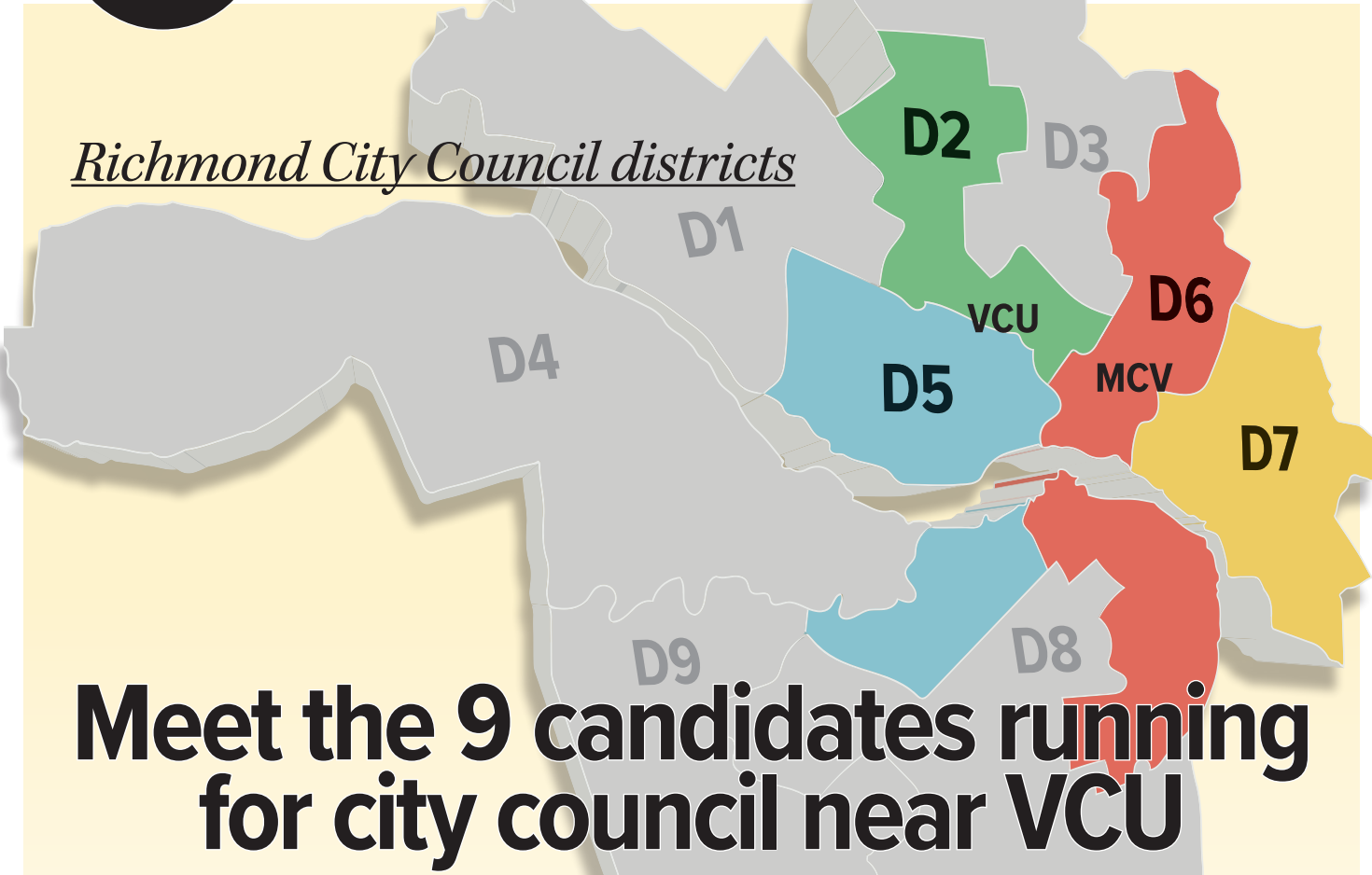




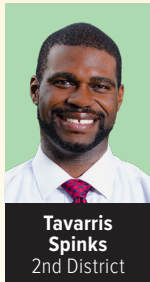
Richmond City Council districts



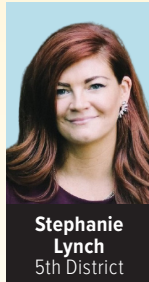
Meet the 9 candidates running for city council near VCU



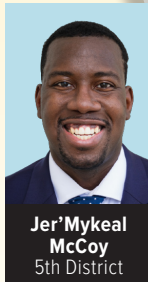
Katherine Jordan
2nd District



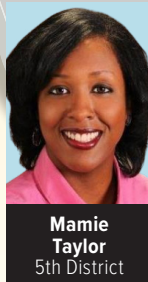
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2nd District



Stephanie Lynch
5th District



Jer'Mykeal McCoy
5th District



Mamie Taylor
5th District



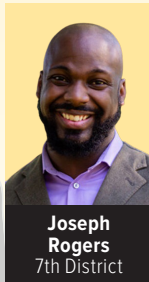
Allen-Charles Chipman
6th District



Ellen Robertson
6th District



Cynthia Newbille
7th District



Joseph Rogers
7th District

Infographic by Ray Liu, information compiled by Sagal Ahmed

SAGAL AHMED
Contributing Writer

Along with nominations for president, vice president and state officials, voters will see Richmond City Council candidates on their ballots. Here is some background on candidates running for seats in Richmond's 2nd, 5th, 6th and 7th districts, all seeking to represent areas near VCU's Monroe Park Campus.

DISTRICT 2

Richmond's North Central 2nd Voter District includes neighborhoods such as the Fan and Scott's Addition. The district runs between Laburnum and Floyd avenues, spreading southeast from some areas west of Arthur Ashe Boulevard to the intersection of Chamberlayne Avenue and Broad Street.

KATHERINE JORDAN supports an increase of pay for teachers and staff in Richmond Public Schools as well as ending the school-to-prison pipeline. The Fan District resident supports demilitarizing police, banning tear gas and establishing a statewide Marcus Alert, which would send teams of mental health professionals into the field with police responding to crises.

electkatherinejordan.com

TAVARRIS SPINKS is running against budget cuts in Richmond Public Schools. He aims to work with the school board, superintendent and advocates to ensure funding is allocated properly. Born and raised in the East End, he seeks to address the housing issue in the 2nd District with expanded housing vouchers for low-income families, elders, and the disabled.

tavarisspinks.com

DISTRICT 5

The Central 5th Voter District includes

neighborhoods south of Floyd Avenue — such as Randolph and Carytown — as well as Woodland Heights in the South Side.

STEPHANIE LYNCH, an incumbent and Woodland Heights resident, wants to establish a permanent teacher advisory committee. She supports offender rehabilitation, transparency and discipline in police forces, as well as removing armed officers from schools. Lynch also supports the Eviction Diversion Program and expanding the Housing Affordability Trust Fund.

electstephanielynch.com

JER'MYKEAL MCCOY is a business development manager with Schutt Sports and a capstone adviser at Georgetown University. McCoy supports teacher pay increase, fully funding schools and restorative justice alternatives. He supports public health services, violence prevention programs and holding law officials accountable. McCoy hopes to increase the Richmond Health District's funding to allow more COVID-19 testing and assistance.

mccoyforrva.com

MAMIE TAYLOR, a former RPS teacher and school board representative, plans to increase school funding and hire additional African-American male teachers. Taylor prioritizes affordable housing, renters' resources and home ownership opportunities. Taylor did not support the Navy Hill Project and plans to implement public input in future development efforts.

DISTRICT 6

Running along I-95 and covering the area around Richmond City Hall, the Gateway 6th Voter District would have been the site of the failed Navy Hill development. Other neighborhoods in the district include part of East Highland Park and Highland Park Southern Tip.

ELLEN ROBERTSON has served as 6th District City Council Member for 17 years. Robertson is the first African American woman to serve as chair of the city's planning commission. Her platform focuses on issues including food accessibility, affordable housing, poverty, healthcare and racism.

robertsonrva6.com

ALLAN-CHARLES CHIPMAN was born in Baltimore, Maryland. He supports empowering schools with developmental authority and assessing impact on marginalized groups before decisions are made in the city. Chipman also plans to provide COVID-19 resources and testing to the Richmond community.

chipman2020.com

DISTRICT 7

The 7th District covers the East End of Richmond, including Church Hill, Union Hill, Whitcomb Court and Mosby Court neighborhoods.

CYNTHIA NEWBILLE has served in City Council's 7th District for 10 years. She supported the council's plan to use tax revenue for education and school renovation. Newbille plans to provide residents with personal protective equipment, COVID-19 testing, mortgage and rental assistance, homelessness programs, tax relief for seniors and the disabled, and childcare for essential workers.

JOSEPH ROGERS is a community organizer and advocate who hopes to raise the corporate tax rate and allocate additional funding toward schools. He supports defunding the police, removing police from schools and banning chemical agents as a form of crowd control. He supports reforms such as the Marcus Alert bill and a civilian review board.

joseph4seven.com



Former nightclub Mansion 534 on North Harrison Street remains unused by VCU. Photo by Hannah Eason

SGA calls for community shelter in VCU building

KATHARINE DEROSA
Staff Writer

Members of VCU's student government are demanding that the university convert an unused building on campus into a homeless shelter after the City of Richmond announced it will not open a downtown cold weather facility. Some who would have a hand in the process, however, say the plan may not be a catch-all solution for the city's homeless population.

VCU's Student Government Association released a statement Friday demanding VCU reopen the former club known as Mansion 534 to the homeless population this winter.

"We feel that as a Senate we must take action to help our community," the statement read.

According to the SGA statement, the Mansion building at 534 N. Harrison St. was Virginia's only Black and queer-owned nightclub before VCU bought the facility in 2018. The building is not being used by the university at this time.

VCU spokesperson Mike Porter said in an email that the former Mansion building is classified as an assembly facility by the state and would need to be renovated to legally allow a shelter to be there.

If the university were to try to make that change, an architect would have to evaluate the building and present the plans to the State Division of Engineering and Building in the Department of General Services. Porter said this process would take 60-90 days, and construction would have to be done on the building.

It would cost about \$1 million to transform the building's first floor into a cold-weather shelter, Porter said.

"There simply isn't enough time to work through the required process," Porter said in an email.

The demand comes on the heels of the City of Richmond's decision to not open the Cold Weather Overflow Shelter at the Annie Giles Community Center in Shockoe Bottom. Instead, the city will expand other resources through the Greater Richmond Continuum of Care Network that includes multiple homeless service providers.

See *SHELTER* on page 3

Stories of the week

NATIONAL: An anonymous grand juror who helped decide charges in the police shooting of Breonna Taylor said prosecutors didn’t explain Kentucky’s homicide laws or the justification for shooting Taylor.

INTERNATIONAL: Archaeologists in Egypt have unearthed a “huge number” of sarcophagi believed to be more than 2,500 years old in a necropolis 20 miles south of Cairo.



Protesters and others at the Robert E. Lee statue disperse 30 minutes before curfew on June 1 as Richmond police deploy tear gas. Photo by Jon Mirador

Protest activity
in Richmond

MAY 25

George Floyd dies in Minneapolis police custody.

MAY 29

A GRTC bus is set on fire, and many shops are vandalized during the first night of protests in Richmond. Tear gas and other weapons are deployed against protesters.

MAY 30

The Daughters of the Confederacy building and other sites are vandalized. Police use tear gas and other weapons.

MAY 31

Gov. Ralph Northam sets citywide 8 p.m. curfew. Police arrest more than 20 people after using tear gas and explosives on protesters outside city hall.

JUNE 1

Police tear gas protesters gathered around the Robert E. Lee monument 30 minutes curfew takes effect.

JUNE 6

Protesters pull down statue of Confederate Gen. Williams Carter Wickham in Monroe Park.

JUNE 9

Crowd removes Christopher Columbus statue in Byrd Park.

JUNE 10

Protesters pull down Jefferson Davis statue from Monument Avenue.

JUNE 14

Demonstrators gather outside Richmond Police headquarters. Officers use tear gas and other weapons to disperse crowd.

JACKSON REBRACA
Contributing Writer

“He was lying on the ground, gasping for breath and coughing so violently. At first I genuinely thought he was suffocating. I stood with medics for 10 minutes while he fought to breathe.”

This was how Sam Allen, a junior business major at VCU, described a man who was tear gassed at a Richmond protest against police brutality in May. Allen said it was one of many such instances he’s seen of the harm that tear gas can cause.

Protests broke out nationwide in May after a video depicted George Floyd, a Black man, dying in Minneapolis police custody with an officer’s knee on his neck. Floyd’s death was one of the most recent rallying cries for police reform and social justice, and clips of police using tear gas, rubber bullets and flashbangs at demonstrations became commonplace on the news and social media.

Despite efforts by the Virginia General Assembly to regulate the use of chemical agents and munitions, the Richmond City Council on Monday struck a resolution that would have banned the use of tear gas and other crowd control measures in the city.

Tear gas is legal and can be used at will by police officers “in the proper performance of their duties,” according to Virginia law. Several voices in Virginia politics are stepping up to question this code.

During its special session, the Virginia legislature passed House Bill 5049, which

directs the Department of Criminal Justice Services to establish training standards on the use of tear gas and kinetic impact munitions, such as rubber batons and rubber-coated projectiles.

HB 5049, which passed the Senate on Wednesday, also aims to restrict the use of kinetic impact munitions to self defense, rather than a tool to disperse crowds. Del. Kaye Kory, a Democrat from Fairfax and a patron of the bill, said police’s traditional use of tear gas is “not defensive.”

“It does really set up a more war-like situation between protesters and law enforcement,” Kory said.

Richmond City Council members Michael Jones and Stephanie Lynch brought forth a resolution in last Monday’s council meeting to ban the use of tear gas by police.

The resolution cited an article, “What ‘Less Lethal’ Weapons Actually Do,” which argues the dangers of tear gas are not fully known, can have particularly severe effects on less healthy people and contribute to miscarriages.

The resolution failed in committee by a 7-2 vote with Lynch and Jones voting in favor. Councilman Chris Hilbert said he is not against limiting the use of tear gas, but voted against the measure because he thought an outright ban would only leave more dangerous means of policing.

“I would love to have an alternative to this,” Hilbert said. “Unfortunately, I think the second choice is for people to come after individual protesters with individual violence from the police officer, certainly

something that we don’t want to happen.”

Hilbert’s argument echoes police departments across the country. On Sep. 10, Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler banned the use of tear gas by local authorities. The Portland Police Bureau responded with a statement, saying, “CS, while effective, is a significantly lower level of force than impact weapons, which would very likely be necessary to disperse riotous groups with its prohibition.”

CS is a term commonly used to refer to tear gas.

Jones said the proposal of an outright ban would force police to change strategies in order to endanger fewer protesters.

“The police have got to sit down and ask, ‘How can we do this? What’s the best way?’” Jones said.

Jones said weapons such as tear gas prevent the demands raised by the protests from being addressed properly.

“In 2020, there has to be a better way to accomplish and reach the same goal,” Jones said.

A petition to ban the use of tear gas started by RaceCapitol, a Richmond-based activist organization, had more than 1,300 signatures as of Tuesday. Founder Chelsea Higgs Wise said the petition’s purpose is to protect protesters’ First Amendment right to speech from dangerous crowd-control methods.

“What we’re noticing is that this is a global movement of people having their voices suppressed with these types of weapons, and so we’re going to continue to bring that information forward,” Higgs Wise said.

JUNE 15

Protesters stage outside Richmond Police headquarters. Officers use tear gas and other weapons for the second night in a row.

JUNE 16

Demonstrators remove Richmond Howitzers memorial on VCU’s campus.

JUNE 21

Police use tear gas and other weapons against protesters on Monument Avenue near the J.E.B. Stuart statue.

JUNE 26

Police deploy tear gas and other weapons against protesters at Lee statue.

JULY 1

City of Richmond begins its removal of Confederate statues with Gen. Stonewall Jackson on Monument Avenue.

JULY 25

Protesters gather outside Richmond Police headquarters; tear gas and other weapons deployed. Several VCU buildings are damaged and vandalized.

AUGUST 20

Protesters gather outside Gwar Bar. Police arrest two people.

SEPTEMBER 23

Protesters march for Breonna Taylor after the officers involved in her death were not indicted on murder charges.

Key events were highlighted for this timeline. For full coverage, visit [commonwealthtimes.org](https://www.commonwealthtimes.org).

Infographic by Andy Caress
Information compiled by Jackson Rebraca



Students walk on Shafer Street near VCU signage. Photo courtesy of Noah Fleischman

More Virginia colleges scrap traditional spring break

ANYA SCZERZENIE
Capital News Service

A growing number of Virginia colleges are announcing that spring break will be canceled or modified in an effort to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

Virginia Tech, located in Blacksburg, announced plans Monday. The biggest change is that the university will not have a week-

long spring break. It will instead have five one-day breaks spaced throughout the semester.

“While we want to discourage travel that could aid in the spread of COVID-19, we don’t want to eliminate much needed downtime that students seek for their overall well-being,” Frank Shushok, vice president for student affairs at Tech, said in a news release.

SHELTER



Tents at Camp Cathy stand in February on land leased by VCU. CT file photo

VCU: Shelter would cost \$1M in renovations

Continued from front page

According to the strategic plan to end homelessness released by the City of Richmond, the shelter was largely ineffective because it only serves adults over the age of 18 and does not provide any support services, such as food or continued care.

The center on 1400 Oliver Hill Way is located next to the former site of Camp Cathy, a tent community that stood on VCU-leased land from August 2019 until it was torn down in March. Porter said in an email that VCU’s lease on the land expires in December 2055, and the university has no plans to build there.

Kelly King Horne, executive director of Homeward, said she is open to a discussion with VCU about the Mansion building. She said she doesn’t know enough about the facility to have an informed opinion on establishing an emergency shelter.

“Having pop-up or uncoordinated services is actually less effective overall, and people don’t get the benefit of service providers or other resources that they might need to end their homelessness and meet other life goals,” King Horne said.

Homeward is a Richmond-based organization that coordinates the region’s response to homelessness. King Horne said the group has been working to respond to the closure of the cold-weather shelter.

“The focus just on one facility to another sort of misses the point, because it doesn’t take into account all the other services that are happening every day and the complexity and commitments that go into those services,” King Horne said.

Homeward, other Richmond-area organizations and the city are working to establish emergency beds and locations for the winter season. King Horne said the decision

to close the shelter is a “moot point” since Homeward coordinates a variety of services to the homeless population.

“No single agency or local government can tackle this crisis on their own,” King Horne said.

Homeward provides entry points to services, housing for people who need assistance, permanent supportive long-term housing, substance use recovery services, COVID-19 testing and socially distanced shelter at hotels. Homeward also coordinates 10 emergency shelters for families and individuals.

The strategic plan to end homelessness includes seven initiatives, one of which is to increase affordable permanent housing by 300 units.

The plan includes 2019 data, compiled by Homeward, that states the number of days that people spend homeless in Richmond has increased from 468.3 in 2015 to 947.4 in 2019. King Horne said personal case conferencing, where case managers from different agencies meet, is crucial to decreasing the number of days that people spend without permanent shelter.

On Friday, Mayor Levar Stoney held a virtual press conference to address the issue of homelessness in the city. He announced increased hours for the Homelessness Crisis Line, which can be reached at 804-972-0813. The line is now open 8:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. on weekdays and 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. on weekends.

“You can’t talk about getting more people into shelter if you don’t have a plan to help them fix it,” King Horne said. “For personal autonomy and dignity, housing is the answer.”

SGA President Taylor Maloney did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Tech will hold a mix of in-person and hybrid classes. The latter will be fully online or a mix of online and in-person courses. The university did not modify the start and end of the spring semester. The university will begin classes on Jan. 19 and end on May 5. Exams will be held May 7-12.

Other Virginia universities have started to announce plans for the spring semester. George Mason University in Fairfax announced Monday plans to start classes on Jan. 25, one week later than originally planned. GMU will also be eliminating spring break. The university will hold a mix of in-person, online, and hybrid classes, and will end classes as originally scheduled on April 30, followed by final exams.

Radford University in Radford will start classes on Jan. 19 as originally planned and hold spring break at the end of the semester, concluding classes a week early. Classes will be a mix of in-person and hybrid format and end on April 23. Exams will be held the following week.

VCU announced last week that it will start the semester a week later than originally planned. VCU will hold two one-day

breaks; one in February and one in March. The university will offer in-person and on-line classes or a mixture of both formats.

“This measure is consistent with many other universities in Virginia and across the country,” VCU President Michael Rao said in an email announcing the move.

Christopher Newport University in Newport News announced a tentative spring 2021 academic calendar on Oct. 7, which includes a shortened, two-day spring break in March. Classes at CNU will begin on Jan. 11 and final exams will end April 29.

Many Virginia colleges have not announced their spring semester plans. The University of Virginia, located in Charlottesville, will announce plans later this month, UVA spokesman McGregor McCance said last week.

Capital News Service is a program of Virginia Commonwealth University’s Robertson School of Media and Culture. Students in the program provide state government coverage for a variety of media outlets in Virginia.

Uncertainties cloud COVID-19 vaccine distribution plan

ANYA SCZERZENIE
Staff Writer

A tentative COVID-19 vaccination plan is taking shape in the Virginia Department of Health, but it is still unknown how VCU fits into the plan for a coronavirus vaccine that could be months away.

Gonzalo Bearman, an infectious disease specialist and professor of medicine at VCU, said a vaccine for the virus will probably not be widely available for another six to nine months — either late next semester or the beginning of fall 2021.

“In general, distribution must be prioritized to first line responders, healthcare workers, the elderly, and people with underlying chronic medical conditions which increase their risk of worse outcomes from COVID-19,” Bearman said.

Bearman said that until published information is available on the vaccine, it will be difficult to predict how it will be distributed. However, he said VCU students and staff should be included as part of a “comprehensive, community-wide vaccine strategy” for the greater Richmond community.

A COVID-19 vaccine has been in development since the early stages of the pandemic. When the vaccine is finally released, the Virginia Department of Health will implement its distribution plan.

According to the plan, initial distribution of vaccines will prioritize nursing home residents and critical healthcare workers. Vaccines will also be distributed to pharmacies, schools and healthcare facilities around the state.

The plan states university students have a higher risk of acquiring or transmitting COVID-19. Student health centers are mentioned in a list of providers that VDH will target to distribute the vaccine.

Margaret Roberson, director of VCU Student Health Services, said the vaccine likely will be distributed at VCU similarly to the swine flu, or H1N1 vaccine. During the swine flu epidemic in 2009, students were encouraged to get the vaccine at no charge through University Student Health Services at 1300 W. Broad St. Roberson said the same thing could happen with a COVID-19 vaccine.

The State Council for Higher Education in Virginia, or SCHEV, oversees



colleges and universities in Virginia and provides them with COVID-19 guidance, but doesn’t have any guidance yet about the vaccine.

“We don’t have answers yet, because there isn’t enough information yet,” said SCHEV spokesperson Laura Osberger.

The current VDH vaccination plan is a draft, but it states COVID-19 vaccines may need to be given in two doses and taken 21 to 28 days apart.

The plan states schools and universities could be used as mass vaccination-distribution centers.

While researchers work to develop a COVID-19 vaccine, many health experts are urging people to get flu shots to prevent this year’s season from overwhelming the health care system. Flu shots are provided by VCU, by appointment only, at no cost to students. Students can make an appointment on the Monroe Park Campus by calling 804-828-8828 or 804-828-9220 for MCV.

Stat of the week

Former VCU golf standout Lanto Griffin finished T-7 with a score of 12 under par Sunday at The CJ Cup in Las Vegas, Nevada.



Sophomore middle blocker Sabria Cooper hits a ball over the net during a practice at the Stuart C. Siegel Center. Photo courtesy of VCU Athletics



Freshman middle blockers Jasmine Knight, front, and Kylie Loftis, back, celebrate at a scrimmage with outside hitter Addison Foote, right. Photo courtesy of VCU Athletics

Scrimmages create competition, allow younger players to shine

NOAH FLEISCHMAN
Sports Editor

Music bellowed from Sports Backers Stadium on Friday as two teams, dressed in full uniform, warmed up on the pitch. Though the coming matchup wouldn't count in any NCAA scorebooks, women's soccer wanted to make it as real as possible.

Women's soccer began playing scrimmages against themselves — splitting the team in two — on Sept. 6, following a July postponement of all Atlantic 10 fall sports. Coach Lindsey Martin said the team has learned a lot from the games.

"It's a measure for us to try to develop and grow as a team collectively but also just trying to bring joy to the kids' lives," Martin said. "They love the game and for them to

not get to have a real season, this is at least a great replacement."

VCU Athletics allows fall teams to practice although the fall season was postponed in July by the Atlantic 10. An August outbreak of 44 cases in athletics led the university to convert three floors of the Honors College into isolation space. Practices, which began over the summer, continue to follow university COVID-19 protocols, and masks are required when not actively playing and when teams huddle in groups.

The team has played six matches, changing the lineups for each match. Martin said the scrimmages allow younger players to learn.

"It's definitely an advantage for younger players for sure," Martin said. "Coming in as first years, there's usually a two-week

learning curve, where they're able to learn for two weeks and then they're thrown into the fire."

Martin said the season being moved to the spring has allowed the program to operate how a regular spring sport would. She said that being able to play games is a "silver lining" despite setbacks caused by COVID-19.

"A lot of players don't end up developing until their later college years because of a lack of games," Martin said. "I think as coaches, we're learning more about our players and our players are learning more about themselves."

For volleyball, competition isn't anything new. Coach Jody Rogers said she recruits players that compete at everything — from the classroom to the court.

Now, she's seeing the competition levels increase on the court at practice, especially during scrimmages.

"We just see it at a higher level, and we get to train as much as possible and not have games," Rogers said. "Everybody's playing a lot, getting a lot of reps and getting better every day."

Like in men's and women's soccer, these fall scrimmages help younger volleyball players get more in-game action than they would have during a normal season.

"Even in scrimmages, during preseason you get a lot of reps, but not a lot of freshman play," Rogers said. "Now since we have six on six, we have a lot of freshmen getting the kinks out, getting their ability to shine and gain leadership skills."

Not only do scrimmages help the players, but they also give the coaching staff more time to get familiar. Rogers has an entirely new assistant coaching staff, with all three of them arriving in Richmond this season.

"I'm looking back and reevaluating what we've had to go through as a program," Rogers said. "I think it's helped us immensely."

Men's soccer has also played scrimmages at Sports Backers this fall. Coach Dave Giffard said games were a part of his team's developmental plan.

"I think that one of the things that athletes of all sports have kind of been missing out on since March have been games," Giffard said. "As we laid out a plan for our fall and what we could get out of it, we want to focus on development for our guys, but part of that development is playing games."

Men's soccer entered this season as a deep squad, and with its season on pause until the spring, Giffard wanted to make the best of it.

"I think what we've tried to do is take what is not an ideal situation, instead of being upset about it, trying to look at it and saying 'how can we get something really positive out of not a great situation?'" Giffard said.

The team streams scrimmages online, so friends and family can watch and be a part of the action.

"They probably miss that as well, being able to see their son, brother or nephew go out there and play and enjoy that aspect," Giffard said.

Giffard said men's soccer will pause scrimmages to focus on a weightlifting plan that they will carry through February.

Volleyball in the park gives students sense of 'normalcy'

KAITLYN FULMORE
Contributing Writer

With the sun behind Altria Theater, rap music playing from speakers and a slight breeze in the air, a student volleyball tournament in Monroe Park stopped passersby in their tracks. Some paused for a moment to enjoy the now-rare occurrence of casual and friendly competition.

VCU Rec Sports invited students to compete in a volleyball tournament on Oct. 15, and protocols and mask requirements made some student players and onlookers more comfortable.

"Even though it seems like you can't do anything, it was finally something to do," junior Ben To said. "The fact that it's supported by VCU doesn't make you feel guilty for it. It's well managed."

Due to COVID-19, the tournament was held outdoors, contrasting from the usual indoor locations such as Cary Street Gym.

"Seeing everyone being active during corona and having fun is just really nice to see," said junior Brendan Queener, whose friends' team, the Ram Yams, made it to the semifinals but lost to opponents Double Dub. "I like cheering on my homies."

Many in the audience came to watch friends play, but some viewers were curious students walking back to their dorms from dinner.

"It looked like everyone was having fun, so we wanted to watch and see who was winning," freshman Jairo Argueta said.

The tournament gave organizations an opportunity to hang out and get to know each other. Junior Matt Gonzales said without regular sporting events, it's hard to get together with his brothers in Sigma Phi Epsilon.

"The only time we would play [last year] was when it was time to play the game," Gonzales said. "But a lot of brothers wanted to build the brother bond and get to-

gether, so we started practicing a lot more."

With no public sports games being played by any of VCU's Division I teams, having some form of athletic competition brought back a sense of regular times — despite all players being required to wear a mask.

"You can't watch sports anywhere as much or as normal, so this gives you some place to cheer," freshman Sydney Thornton said. "It gives you some sort of normalcy."

The event lasted three hours and had a total of 12 teams that played first-to-21-points matches. The last match was a close competition between Double Dub and SigEp. The winner was decided in a first-to-5-points game. With the sun nearly gone, SigEp pulled the victory.



Students play in a VCU Rec Sports volleyball tournament at Monroe Park on Oct. 15. Photo by Kaitlyn Fulmore

"It was so much fun. I'm not disappointed at all," said Double Dub player and freshman Raza Hider. "It was super fun meeting everyone here. We're high fiving from six feet apart, congratulating each other, and it was a good time."

PRESS BOX



Illustration by Isabelle Roque

VCU SPORTS NEED FANS BACK IN STANDS

RYAN GRUBE
Contributing Writer

WHEN VCU'S SPRING SPORTS shut down in March, plans seemed to revolve around getting players back on the court. But as COVID-19 continues to bar sporting events from the starting line, the idea of packing VCU's stands with spectators is still cloudy.

On a national scale, as more games are played without supporters and hecklers in the stands, it's becoming increasingly clear that people at home are becoming less interested in tuning in to watch the big games.

The most recent evidence came from Games 1, 2 and 3 of the 2020 NBA Finals, which were played without spectators in attendance. The matches topped the list of the least-watched NBA Finals games in recorded history, dating back to 1988, Sports Media Watch reported.

MLB attempted to add a crowd element in the form of cardboard cutouts. The notion eventually wore out, however, as the league began to gradually allow larger capacities of fans for divisional playoffs held at bubble sites in San Diego, Los Angeles, Houston and Arlington, Virginia.

The decreasing viewership in professional sports outlines why venues like Stuart C. Siegel Center and The Diamond must be filled with fans for the upcoming seasons. By not having fans in the seats at contests, VCU runs the risk of people losing interest while watching at home.

An October statement from VCU Athletics stated the school will continue to seek advice from the state on fan capacity for 2020-21 men's and women's basketball games.

"Regardless of capacity limit, if fans are permitted, a seating manifest that adheres to social distancing guidelines will be generated," the statement read. "In addition, VCU athletics will transition to fully digital ticketing to eliminate contact between fans and game-day staff."

According to a survey by the Marist Center for Sports Communication, 35% of sports fans said concerns around COVID-19 resulted in a decrease in their watching live sports broadcasts.

Fake crowd noise is a popular fill-in, particularly in the NBA, NFL and MLB, as major sports venues begin permitting small percentages of fans back in their respective seats.

But even that interim solution has been largely unsuccessful. According to data compiled by Sports Media Watch, these top-level sports leagues are facing considerable negative viewership within their contests.

The NBA's bubble playoffs were viewed by 37% fewer people than last season's normal playoffs, while the 2020 Finals declined by 49% from 2019.

Meanwhile, the MLB experienced a 40% drop in its divisional series, and the NFL is witnessing a 14% early-season drop-off from last year's viewership numbers.

Simulated crowd noise will likely have the same underwhelming effect at the Siegel Center or at The Diamond, where VCU's baseball games are held.

The Siegel Center, VCU's home for men's and women's basketball, current-

ly holds 7,637 fans. The building is the site of 152 consecutive sellouts at men's hoops contests.

The arena has not only become a staple for entertainment in the local Richmond area, but also in all of college basketball. The packed crowd creates an electric atmosphere that draws in thousands of viewers to every game.

“

For obvious reasons, our whole environment of social connection is completely inside out. So sports and the ability of sports to act as a unifying force is really undermined.”

Mike Mulvihill, head of strategy and analytics for Fox Sports

Reducing the capacity of spectators severely diminishes the home court effect, which the black and gold have taken to a whole new level since the home sellout streak began in January 2011 with a VCU victory over UNC Wilmington.

The VCU Peppas can only create so much noise, and many of the chants they lead don't carry the same effect without a substantial amount of black and gold fans.

Mike Mulvihill, the head of strategy and analytics for Fox Sports, said sports and social connection go hand-in-hand to create a productive business.

“For obvious reasons, our whole environment of social connection is completely inside out,” Mulvihill told The Washington Post. “So sports and the ability of sports to act as a unifying force is really undermined.”

It's understandable that the vast majority of sporting events are operating at a reduced capacity due to COVID-19 risks.

With the majority of sports essentially put on hold around the commonwealth, University of Virginia, Liberty and Virginia Tech remain the only in-state schools currently in season, as they advance through their respective conference schedules. Virginia announced in September that fans would not be allowed at fall sporting events. Liberty's Arthur L. William Stadium holds a limited capacity of 1,000 patrons, and Tech fills Lane Stadium with the same number of guests plus another 1,000 cardboard cut-outs.

Leagues of all levels of competition are following social distancing guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, requiring a safe, 6-foot distance between yourself and others.

But there are obviously ways to enforce these measures and still have spectators present inside stadiums and arenas.

Take the temperature of fans as they enter. Spread people out accordingly. Make everyone wear a mask, but make it happen. VCU Athletics needs fans back in the stands for the approaching seasons, or the university's sports teams could become the latest victims of dwindling viewership.

On this day
In 1949, President Harry S. Truman appointed the first female federal judge, Burnita Shelton Matthews from Hazlehurst, Mississippi, to the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.



Deep Groove Records manager Cloud Myers tends to the counter as customer Rachel Martinell sifts through records. The store is one of five in Richmond participating in Record Store Day this year. Photo by Enza Marcy

Local vinyl shops celebrate Record Store Day, see boost in business

GRACE MCOMBER
Contributing Writer

At Plan 9 Music in Carytown, sales associate Eugene “Hip Hop” Henry gestured to a half-full wooden crate of exclusive vinyls labeled “Record Store Day.”

“That little bin is all that’s left,” Henry said. “You go from having hundreds of titles to being able to fit everything in there.”

What remained in the container are vinyls exclusively released to independently-owned record stores in celebration of Record Store Day, a worldwide event celebrated via artist events and music-related festivities unique to each location.

The annual event, which typically takes place during the third week of April, was postponed to June due to COVID-19. That date was then replaced by three separate dates in the fall — Aug. 29, Sept. 26 and Oct. 24.

On Oct. 24, Plan 9 will stock more exclusive titles than previous dates in celebration of the event’s final installation.

Started in 2008, the event is part of a renewed and growing interest in vinyl, most of which, according to Henry, is driven by younger fans.

“It’s funny, because older customers will go for CDs or cassettes,” the associate said. “But you see the trend even with newer artists. They’ll put out the record before the CD.”

In last year’s annual report from the Recording Industry Association of America, or RIAA, vinyls had earned \$224.1 million on 8.6 million units, closing in on CD revenue of \$247.9 million on 18.6 million units. However, the RIAA’s 2020 mid-year report indicated a 23% drop across all physical sales due to COVID-19.

Record Store Day’s new format generated a boost in sales at Plan 9 Music, which

Henry said was especially needed after an uncertain start to the year.

“I think that’s exactly why they broke it into three,” Henry said. “A lot of stores had three or four months of pretty much nothing that they needed to make up for.”

Henry said business at Plan 9 is almost back to pre-pandemic levels since resuming in-person shopping in May. He attributed this to the enthusiasm he has seen from vinyl fans.

“People really need their music,” Henry said. “When we were only doing curbside pickups, we were getting a lot of calls. Now that we allow a limited number of people in the store, we’re seeing a line down the street on Saturdays and Sundays.”

In addition to modified in-person shopping, many of Richmond’s brick-and-mortar record stores have either incorporated or completely shifted to online or social media shopping as a result of the pandemic.

This includes Steady Sounds, which had served the Richmond community on West Broad Street for the past 10 years. In a June Instagram post, the store announced that it would not reopen after closing in March. Steady Sounds will continue buying and selling vinyl on Instagram and merchandise through the store’s website.

“We miss having day-to-day interactions with all of you, and one of the pleasures of owning a brick and mortar is just meeting all walks of life and talking about music and life,” the store said in the post.

Jay Leavitt, owner of Deep Groove Records, said increasing the store’s presence on social media helped maintain customers, but the increase in business he has experienced since June is due to the tenacity of music fans.

“People can’t go to shows or concerts anymore and some have listened to their entire vinyl collection in lockdown,” Leavitt said. “For the people that have disposable income and like records, we’ve been booming.”

Deep Groove, which buys and sells new and vintage vinyl, offered only curbside pickups for six weeks after reopening. From this, the business was able to generate around 30% of its usual pre-pandemic revenue while keeping the storefront closed to the public. Leavitt said this was enough to keep his 317 N. Robinson St. location afloat during lockdown.

“I’m very grateful,” the owner said. “Because I know a lot of businesses, like restaurants and the live music industry, are really struggling.”

Leavitt’s store has celebrated Record Store Day since opening in 2009, but this year’s three-part event has caused complications while obtaining exclusive releases.

“Our distributors are just overwhelmed,” the owner said. “We love the day, it’s a lot of fun. But from the non-consumer side of it, it’s a pain in the ass.”

Despite the challenges presented by both the pandemic and having to adapt to three Record Store Day events, Leavitt is optimistic about the future of his business and the vinyl industry as a whole.

“I’m seeing more new people coming in than ever before,” Leavitt said. “At first we didn’t know if we were going to make it, but we’ve set a strong foundation and I’m very grateful for the position I’m currently in.”

Record Store Day locations in Richmond:

Plan 9 Music

Contact: 804-353-9996,
richmond@plan9music.com
Location: 3017 W. Cary St.
Website: plan9music.com

Crossroads Records

Contact: 804-823-8357,
crossroadsrecords86@gmail.com
Location: 9200 Stony Point Parkway,
Suite 191
Website: facebook.com/crossroadsrecords-musicandmore

Deep Groove Records

Contact: 804-278-9112
Location: 317 N. Robinson St.
Website: deepgroovevinyl.com

Wax Moon

Contact: waxmoon@outlook.com
Location: 1310 Altamont Ave.
Website: waxmoonrecords.com

Small Friend Records and Books

Contact: 804-353-1320,
info@smallfriend.org
Location: 1 N. Lombardy St.
Website: smallfriend.org



Seats at the Firehouse Theatre will go unfilled during a final livestreamed performance of “Ann” on Oct. 25. The one-woman play explores the life of Ann Richards, Texas’ first female Democratic governor. Photo by Jon Mirador

‘Ann’ provides contactless theater with a political message

CLAIRE DARCY
Contributing Writer

Feisty, sharp, ballsy and vulgar — these are the words audience members at Richmond’s Firehouse Theatre use to describe the late politician Ann Richards.

As the first female Democratic governor of Texas from 1991-95, Richards advocated for women’s rights, supported the pro-choice movement and encouraged civic engagement for everyone. Written by Holland Taylor, “Ann” is a biographic look into Richards’ personal and professional lives.

The show began its four-month Broadway run in 2013 at the Lincoln Center’s Vivian Beaumont Theater. “Ann” came to Firehouse Theatre as the third show of its 2020-21 season and started its run on Sept. 16.

“She was known for her devotion to people of all stripes and colors and sizes, and she created a government in Texas that was representative of the people,” said actress Jacqueline Jones, who stars in the titular role. “She hired all walks of life to be part of her government, and the people really admired her and loved her for that.”

In order to comply with social distancing measures, Firehouse Theatre limited the number of audience members permitted to attend each show. The maximum capacity grew from two to eight people as dates progressed. To accommodate tickets quickly selling out, the theater also offers livestreamed performances on select nights.

“The main idea of our contactless performance is ‘stay away from everyone,’” producing artistic director Joel Bassin said in his pre-show announcements.

Stage manager Grace Brown said the theater also takes audience temperatures before entry, sanitizes the building everyday, requires masks to be worn at all times and limits the production crew’s size.

Additionally, audience members are socially distanced and can pre-order contactless drinks.

“Everybody has a number,” Jones said. “Your number is your seat, your number is your bathroom and your number is your little slice of space on the bar.”

Brown said the one-woman show was an ideal fit because of social distancing requirements and its political message during an election year.

With a minimal audience size, Brown and Jones cited a noticeable difference in energy levels compared to full house shows of the past. Despite this, both said the reduced crowd brought some advantages.

“It’s a lot easier to know when everybody has arrived or just having a good idea of where everybody is and what’s going on,” Brown said.

The limited capacity gave Jones the ability to create a more intimate experience for her audience.

“It’s kind of nice because I can address individuals more specifically,” Jones said. “That’s kind of exciting to feel like I can connect more on a personal level.”

Director Billy Christopher Maupin of Firehouse Theatre approached Jones in 2019 with the idea of producing “Ann.”

In his director’s note, Maupin wrote that after watching a production of “Ann” on PBS for the first time, he wanted to produce the play himself and had Jones in mind for the lead role.

The show runs for approximately one hour and 40 minutes, with a brief intermission at the one-hour mark. Except for dialogue with the off-stage voice of Richards’ secretary, Nancy Kohler — played by VCU voice and speech instructor Erica Hughes — Jones delivers a fast-paced monologue with little rest for the full duration of the show.

“Her mind goes a million miles a minute, and the script is actually written like that with personal self-interruptions,” Jones said. “You see how fast she thinks.”

Jones said performing the breathless script is “exciting.” She prepared for the role by reading Richards’ autobiography, watching interviews and speeches that Richards gave, and working with Hughes as a dialect coach.

The play highlights Richard’s vulgar humor and sharp wit. Despite the small attendance size, each joke was met with resounding laughter.

The show draws to its conclusion with a passionate message about the importance of participating in government. The moment involves Jones pacing the stage as she directly addresses the audience and stresses the value of an individual’s right to vote — a message that is especially potent leading up to the Nov. 3 election.

“We have to quit whining and start participating,” Jones said during the show as Richards.

The final performance of “Ann” will be livestreamed Oct. 25 at 4 p.m. For more information, visit the Firehouse Theatre’s website at firehousetheatre.org/ann.

Five spooky Halloween movies for the faint of heart

CLAIRE DARCY
Contributing Writer

While some may prefer watching a spine-chilling horror film to celebrate the upcoming holiday, others seek more mild doses of the season’s spooky themes. Below are five great family-friendly films to get you in the Halloween spirit.

“Scooby Doo on Zombie Island” 1998

After the Mystery Gang splits up to pursue individual passions, Fred Jones — the group’s level-headed leader — reunites the crew for a trip to Moonscar Island: home of pirate ghost Morgan Moonscar. The friends find more than what they hoped for as they are confronted by ghosts, werecats and zombies.

This film is an action-packed adventure that will reunite viewers with familiar childhood characters. It features character development that displays the Mystery Gang as older and more sophisticated, along with a refreshing break from the “bad guy in a mask” plot line. Despite its TV-G rating, the film contains its share of frightening moments and has a creepy, unpredictable ending.

“Scooby Doo on Zombie Island” is available on Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Boomerang and Vudu.

“Beetlejuice” 1988

Halloween would not be complete without at least one Tim Burton film, and “Beetlejuice” is the perfect candidate. When a ghost couple finds their house overrun by trendy New Yorkers, they turn to notorious poltergeist Betelgeuse to scare away the newcomers.

In what is arguably the film’s most iconic scene, a dinner party leads the mortal family and their guests to become possessed and perform “The Banana Boat Song (Day-O).” “Beetlejuice” boasts an instantly recognizable cast — including Catherine O’Hara, Winona Ryder and Alec Baldwin — along with shocking special effects and bawdy humor.

“Beetlejuice” is available on Amazon Prime Video, Freeform, Sling and Vudu.

“CORALINE” 2009

This stop-motion favorite tells the story of Coraline Jones, who feels bored and neglected in her family’s new house. She discovers a portal to an alternate universe that appears like the utopian version of her world, but she soon discovers there are more horrors than meet the eye — or button. The movie has a beautiful and eerie soundtrack, playful animation and fantastic twists, making it perfect for the Halloween season.

“Coraline” is available on Amazon Prime Video, Starz and Vudu.

“The Addams Family” 1991

Packed with an eccentric cast of characters, “The Addams Family” tells the story of Gomez Addams and his long-lost brother, Fester. A sinister con-artist, Abigail Craven, is owed money by the family’s lawyer. She uses her son Gordon to pose as the missing relative in hopes of acquiring the Addams’ fortune and is nearly successful in doing so. The story is engaging, and the humor is dark and witty — making this movie about a twisted, morbid family a Halloween must-watch.

“The Addams Family” is available on Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Freeform and Vudu.

“Little Shop of Horrors” 1986

This cult classic musical has it all — comedy, romance, catchy showtunes and a man-eating plant from outer space. When florist Seymour Krelborn finds a mysterious plant, he discovers that only human blood will help it survive. As the plant grows, Krelborn is skyrocketed into a world of fame and fortune but at the cost of sacrificing his morals and peers to feed the hungry monster.

The film has two endings. The originally released version includes a happily ever after, while the director’s cut features a more sinister and heartbreaking conclusion.

“Little Shop of Horrors” is available on Amazon Prime Video, HBO and Vudu. The director’s cut is available on Amazon Prime Video and HBO.



Illustration by Marisa Stratton
Infographic by Raymond Liu

Cultural graduation ceremonies honor underrepresented student groups

EBONIQUE LITTLE
Contributing Writer

The unique challenges faced by some minority graduates won't go unnoticed this December as three intimately-held VCU ceremonies unite students of similar cultural backgrounds and uplift their academic journeys.

During fall and spring commencements, cultural graduation ceremonies — Donning of the Kente, Latinx Achievement Ceremony and the Lavender Celebration — recognize the academic achievements of Black, Latino and LGBTQ students. VCU's first Lavender Celebration was held in 2012, while the other two cultural ceremonies were introduced in 2016.

"These ceremonies are significant because they honor traditionally marginalized and overlooked communities," said Office of Multicultural Student Affairs, or OMSA, Programming Coordinator Tiana Ingram. "And these are the students who, most often, were not considered in academia, who weren't even allowed to attend institutions."

Typically hosted by a VCU alum as the keynote speaker and a designated family member or friend to give students their regalia, all three events seek to provide them with a "positive and rewarding experience that recognizes hard work, dedication and perseverance," according to OMSA's website.

In the past, some of these experiences were enriched by DJ duo The Di-egos, Elegba Folklore Society dance and drum performances, and interpretive routines from the Khalima and Laterna Dance Company.

Due to the coronavirus, OMSA recently announced adjustments to these ceremonies. Winter 2020 graduates will receive their regalia, ceremony booklet and a personalized hand-written letter in the mail. Ingram said the OMSA staff seeks to send impactful messages.

"We set aside a day in the semester, and you know, we try to be intentional," Ingram said.

Students who register for recognition learn about the history and cultural relevance of their respective ceremonies — those participating in the Donning of the Kente are bestowed with a stole made of kente, a cloth which originated in Ghana and symbolizes prestige in many African societies.

Graduates in the Latinx Achievement Ceremony, which is partly conducted in Spanish, receive a serape stole. The stole represents the traditional blanket-like shawl worn in Mexico, with bright colors and intricate patterns that were once used to indicate one's family or social status.

Psychology senior Yisela Vasquez-Perez will be included in this semester's program, making her the first person in her immediate and extended family to receive a college degree.

As a first-generation student, Vasquez-Perez said she faced obstacles in her college career, like learning how to register for classes and pay for tuition.

Vasquez-Perez said joining the school's first Latina-based sorority, Sigma Lambda Upsilon, was how she established herself at VCU.

"I'm still glad that this is happening in some shape or form," Vasquez-Perez said, "because my heritage and roots are incredibly important to me."

Vasquez-Perez was looking forward to recognizing her heritage at an in-person ceremony, but hopes the graduation stoles and other materials can still serve as a point of gathering.



Sheila Hernandez and Tiana Ingram, employees at VCU's Office of Multicultural Student Affairs, organize graduation regalia for Latino, Black and LGBTQ students. Photo by Enza Marcy

The Lavender Ceremony, which recognizes the achievements of LGBTQ students, began in 1995 at the University of Michigan and has since expanded to VCU, making the university one of about 200 schools to host it.

The significance of lavender to the LGBTQ community traces back to the pink triangle that gay men wore in concentration camps, combined with the black triangle that signified lesbians as political prisoners in Nazi Germany, according to CNN. During the ceremony, LGBTQ students are presented with a commemorative rainbow cord.

Despite having to change the format, Ingram said honoring specific groups of students outside of the university-wide commencement was important.

"We understand that your story is probably different," Ingram said. "We understand that there are some struggles and some barriers that you had to get through to even get here."

Students can register online for the cultural graduation ceremonies at omsa.vcu.edu/what-we-do.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

See something

FRI. 10/23

‘Rocky Horror Picture Show’ Screening

Celebrate the Halloween season by driving to the Ashland Theatre parking lot for a showing of the 1975 classic, “Rocky Horror Picture Show.” The event is rain or shine. All tickets must be purchased prior to the screenings on ashlandtheatre.org. Concessions will be available.
7 p.m., Ashland Theatre, 205 England St., \$20 per car

SUN. 10/25

‘Positive Thinking’ Opening Concert

The Chamber of Music Society of Central Virginia will begin its 16th season with “Positive Thinking,” a concert featuring flute, guitar and cello music. The socially distanced show will feature the works of French composer Guillaume Connesson, Argentine tango composer Astor Piazzolla and a 19th-century take on Austrian folk tunes. Tickets can be purchased at [Eventbrite.com](https://eventbrite.com).
3 - 4 p.m., Historic Mankin Mansion Private Wedding & Event Estate, 4300 Oakleys Lane, \$5 - \$30 per ticket

Do something

FRI. 10/23

‘Breakthrough’ Opening Reception

Alaskan artist Sara Henry will debut her newest exhibit, “Breakthrough,” which features 3D ceramic paintings in the form of towers, walls, orbs and tiles. The exhibit will reside in the Jane Sandelin Gallery through Jan. 2. At this free event, guests can also participate in a mask decorating contest. This is the first of the museum’s Fourth Friday events, and different exhibits will be introduced through Nov. 21. For more information, visit artworksva.com.
6 p.m., Art Works Inc., 320 Hull St.

SAT. 10/24

‘Haunted Trail at Windy Hill’

Guests can walk through two haunted outdoor trails full of creatures, tricks and traps, where they can also view a “ghoulish garden” light display. For tickets to the 30-minute time slots, visit bloodlakeva.com. The trail will run until Halloween day.
Times vary, Blood Lake Haunted Trail, 16500 Midlothian Turnpike, \$18

Learn something

FRI. 10/23

‘Fashion for All’ Informational Panel

Student group VCUBlkinfashion will host an informational panel with guest speakers Hannah Stoudemire and Ali Richmond. Their foundation, Fashion For All, provides solutions for fashion industry professionals to create more equitable and inclusive environments. The free Zoom event will teach attendees about the connection between social activism and fashion. Register at the link on the club’s Instagram page, [@vcublkinfashion](https://vcublkinfashion).
6 - 7 p.m.

MON. 10/26

Student Election Debate

Three students representing VCU Young Democrats and College Republicans at VCU will debate about the upcoming presidential election and candidates’ policies. Viewers can tune into this free webinar and listen to varying perspectives as broadcast journalism professor Bill Oglesby moderates. The Zoom link is available at events.vcu.edu.
6 - 7:30 p.m.

Have suggestions for the events calendar? Contact spectrum@commonwealthtimes.org

CT Opinions

Quote of the week

"Diversity is having a seat at the table. Inclusion is having a voice. And belonging is having that voice be heard."

— LIZ FOSSLIEN

Tea Time With Tagwa

DRUGGING PEOPLE IS NOT THE WAY INTO THEIR PANTS

TAGWA SHAMMET
Opinions Editor

Tea timers, I'd like to give a trigger warning. This story discusses the disgusting reality of date rape culture at parties — and the presence of it on VCU's campus.

Scrolling through Twitter, I nearly spilled my coffee. An Instagram story from an unofficial account, @vcuparties, showed a person pouring an entire bottle of NyQuil into a drink container. The video later shows a room full of people dancing in a party setting.

I could not believe my eyes. I could not decipher where my shock came from. Was it the flat out criminal and unethical act in front of my eyes or the mere audacity to record and post such an incriminating video?

Being a junior, I've been to my fair share of parties. I've seen the culture of men in the room; their willingness to risk a woman's life for quick gratification. It has always baffled me that someone could even think of acting without consent.

The conversation of consent has been going on for far too long. Quite frankly, the fact that it is even a conversation is aggravating. There is nothing to talk about.

If a person is uninterested in being intimate with you, oh well, move on. Life continues after the initial sting of

rejection. However, a person's emotional, mental and physical state will never continue normally after being assaulted or raped.

Furthermore, someone can still be interested, just not in that moment. There is nothing wrong with not being ready to be intimate with someone — it is your choice at the end of the day.

“

Intimacy can come through conversation, through gifts, through love and affection; sex is not everything.”

Tagwa Shammet,
Opinions Editor

Pressuring and forcing someone into something they are uncomfortable with is one of the most despicable things I've ever heard. We are more than just our bodies. There are more ways to be intimate than sexual activities.

Intimacy can come through conversation, through gifts, through love and affection; sex is not everything.

This video solidifies the accepted rape culture engrained in the party scene. It feels like anytime a person, especially a woman,

attends a party, she is essentially risking her life and sanity for the immediate satisfaction of a predator.

As a woman, I understand the fears that are associated with parties. I don't even drink, yet I find myself being extremely mindful of where I am and what I'm doing. I am constantly hovering around my drunk female friends and keeping account of their whereabouts. It is exhausting to be on eggshells in a place that is supposed to radiate excitement and youth.

It's getting old. The horror stories experienced by countless women due to spiked drinks, sexual assault and rape is ridiculous.

I truly cannot rationalize the idea of putting drugs into someone's drink. I think the scariest part about drinking something that is spiked is how unaware one is until it's too late. Some symptoms can be:

1. Feeling drunk, woozy or drowsy
2. Feeling drunker than expected
3. Mental confusion
4. Slurring words
5. Memory loss

These are only a few of the side effects present with a spiked drink. While it is unfair to put the responsibility on those

attending parties for fun, I urge everyone to be safe and cognizant of what they put in their bodies.

As a society, how much more are we willing to allow? How many more victims are we going to blame before we realize that the problem does not come from the person who has been hurt?

Since we're having the conversation, let's say this: If someone says no, move on. Drugging and raping them highlights how inherently disturbed you are. And that's the tea.

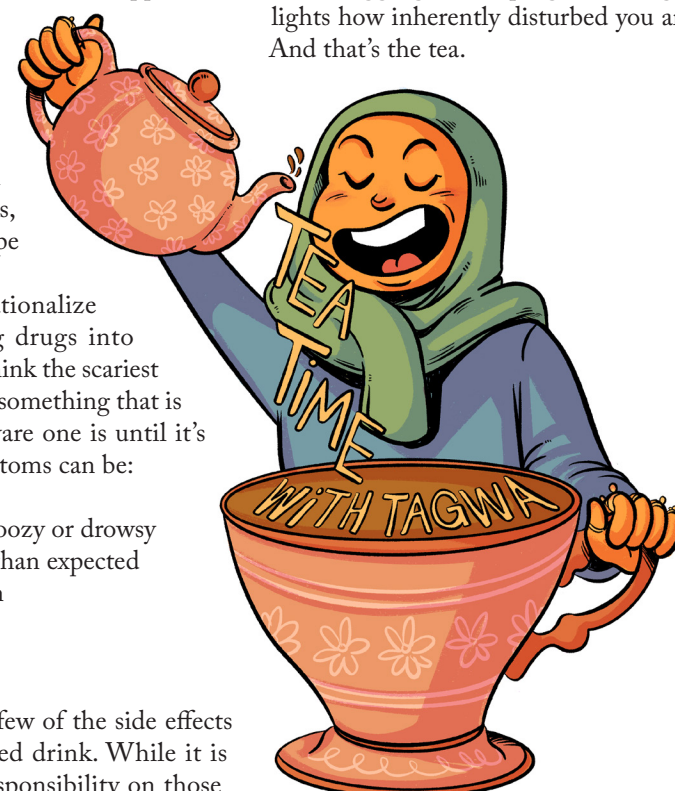


Illustration by Karly Andersen

ISHAAN NANDWANI
Contributing Writer

Now more than ever, we need to elect leaders who understand the individual struggles for health care rights and believe in science. Who better equipped to face today's important decisions than health care professionals themselves?

At first thought, health workers leading the government may seem like an unconventional and even absurd idea. After all, when we think of politicians, our minds typically turn to lawyers and policy experts, not physicians and nurses who attend school with the primary goal of caring for patients through science.

During this time, however, health care has become a topic of intense political debate. Left-wing politicians have admonished the current administration's failure to contain the virus. The rapid spread of COVID-19 throughout our nation is largely due to our commander-in-chief's inability to listen to science and take the disease seriously.

The right has repeatedly attempted to repeal the Affordable Care Act — a health care overhaul law signed in 2010 by former President Barack Obama — notably through the nomination of Judge Amy Coney Barrett to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court will hear a case determining the future of the ACA the week after this November's general election.



Illustration by Noelle Hepworth

Health care professionals belong in public office

Adding Barrett, who has publicly criticized "Obamacare," to the court could cause millions with pre-existing conditions and adults under 26 who rely on their parents' coverage to lose their insurance.

This would be especially dangerous during a global pandemic. According to Johns Hopkins University, more than 1.12 million people worldwide have died and experienced the devastating health consequences of COVID-19, which is far from over.

Today, Gov. Ralph Northam is the only doctor serving as governor in the U.S. But health care workers serving in government positions are far more common than one would expect. Many

would be surprised to find out that there are 14 physicians currently serving in the House of Representatives and three in the U.S. Senate.

Although it's true that health care workers come from both parties — and many of the physicians currently serving in Congress are Republicans — there are a handful of former medical professionals running as Democrats in the upcoming election.

Hiral Tipirneni, a 2020 candidate for the House of Representatives in Arizona's 6th District, said in an interview that her incentive to run for office stemmed from the desire to protect health insurance coverage. Serving as an emergency room physician for 10 years, Tipirneni's experiences provided

her with a deep understanding of patients' everyday struggles.

In Virginia, internal medicine physician Cameron Webb is running to represent the commonwealth's 5th District in the House of Representatives. Similar to Tipirneni, Webb is advocating for progressive platforms, such as expanding access to health care and utilizing his physician background to appeal to voters concerned about the pandemic.

Health care workers should absolutely be involved in making policy decisions about the most important issues plaguing our nation. Doctors, nurses and physician assistants possess a unique skill set that makes them well equipped to tackle these issues.

Doctors are put through the ringer professionally. They endure eight years of higher education plus an additional residency training program, gaining not only rigorous scientific competency but also invaluable interpersonal skills. From day one, they're taught to place humanity at the forefront of their profession.

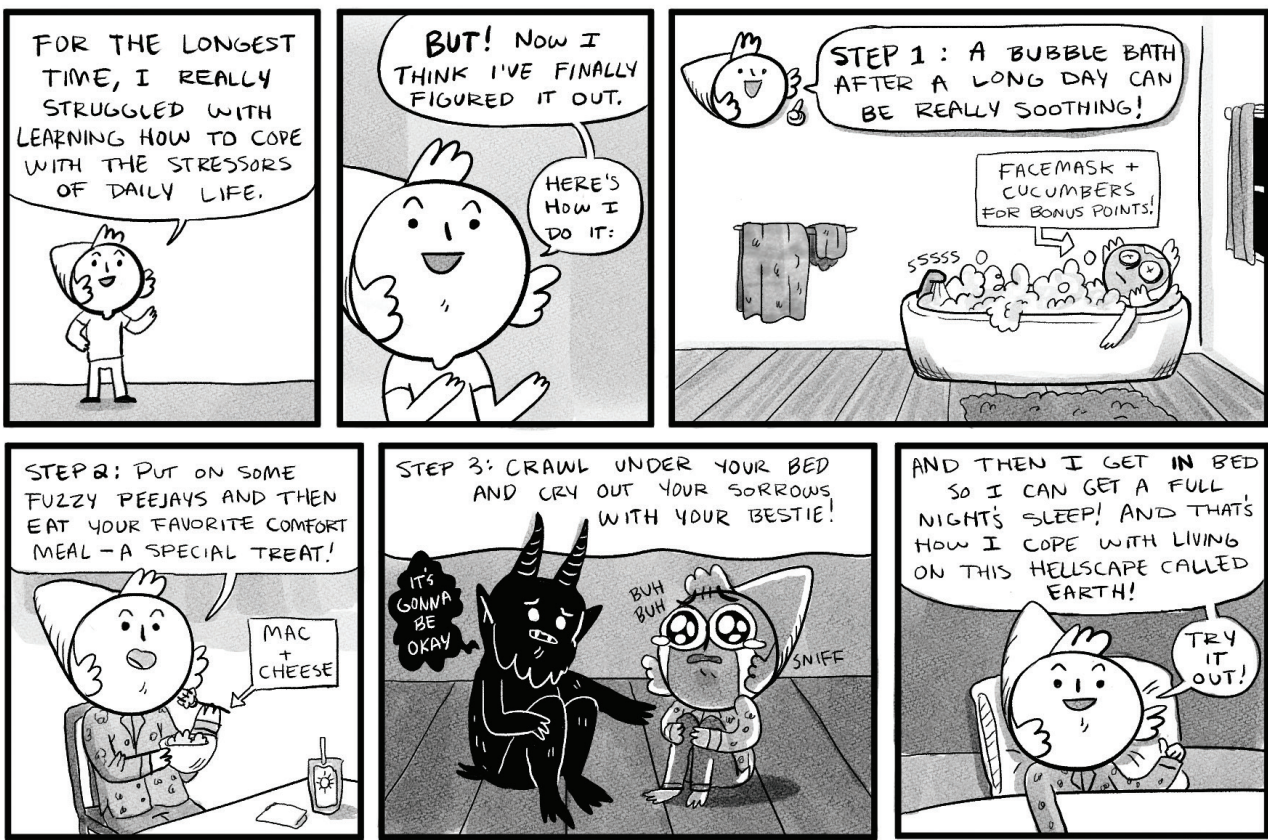
When I think of the kind of leaders I want for my country, that's what I mean — someone who can empathize with my personal concerns and considers humanity when making decisions about critical issues, such as access to abortion and gun legislation. Health care workers have already begun to fill these roles and it could very well be the start of a new era in politics.

CT Comics

The Hard Truth by Carleigh Ross



How I Cope by Sarah Brady



I'm Cooking by Audrey Garrett



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The Commonwealth Times is the award-winning independent student newspaper at VCU, since 1969. The CT staff maintains all editorial and operations discretion. There is absolutely no prior review by the public, university or VCU Student Media Center administration or staff. The Executive Editor writes and manages the Operations Budget.

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CT

Puzzles

Los Angeles Times

Crossword Puzzle

Edited by Rich Norris and Joyce Nichols Lewis

ACROSS

- 1 Rush job notation
5 Lose one's way at the podium
11 Wild guess
15 Eastern "way"
18 Valley with vines
19 Court
20 Cry out loud
21 "___ Luna": Allende novel
22 "You Make Me Feel Like Dancing" singer Leo
23 Wrecked Mitsubishi SUVs?
26 End-of-page abbr.
27 1998 animated bug film
29 "And how!"
30 Eponymous lab dish inventor
31 Iconic '60s-'70s TV caretaker
33 Skein formers
35 Response to "Shall we?"
36 Followed Chevy SUVs?
41 Worn
43 Made
44 Inflexible
45 Indian term of respect
46 Modern office staples
49 Foundry waste
50 Kept adding to, as a tab
51 Choice for the kitchen
54 Thrust
57 Like-minded group
58 Greenwich who co-wrote songs for the Ronettes and Crystals
59 Tar
62 Head cases?
64 Tricks

- 65 Fraternity letter
66 Found spots for Ford pickups?
71 Tiny songbird
72 Eject
74 Simple to manage
75 Pepper named for a state
77 "What the Butler Saw" playwright
79 The "E" in Q.E.D.
80 Indian spice mixtures
83 "The Dirty Dozen" star
85 Comic strip frame
86 José's home
90 Put the kibosh on
91 Sock part
92 Poker Flat creator
93 Seals' singing partner
95 Building for tools
97 Selected classic VWs at an online auction?
100 Partnership for Peace gp.
102 Leftovers wrap
104 Crossword solver's smudge
105 Something in the air
107 Tenant
110 Series finale: Abbr.
111 Youngster
112 Pointed the way for Subaru SUVs?
115 They cast no votes
117 Dr. Seuss' Sam-___
118 Former slugger Martinez
119 Weapons cache
120 Wasn't straight
121 Pack critter
122 Getaway spots
123 Fannies
124 Listening devices

DOWN

- 1 Note in an E scale

- 2 Parting word
3 Wild way to go
4 Good Samaritan story, say
5 Betrayed, with "on"
6 Familiar gamut
7 1980s Peppard co-star
8 Partiality
9 Whopper
10 Broke the surface
11 Borg and Bergman
12 Snacks in shells
13 Afflict
14 Minor disruption
15 Took Honda SUVs for demo drives?
16 Ward off
17 Spring locale
22 Sudden outbursts
24 Bucks in the woods
25 Soccer immortal
28 Obligation
32 Slight touches
34 Multinational money
37 White rice's lack
38 "The Mod Squad" cop with an Afro
39 Feverish feeling
40 Energy
42 Bring into being
45 Like some norms or ills
47 Medical center
48 Takes care of
50 Work with a hunter, perhaps
51 Spanish dessert
52 Yearn
53 Coddling for a comrade, briefly
55 Weaken
56 Picnic staple
57 Product of Bali
59 "Lawrence of Arabia" star Peter
60 MLB Network sportscaster ___ Shehadi

- 61 Cleaned the interiors of Geo compacts?
62 Weep
63 Decimated Asian sea
67 "The Americans" co-star Russell
68 Pizzazz
69 Banned pesticide
70 Govt. org. that ai entrepreneurs
73 Barnyard male
76 Fancy ties
78 Rapper cousin of Snoop
80 Target
81 Required pot contribution
82 Start of an idea
84 Fishing gear
85 Super ___
87 Quivering
88 Focus of a 1990s-2000s baseball "era"
89 Stocks and such
92 Implies
93 Michael of "Arrested Development"
94 Naturally carbonated brew
96 Main Web page
97 Doctrines
98 Young Clark's lov
99 Ross and DeVos
100 Gymnast Comaneci
101 Opera solos
103 ___ football
106 Takes steps
108 Linen hue
109 Radiation measures
110 To be, in Tours
113 "Let me give you ___"
114 Japanese drama
116 Long of "Empire"

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Contact Dominique Lee @ leeds3@vcu.edu

Driver's Ed by Gary Larson

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Sudoku

By The Mephram Group

DIFFICULTY LEVEL

- 1 2 3 4

Complete the grid so each row, column, and 3-by-3 box (in bold borders) contains every digit, 1 to 9.
For strategies on how to solve Sudoku, visit sudoku.org.uk

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	4				2			8
7					9	6		
3	9							1
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				3	8	9		

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