizer” films are just a few of the movies that have set the standard for upcoming action flicks. But there are still some action movies being released that try to get away with the bare minimum, feeling a few years too late.

“Peppermint” is one such film. Looking to capitalize on Director Pierre Morel’s previous hit, “Taken,” and the recent action-film surge, this project comes off as lazy, tired and monotonous.

Jennifer Garner heads the film as Riley North, a mother whose life is destroyed when her husband and young daughter are gunned down by members of a Mexican cartel. After the killers are acquitted, North goes “off-the-grid” for five years, training to become the ultimate killing machine to not only get revenge, but keep others safe from the ills of the world.

When I woke up the day after seeing “Peppermint,” I realized I had almost forgotten I’d seen it. Not even 12 hours had gone by and the movie was starting to leave my mind. If I hadn’t written down notes on how I felt after leaving the theater, this re-

view might have turned out quite different.

The largest issue with the film is that nothing about it incites interest or sparks the senses. It’s a by-the-numbers revenge story full of inconsistencies, laughable acting and dialogue and a severe lack of logic.

Garner cannot play a believable action heroine. No matter how much the characters say she is a badass and how much dirt they throw on her or the amount of blood she spills, Garner just doesn’t do grizzled vigilante well.

The other performances are mediocre to comedic, with many actors clearly phoning it in. The dialogue doesn’t help either; it’s full of cliches and overdramatic statements. Even worse, the film’s Mexican villains are stereotypical to a cartoonish level, so much so that it’s difficult to call it offensive because the characters are simply so ridiculous.

The lack of humanity rings true in the action scenes as well. While there are a good amount of fight scenes and shootouts, few leave an impact. This is because of the flat filmmaking style and the lack of blood, which lead to confusing, forgettable bursts of action.

I’m struggling not only to find anything nice to say about “Peppermint,” but also even to care. As I write this review, I feel as if I’m putting more effort into bashing this film more than the filmmakers did in making it.



Illustration by Sammy Newman

The whole production feels cheap — locations are reused and they hide the lack of background extras with tents and sound effects. The movie also feels past its time to the point where they use the dramatic, shaky-camera effects parodied in “Hot Fuzz” more than 10 years ago.

Despite all these problems, I can’t say “Peppermint” is offensively bad or even worth my time to fully discuss. It’s simply a generic, passionless film that should have just been put on Netflix or DVD, but somehow ended up in your local multiplex. The only saving grace is that its pace is quick enough that the film doesn’t outstay its assumed welcome.

UPCOMING EVENTS

See something

WED. 9/12

Musicircus

Join the VCU Departments of Music, Dance and Theatre as members participate in separate performances simultaneously.

8 p.m. — W.E. Singleton Center for Performing Arts — Free

THURS. 9/13

Sugar Candy Mountain/Don Frederick/Tecate Tall Boy

Local bands Don Frederick and Tecate Tall Boys accompany California based psychedelic band Sugar Candy Mountain at Strange Matter this Thursday.

8 p.m. doors, 9 p.m. music — Strange Matter — \$10 — 18 +

TUES. 9/18

US Army Blues Jazz Ensemble

Part of the United States Army band, this 18-piece jazz ensemble will perform at the Singleton Center as part of their mission to preserve traditional American jazz.

W.E. Singleton Center for Performing Arts — Tickets are free but must be reserved at vcumusic.showclix.com

MON. 9/17

The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers

The Byrd will be playing the second Lord of the Rings movie this upcoming Monday.

7:15 p.m. — The Byrd — \$5

Do something

TUES. 9/18

Free Breakfast Sandwiches for Students

The Graduate will give out free egg and cheese breakfast sandwiches to local students as a way of welcoming everyone back to campus for the semester.

7-11 a.m. — The Graduate — Free — Must show valid school ID

TUES. 9/18

2nd Annual Sungay Funday

Kick off Pride Week with New York Deli and enjoy music, performances and drinks. All proceeds from Jell-O shots sold will be donated to VA Pride.

6-10 p.m. — New York Deli — No cover charge, purchases must be cash only, 21+

Learn something

SAT. 9/15

Foam Rolling Workshop

Join Richmond Wellness and Muscle + Bone to discover the benefits of foam rolling and learn how to do so properly in order to decrease your risk of injury and replenish your muscles.

10-11 a.m. — Richmond Wellness — \$10

SUN. 9/16

RVA Bachata Sunday Social

Join DJ Ruddy and DJ Fredy this Sunday at Champion Brewing Co. for dancing, Bachata lessons, food specials and a performance by their Performance Challenge Class.

3-8 p.m. — Champion Brewing Co. — All ages — Free

MON. 9/17

Meet VCU’s Authors: Brooke Newman

Associate Professor of History and Associate Director of the Humanities Research Center Dr. Brooke Newman will be discussing her new book, A Dark Inheritance: Blood, Race and Sex in Colonial Jamaica.

4-5:30 p.m. — Cabell Library, room 250 — Free

CT Opinions

Quote of the week

“The pills that I’m poppin I need to man up / Admit it’s a problem I need a wake up / Before one morning I don’t wake up / You make your mistakes, your mistakes never make ya / ... So I guess this is a letter, to all my brothers, Most Dope, that’s forever / I love you more than words could express.” — MAC MILLER. “GOD SPEED,” *GO:OD AM*

The Anonymous Patriot

CAITLIN BARBIERI
Opinions Editor

The anonymous op-ed published in The New York Times last week is an example of the press utilizing our freedom of speech for its intended purpose: empowerment.

Media outlets across the country have debated the decision by the Times’ opinion desk to run the editorial anonymously. The publication has sparked a discussion in the journalism community about the ethics of granting anonymity.

As the opinions editor of The Commonwealth Times, I would have made the same decision as James Dao — who holds the same position at the New York Times — to grant anonymity.

Granting anonymity is not a disregard for credentials or validity. Publishing the op-ed was a judgment call made in the best interests of the American people. The press’ job is to educate the public, and the editorial section is meant to provide a platform for further education through opinionated analysis.

It is rare for The New York Times to grant anonymity, so the fact that it did so reflects the publication’s belief in the significance of the content.

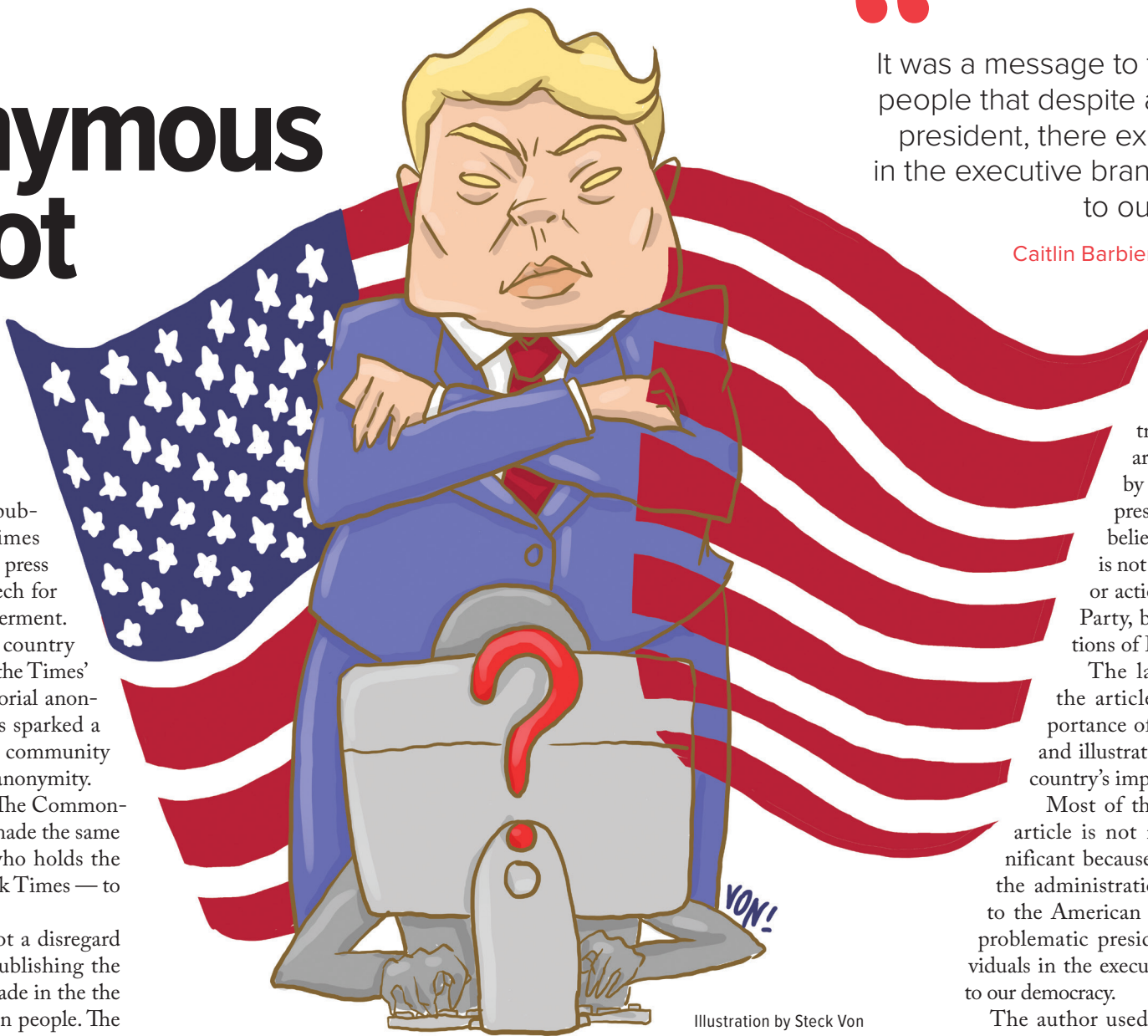


Illustration by Steck Von

Critics of the article assert it threatens our democracy because it undermines the executive branch by openly revealing how members of the government are working to contain President Trump. A Republican publicly expressing a lack of confidence in a president of his/her own party shows

extreme tension within the party and could continue to fuel the public’s distrust of the government.

However, this op-ed also shows government officials are aware of the problems that surround the Trump administration — they will not blindly follow a leader they do not

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Caitlin Barbieri, Opinions Editor

trust. The author of this article puts the U.S. first by speaking out against a president she/he does not believe is qualified. She/he is not questioning the values or actions of the Republican Party, but the values and actions of President Trump.

The language and tone of the article appreciates the importance of the presidential role and illustrates a dedication to the country’s improvement.

Most of the information in the article is not new, yet remains significant because it came from inside the administration. It was a message to the American people that despite a problematic president, there exist individuals in the executive branch dedicated to our democracy.

The author used this op-ed as a platform to communicate surreptitiously to the American people. By remaining anonymous, she/he can continue to work to improve our country while protecting herself/himself. This was a message of hope, not a sign of a breakdown — and the Times had an obligation to our country to publish it.

An ode to self care

SHAUN JACKSON
Staff Columnist



Recommended listening while reading:

“Runnin’ Thru Lovers”

Sabrina Claudio

How do you deal with boys who just want to hook up when you have no interest in meaningless intimacy?

Well, naturally, the first thing I would recommend is not to deal with them at

all, especially if you are clued-in to the fact that they want only to remain casual. However, I too am human, and would probably do the opposite of what I’m recommending. If that is the case and you know you want more than just a casual situation, don’t lend yourself out and end up caught all in your feelings only to find them unrequited and unreciprocated. Always let your feelings be known and communicate them with whomever you may be talking to. But be sure to do that for those who are actually worthy of your intimacy.

How do you deal with some dude who won’t stop entering your life? He’s like a used car, he’s a good time but only for a few miles.

Oof, this one is always a doozy. It seems like you are way past being susceptible to the ever-agonizing game of emotional Russian Roulette that comes with dealing with an ex, or whatever the case may be. Good for you. Now my bottom line is this: do better! If you know that car is only good for a few miles and you have no desire to take it to the shop or try to fix it up, then simply don’t waste his and

your time. It’s disrespectful to you and it’s disrespectful to him as you don’t want to continue to lead him on. It’s never a good idea to go over your mileage!

Recently, I was dating a nice girl. I got to know her and I liked almost everything about her. But I was waiting for “something” to just fall into place. Do you think that falling for someone happens in an instant like I do, or does it gradually come?

This is going to vary from person to person, but think for a second about the idea of attraction as a spectrum from 1 to 10. People at the lower end are people you aren’t too physically or romantically attracted to, and obviously higher numbers indicate an immediate attraction. I think it can happen quickly for folks like yourself. But what people fail to realize is that those intense, immediate attractions often blind us to the quality of our interactions with others, and to the actual characteristics of the people we desire to date. On the other hand, it can take attraction time to grow for some people. But these are few and far between, and no one is going to admittedly date in the middle of the spectrum — however, peo-

ple tend to be happier and find lasting love when they do.

I need help. I consistently date/talk to men who are losers because I am afraid of being rejected by a man who I respect and admire. Every time I talk to a guy who I do admire I automatically assume they are not interested in me and we end up becoming friends. How do I break out of this cycle of dating uneducated, lethargic men when there are smart, responsible men all around me?

When I think of rejection, I kind of think of the idiom “the truth hurts, but it will set you free.” I totally get where you’re coming from. Rejection is hard to face, but you’ll never find who you’re looking for if you’re shrouded in fear and self-depreciation. Dating is insufferable most of the time, but there are people worth suffering for. Don’t be afraid to put yourself out there and take control of your interpersonal relationships and let that slowly chip away at any insecurities you harbor. Insecurities are an ongoing battle, but there will come someone who will quell them with the pleasure of their company. You are worthy of love, never forget that.

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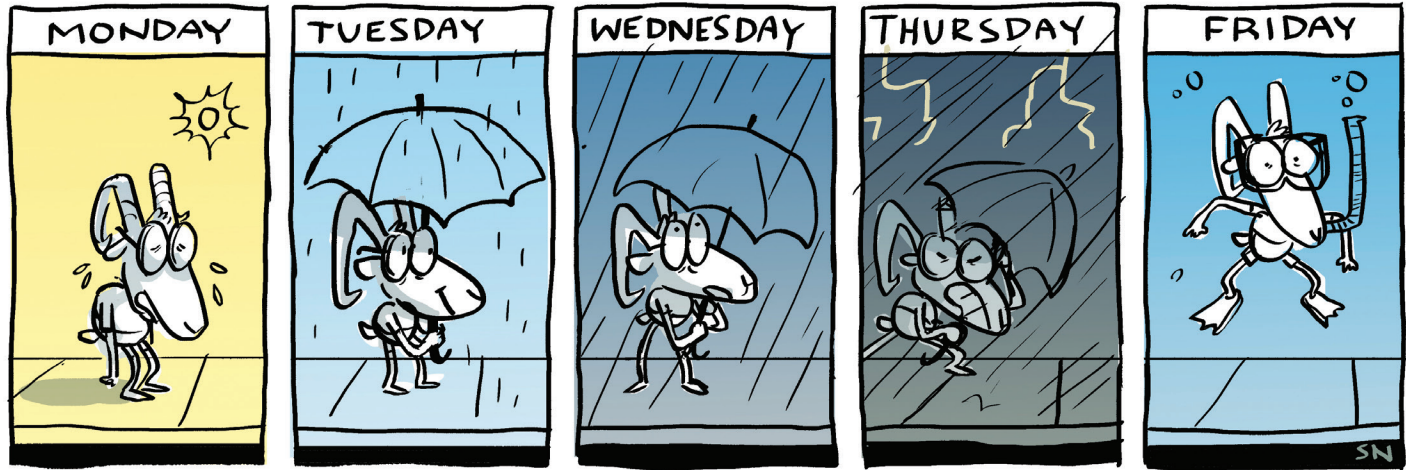
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CT Comics

Rain by Sammy Newman



Good Advice by Tobias Hong



47th Anniversary of Attica Uprising by Alex Hwee

