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# from the editors

Hey, free birds!

We are almost there! One more quarter until the school year is over. That means that this will be the final issue for the 2020-2021 school year. We hope you enjoy reading what the staff has put together and we appreciated all of your support through this unprecedented time.

Although Uncaged looks different this year with only 2 online magazines, please continue to visit our website at [uncagedfhs.org](http://uncagedfhs.org) for the latest news on the Freedom and South Riding community. We hope to continue our previous publishing schedule next school year and bring even more exciting content for you to enjoy.

As we finish off the 2020-2021 school year we want to congratulate the class of 2021 for finishing a year unlike any others. The successes you have achieved and future plans are ones that you should be especially proud of and we can't wait to see where life takes you after Freedom High School. For the underclassmen reading this, enjoy your summer break and come back next school year eager to enjoy these years you have left of high school. As they say, it really does go by fast.

Thank you so much for taking the time to read through this magazine. As COVID-19 affects most aspects of our lives, we hope that this magazine has still been able to reach you. The staff always appreciates and recognizes your support. Look forward to new content on our website and publications in future years.

See you next year, free birds!



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**Cover**  
photo by Susanna Kim

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“

The caged bird sings with a fearful trill of things unknown but longed for still and his tune is heard on the distant hill for the caged bird sings of freedom.



# Learning with Virtual Loudoun

[Story by Pratha Ravani]

Virtual Loudoun, a program created by Loudoun County to let students take classes online and self-paced, is a great way for students to take classes early or retake a course. However, not many people know about it and its benefits.

Virtual Loudoun was created in the summer of 2014. The whole program is virtual and self-paced, so students can work on the assignments whenever they want, giving them flexibility. Students who take a class through virtual loudoun have to register online, and can pick from 42 different courses, some that may not even be offered at school. There are three different terms, two during the school year and one during the summer.

Students can take many different courses over Virtual Loudoun, including economic, personal finance, PE, drivers education and math, science, English and history courses.

"The course is a series of modules that involve reading and applying the content," said Robyn Griffis, Virtual Loudoun economics and personal finance teacher. "The course is self-paced and there are no penalties for late work as long as students submit work by the course end date."

The assignments for the courses vary based on the

topic and the class. Griffis believes that the assignments are reasonable and fair. Ananya Ragunath, a sophomore who is currently taking economics and personal finance with Virtual Loudoun, believes that as long as students pace themselves, the assignments should be fine.

"The assignments are very interesting," Ragunath said. "Certain assignments ask you to do research, make slideshows, write letters, paragraphs, fill out charts, create brochures, [etc]. It is important that you plan and develop time management skills when you want to work on [the course]. Overall, the assignments aren't too bad if you stay on task."

Sophomore Rashmi Admala took PE and driver's education with Virtual Loudoun during the summer. She enjoyed the course, but wishes she paced herself better.

"My overall experience was pretty good, and I'm glad I got PE out of the way during the summer," Admala said. "The PE assignment was completely on your own time with six hours of tracked workout per week. The health assignments were pretty easy, and they were mainly short stories or projects."

Admala believes that the drivers ed assignments were more difficult to complete.

"The drivers' ed assignments were really long powerpoints with a quiz at the end of each one and a test at the end of each module," Admala said. "I wish I managed my time better for the drivers ed. I had to do 1-2 modules a week,

and I always left it for the end of the week, which was not ideal."

The biggest challenge with taking the course is managing time. While there is no due date for the assignments other than it has to be done by the end of the term, pacing is important for students, to prevent them from getting overwhelmed at the end.

"There is no direct teaching and although we do have discussion forums, they are not as personal as discussion as it is with my students in my physical classroom," Griffis said. "[However] students that sign up for Virtual Loudoun are generally already self-motivated and hard-working so [they] generally do well in the course."

Ragunath believes that if students pace themselves right, you could get through the assignments in a timely manner.

"The key to scheduling your normal classes along with your virtual ones is through time management," Ragunath said.

Overall, Students and teachers both believe that Virtual Loudoun is a great way for students to retake courses or make space in their schedule by taking a class earlier. Even though it is self-paced and self-taught, past students have said that the material is easy to understand, and that they have gotten tons of support from teachers to finish their assignments.

"Virtual loudoun is a very good resource that really helps me learn and retain a lot of information," Ragunath said. "I would consider it because I love Virtual Loudoun and think it's an amazing resource to use and benefit from!"

# Social Media Connects Students

[Story by Mika Dang]

One of the downsides of distance learning is the lack of social interaction between students. Talking to group mates about projects used to be nothing more than walking up to each other in the hallways or finding one another during study hall. Because of distance learning, students are unable to interact with each other, much less face-to-face.

Marrissa Strong, a sophomore at Freedom High School, had felt withdrawn from her friends.

"Distance learning has definitely impacted my social life," Strong said. "I'm not a huge texter, so I've lost touch with many of my friends from the past school year. I also can't hang out with them either so there's not much of a connection anymore."

Molly Bercher, another sophomore, reflected a similar sentiment.

"During the school year, I would hang out with friends before, during and after school and I was a lot more involved in extracurriculars," Bercher said. "Now I really only talk to a few people a few times a week."

Many students of LCPS have begun to take matters into their own hands. By creating pages and groups online, LCPS students can communicate with one another through social media such as Instagram and Discord. Although this can never replace in-person conversations, online communities

can help students feel connected with their peers.

One student created a meme page called 'SchoolyMemes' about LCPS' new schoolwork manager and replacement for Google Classroom, Schoology.

"I started my account last year to take the stress off switching to distance learning and having to use a new program for school," said the student behind the account, who wished to remain anonymous. "When this school year began completely online, I decided to continue making memes since they also brought joy to others. Somewhere along the line, that turned into me spending the time to watch school board meetings, waiting to see what would happen with the return to in-person school. I started to provide information to students who often feel left out of the loop when the county makes decisions, having discussions and answering their questions."

Before the student knew it, the account had reached 4,000 followers. The Discord server continues to grow, reaching more than 200 members, a majority of which are LCPS students.

"I feel really lucky to have the audience that I do, and I'm very glad that I've been able to help so many students," the student said. "I've been able to meet some very cool people through the account, and I'm glad I can provide an outlet for LCPS student's voices and questions."

Another student maintained

their fan account for Wayde Byard, the public information officer for LCPS who records the school cancellation phone calls, under the username 'WaydeByardFans'. The account also informs students of any county-related issues, such as closures or inclement weather.

"I try to make sure all information I share is quick and correct, so I'm sharing the right information," said the student, who wished to remain anonymous. "A lot of parents restrict their kids in what they do on social media and such, so I've had a lot of people tell me thanks because they can't get Twitter and other things of the sort."

The student had also expressed concern about the wellbeing of the community and COVID-19:

"Please make sure you are following all COVID-19 guidelines and precautions that have been set in place. The longer we have students and members of the committee alike not following these guidelines, the longer we will be out of school, limited events, limited sports, etc., and the longer we have to wait to go back to what was 'normal'. Many people are struggling in our current learning environment, and we have to get our metrics low to go back to what we want to be doing."

Both students created their accounts out of consideration for their peers, and intend on continuing to help spread information to LCPS students.

# Quarantine Fuels a New Drive for Fun

[Story by Bailey Elliott]

[Photo by Eliza Agi]

Stress rates have significantly increased among high school students throughout the pandemic as COVID-19 has provided a significant challenge of figuring out the new ways of life during a pandemic. While students alone already have the heavy weight of college, grades, extracurriculars and balancing a healthy lifestyle, the pandemic has only provided additional stress.

During these times, it is extremely important that teenagers are prioritizing mental health to keep a clear mind and steady routine. With lockdowns and quarantine rules put into place many mental cleansing activities involving indoor areas or physical contact have been put to a halt. One thing teenagers have discovered as a breakthrough during stressful times is the

freedom of going on a leisurely drive. Going on a drive is one of the few activities that doesn't require a list of rules and regulations, time limits or masks. It is a simple way to relieve stress and get out of the house all while being cautious.

Senior Elena O'Brien prefers going on drives as a way of getting out of the house.

"Driving has been extremely beneficial during quarantine because it's so easy to get stressed being in the same environment all the time so going on a simple drive and rolling down the windows, listening to music really provides a therapeutic approach to dealing with quarantine restrictions," O'Brien said.

Along with allowing access to a change of scenery and sense of freedom, driving also provides time away from technology. Being stuck in quarantine there is not much to do, leaving teenagers to be glued to tech-

nology more than ever whether it's bingeing a new Netflix series or scrolling through social media, a leisurely drive provides time to oneself away from a screen.

"I enjoy driving alone to relax myself and have time to myself," O'Brien said.

Listening to music or a podcast while driving can also provide stress relief and increase one's mood.

"My favorite thing to do while driving is rolling down the windows and listening to my favorite music then I either get food or go to one of my favorite destinations to clear my head," senior Ava Heeren said.

Living through a pandemic can be a challenging task, involving various shifts in everyday life. Mental health is a vital part of oneself to pay attention and care for. Going on a simple drive provides a change of scenery, freedom, and glimpse of COVID-19 free lifestyle.



# Creating Casual Conversations

[Story by Karen Xu]

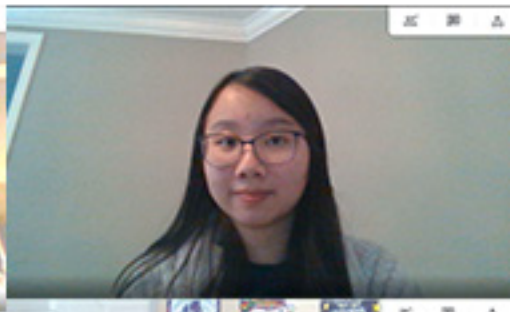
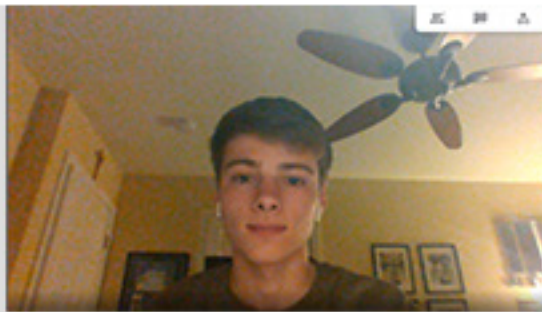
[Photos provided by Ryan Broussard, Hazel Nguyen, and Hyun Yim]

The global pandemic has dramatically altered just about every aspect of life, from how we socialize to the way we learn. However, one often overlooked aspect of distance learning is the relationship that builds between a student and a teacher over the course of a school year. That too has been upended as a result of COVID-19.

As a result of moving school online, a barrier has been put up between students and teachers causing communication to be more difficult.

"It's much more inconvenient through the virtual setting. [I miss] going in before school to ask a teacher a question," says senior Ryan Broussard. As a result, many students have reported feeling overwhelmed and alone while struggling through their schoolwork. In a world of emails and virtual office hours, reaching out for help may feel like an even more daunting task than a regular school year.

"I feel uncomfortable going [and] I don't really like talking individually on a call," said fresh-



man Hazel Nguyen. More than any other class, the current freshmen not only have to deal with the traditional challenges of transitioning to high school, but must navigate the challenges of doing everything online on top of that without the support of friends and classmates. The few human interactions that are able to exist within online school may feel artificial and superficial and connecting deeply with a teacher on a personal level now require a Herculean effort from even the chattiest of students.

"It feels like I'm not talking to a real person, like I'm communicating with a robot," said Nguyen.

Freedom High School biology teacher Hyun Yim echoes that sentiment, citing "seeing facial expressions" as the thing she misses most about in-person interactions (and even in-person, this is still hard with a face mask on). But there is still a glimmer of hope in classes that are often full of icons.

"If I pop into a breakout room, that's when I can see their faces and it's easier to turn your camera on when you're in a small group



where it's people you know, so that's when I do get to see my students here and there," said Yim.

Noting the distance that switching online caused, Yim and a few other teachers at Freedom High School have started social media pages for students to keep up with their lives and engage with their teachers.

"I wanted to make sure there was a way like my students could see what I was doing at home, I was thinking of them, and trying to garner school spirit," said Yim. With a month of hybrid so far and only a few weeks before 4 day a week in-person school for students, teachers and students alike are hopeful about the return to open conversations, social interactions, and building relationships with their teachers and fellow students.



# Striking Out Stress

[Story by Olivia Elliott]  
[Photos provided by Shelley Carter, Nick Werderman, and Hannah Bensley]

While online learning has helped some students thrive in the learning environment, it's also been the source of stress for many others.

What causes the stress? How do you deal with it? Are other people going through the same thing? Cristi Goldberg, a counselor at Freedom High School, believes this stress is caused by a few different factors. First, there's the isolation.

"Not having the teacher or the students there in class does not

allow for as much interaction or communal learning," Goldberg said.

She also says that the students, "miss their social connections at school, so the isolation can create stress."

Goldberg also believes that stress is caused by the independent nature of online learning and the students' difficulty managing that.

"The learning," Goldberg said, "while being fully supported by teachers, is more individual, and the responsibility is on the student to engage and get motivated to complete work."

While this may be true, FHS freshman Shelley Carter disagrees.

"I get stressed when I'm given a lot of homework and when I'm not able to get enough time to complete assignments," Carter said.

There are a variety of symptoms that one can experience when under pressure, and the signs vary from person to person.

Hannah Bensley, a senior from North Dakota experiences, "difficulty sleeping, fatigue, anxiety, and procrastination."

Additionally, junior Nick Werderman faces, "headaches and maybe a tiny panic attack."

Other symptoms include an increased heart rate, an increased output of sweat, and erratic mood swings.

## Here are some resources students can utilize if they are feeling stressed:

1. Organize yourself: "Work on time management and organization to make sure [you] are using [your] time wisely." -Goldberg said.
2. Turn on your camera during synchronized class time
3. Refer to the Sources of Strength Wheel
4. Eat healthy food
5. Exercise regularly
6. Have plenty of sleep
7. "Access our Academic Support Center for tutoring support." -Goldberg said.
8. Refer to mental health resources on LCPS website: <https://sites.google.com/lcps.org/resourcesforfamilies/home>
9. Do something you love

Most importantly, there are people that you can talk to. You can also always talk to your school counselors, or another trusted adult.

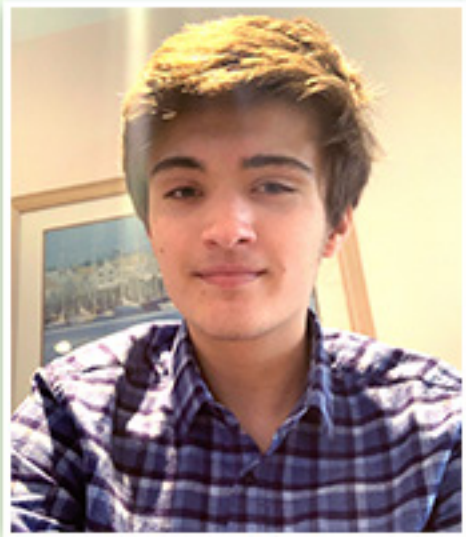


## Need motivational advice? Fellow teens and counselors can help:

Bensley: "Remember to take time for [yourself]."

Werderman: "Make a point to talk to someone or work out."

Goldberg: "Some stress is a part of life. When we are learning new skills, or in a new situation, we may feel stress. Recognize the difference for this kind of stress, and stress that is overwhelming. If [you are] feeling overwhelming stress, then something is out of balance. Maybe [you] have taken on too many challenges, or are not enjoying the challenges, or maybe [you] are trying to live up to someone else's expectations or criticism. Each student is unique and special and important and I hope that [you] know that [you] are enough, just as [you] are. Also, we counselors are always here to help."





[Story by Rebecca Cherian]  
 [Photos provided by Samantha Jenkins, Leelie Kebede, Susanna Kim, and Kayla Crockett]

This past year - marked by fear, uncertainty and loss - has been undoubtedly difficult for most, but even more so for one group in particular: the black community. Despite how far this nation has come, racism is still prevalent and continues to impact the lives of African American citizens, especially the youth.

"Although I am happy the injustices black people face are getting recognized, there were some tough moments," junior Leelie Kebede said. "I've been well aware about the police brutality the black community faces, but seeing my community getting killed daily on social media was definitely damaging to my mental health. I had to take multiple social media breaks and seek comfort through my black friends."

However, in the face of adversity, the black community has stayed strong. In light of recent events like hate crimes and police brutality, students at Freedom have really come together to support one another.

"During the summer we were all able to come together to discuss these issues because they affect-

ed all of us. I think having these conversations and being there for each other and taking care of one another has ultimately made us a stronger community," junior Devon Chaulk said.

In fact, Freedom's Black Student Association has been taking initiative in furthering its agenda. The club recently joined a community union and hosted its first open mic night. It also has a mural going up in the school, designed and painted by none other than BSA president Samantha Jenkins.

"Everything that happened highlighted just how important our message is," Jenkins said. "I'm pretty excited about [the mural] because it portrays an important message about unity and advocating for change."

Though a number of students have expressed that the school can do better in supporting its black community, many staff members have stepped up and been a valuable source of strength for those in need. For instance, Darlene Adu Gyamfi, a counselor at Freedom, leads the Excellent Options program, dedicated to help students connect

# together we are strong

with peers of similar backgrounds and graduate with options.

"[It's important to understand] how being at a school where a lot of the teachers don't look like you, a lot of the front office staff doesn't look like you, admin and so on, impacts students and their level of feeling safe and supported," Adu Gyamfi said. "Self-advocacy is an important part of mental health because sometimes you could develop what is known as learned helplessness, which is when your past experiences make you feel uncomfortable or unable to speak up. So we don't want kids to engage in that and develop that attitude; we want them to feel empowered and have the ability to speak up and properly advocate when necessary."

Many believe that Freedom HS and South Riding as a whole should strive to do its part to support the black community. Whether it be by advocating on social media, signing petitions, attending marches, or even just being there for those who need it, everyone can help make a difference.

"Mentally, it was rough for me and others in the black community last summer; I remember having this feeling of being angry and sad nearly every day when the news of George Floyd start-

ed to spread," Caulk said. "But it made me really happy when I got a DM from a Freedom student who I hadn't talked to much but they basically reached out and said, 'Hey I'm sure this is a really rough time for you, but I am here

for you if you need it,' and that right there meant everything. Just to know that I could be supported by students I didn't even know or feel all that connected to want to support me through that time meant the world."



**"We want to provide a safe space for Black students and allies, but we also want to educate each other on the past and present so we're better prepared for the future."**

**-Samantha Jenkins**

**"Trauma and strife can always bring the right people together. It may cause separation, but if a common cause arises, many people put aside their differences to focus on a common good."**

**-Leelie Kebede**



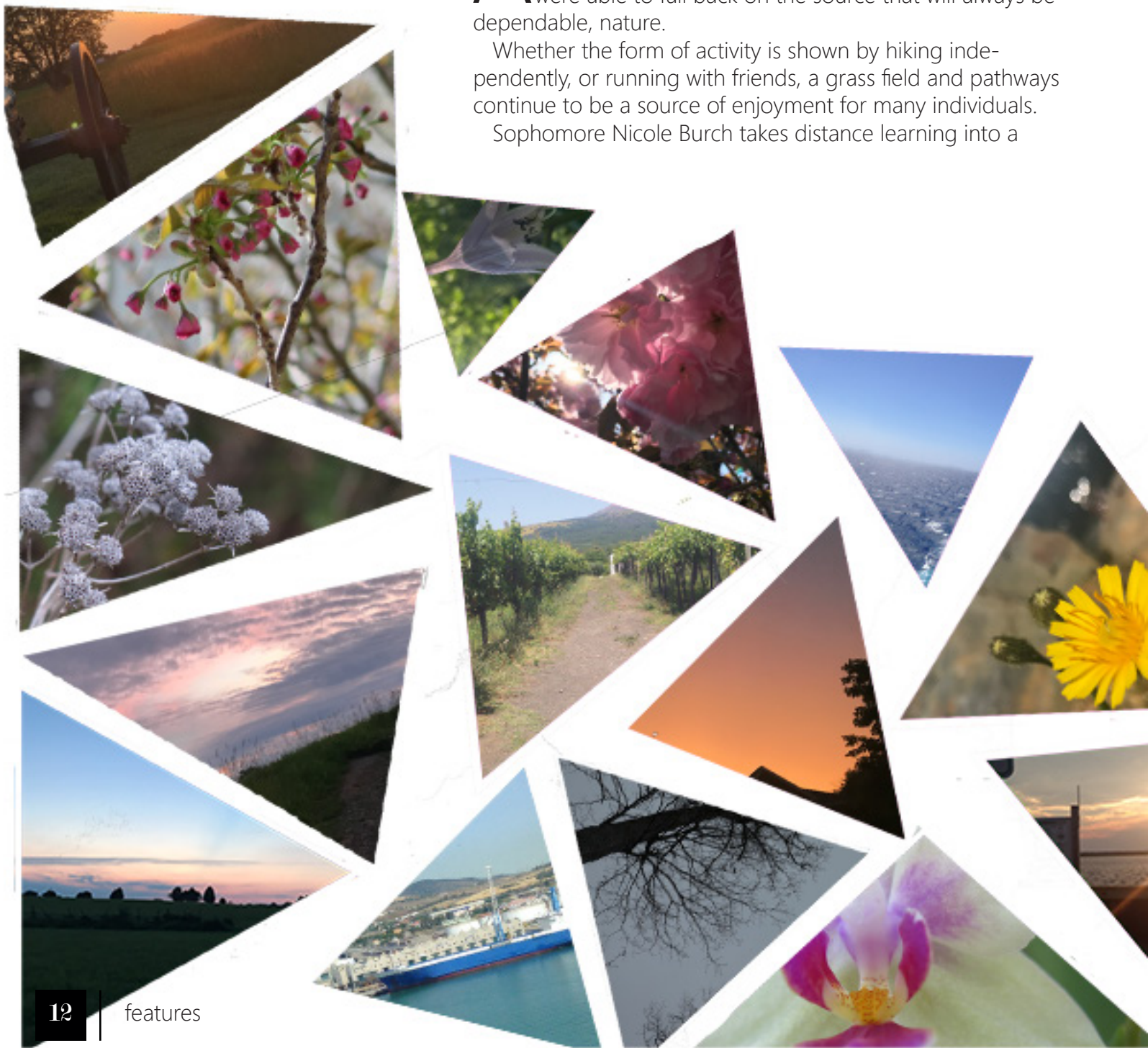
# embracing the great outdoors

[Story by Eliza Agi]  
[Photos by Eliza Agi]

As COVID-19 temporarily closed storefronts, and changed the activities accessible to teenagers, they were able to fall back on the source that will always be dependable, nature.

Whether the form of activity is shown by hiking independently, or running with friends, a grass field and pathways continue to be a source of enjoyment for many individuals.

Sophomore Nicole Burch takes distance learning into a



positive light as a way to optimize her ability to enjoy nature.

"Because of distance learning I was outside way more than I used to be," Burch said. "I am able to do my schoolwork outside when it is nice out."

Hiking is also a form of embracing nature, shown by senior Miriam McClure. Her ability to create a more flexible and open schedule has allowed her to go on walks and hikes on the weekends.

"From activities like hiking I feel so much more relaxed," McClure said. "I'm able to clear my mind outside from being cooped up indoors during the school day. I also just feel healthier in general!"

The benefits however are not limited to the plants and wildlife found in Northern Virginia. Changes in schedules and from normal day-to-day life has created opportunities to appreciate various ecosystems such as the Outer Banks.

"Quarantine definitely allowed me to vis-

it more beaches as well as live at our beach house for two months," senior Anna Stewart said. "During such a hard time it was really nice to be able to get away, especially since it was starting to get warmer out."

With the correct precautions, club teams for sports are also training on outdoor facilities which allows athletes as well to maintain a level of fitness while receiving benefits and enjoying the outdoors.

"I love being outside [and] playing soccer," Burch said.

The slow transition back to a life before COVID-19 is encountered by Senior Nathan Welz, who participates in various hiking activities in locations such as Shenandoah National Park or Washington and Jefferson National Forest.

"During the beginning of quarantine I was definitely outside more than before, but now I pretty much go outside the same as normal," Welz said.



# Podcasts Offer New Perspectives

[Story by Carina Funk]  
[Podcast artwork provided by  
Chas Chappell and Khamari  
Pindea]

Freedom High School students have some up with a creative way to safely and freely voice their opinions on current popular topics. Podcasts are a way for creators to talk and interview many different people and publish their conversations on various music streaming platforms.

Senior Chas Chappell created a podcast called "Chas's Chaps: The Podcast" where he focuses on interviewing people that live in

or around South Riding who are either his friends or important to the community.

"I want to get their perspective on the pandemic and gain insight into their daily lives and what they're passionate about," Chappell said.

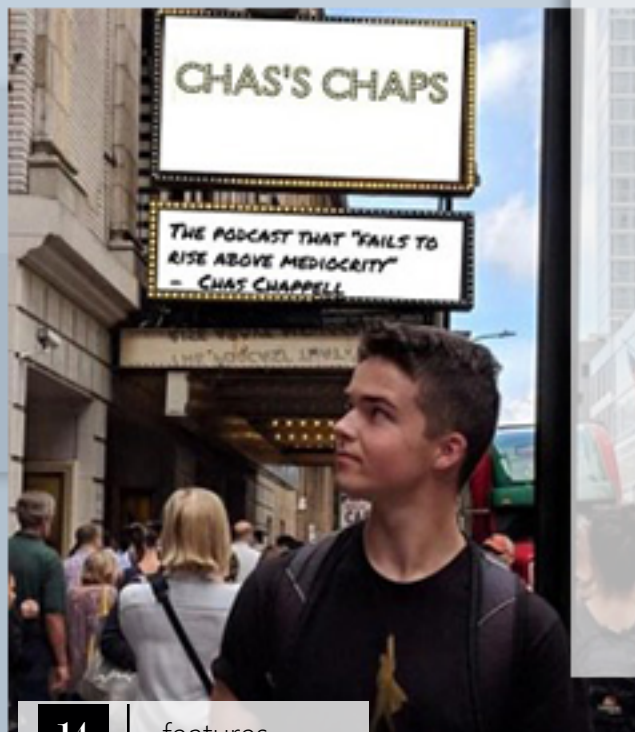
His content was originally geared towards comedy, his questions aiming to provoke ridiculous or silly responses with almost a theatrical element to them but now he has since turned away to focus more on his guest's passions.

"My target audience is people in the Freedom and South Rid-

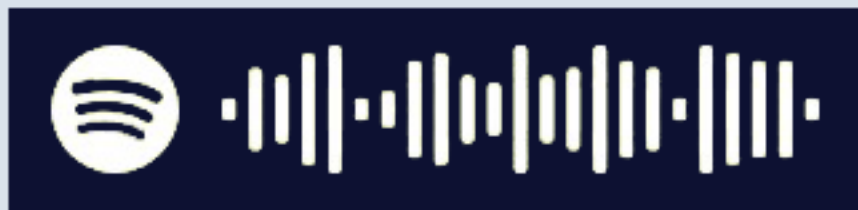
ing community, as well as people who are interested in the projects that some of my guests promote," Chappell said, "For example, Wim Tapley joined me fairly recently to promote his new album "The Woodlands" -- that particular episode gained a lot of plays from his fan base."

His podcast was inspired by American television host, comedian and podcaster Conan O'Brien and hopes to continue making podcasts in the future as he is working on his second season.

"I think that my youth gives me a very different perspective than Conan O'Brien, the person who



**"In this new and and totally unnecessary podcast, Chas Chappell interviews his friends about their daily lives during the COVID-19 quarantine and attempts to learn more about who they are as people (their middle names, whether or not they hate euro-pop, etc). If Chas asked you to tune in, you could just say you listened to it and he'd be none the wiser. The back button's right there. Nobody would blame you."**



Scan codes on Spotify app to listen



## The Beginning: Conversations of Self Vol.1

**“Through conversations on various topics, we strive to find and understand truths and aspects of ourselves as individuals and others. Whether through spirituality, mentality or anything, conversations are the beginning of a break through with our deeper selves and even consciousness.”**

inspired me to create this podcast, because I have a much more limited world view because I haven't had as many life experiences yet," Chappell said.

He keeps his viewers up to date with new episodes through posting on his podcast's Instagram @chass\_chaps and his youtube where he debues clips of his interviews.

Junior Khamari Pineda also has a podcast called "Conversations of Self" filled with philosophical conversations about anything and everything that his listeners and himself find interesting.

"One day we can talk about meditation and have conversation about that and the next day we could talk about love and try to break down what we define as that," Pineda said.

He started the podcast because he always had a lot of topics he thought about on a daily basis. He wanted a platform he could where he could project his voice with no filter.

While Chappell's podcast focuses on the South Riding community, Pineda aims to reach those who want to have deeper philosophical conversations about various broad subjects or are in general intrigued by life

itself.

"I think that my podcast helps spark conversations and thoughts about things that people may find interesting or may have never even thought of before," Pineda said.

He consistently posts on social media, promoting his podcast on his Instagram @conversationsofselfv.1 while also connecting and collaborating with fellow creators and podcasters to broaden his audience. Pineda broadcasts on multiple different platforms through his Linktree @linktree/Khamarii.

His favorite episode he has created so far is "Polar Opposites" where he talks about the energies within a person both the positive and negative that can affect the mindset, perception and feelings all within oneself.

"My favorite episode that I have released so far is definitely "Polar Opposites" seeing as that was a really emotional episode for me and I was speaking openly about a lot of things that I never really talked openly about before," Pineda said.

Both podcasts provide a variety of different perspectives and topics people can listen to. These students also show what FHS students are capable of while they share their opinions with the world.

# Football Makes Freedom History

[Story by Michael Baker III]

[Photos by Robert Tang]

A regional run for the varsity and a strong freshman season highlighted Freedom High School's football program this year.

For the first time in school history, with a record of 1-4, the Eagles made the regional playoffs.

"Three of our region teams were tied with a 1-4 record," said Zach Barnisky, head football coach. "One of the three teams had to be selected to play in the playoffs. We were lucky enough to be selected and it was a great opportunity for our program to see playoff football and the work that still needs to be done to compete in playoff football. It is a credit to our seniors who have worked their tails off for four years to earn Freedom Football's first opportunity to play in playoffs. It wasn't the outcome we wanted, but it set a standard that will be expected in the program in the future."

In the playoff matchup, Freedom faced the Stone Bridge Bulldogs, with a list of football titles a mile long. Freedom was defeated 6-74, but the playoff run helped inspire players to work harder and dig deeper for next season.

"Participating in the regional

game was a chance to see what it feels like to be the one of the only teams to be able to compete for a state champ title," said Josh Silva, junior and varsity kicker. "I'm planning on going to kicking camps this summer for this upcoming season."

Instead of starting in the fall, the football season was delayed until technically the spring due to COVID-19. Restrictions were placed on off-season training and the actual season was shortened to six games. Coaches were prepared for the changes.

"I do not think the timing of the season affected the games drastically," said Nick Schwarz, FHS assistant football coach. "We had to start the season at the beginning of February, so there were some practices that it was very cold and we had to take that into account. Also, because of the shortened season, some games are not played on the typical Friday nights. That does make us have to adjust what we do throughout the week to prepare for games."

Lack of off-season training was a concern, but players completed

workouts on their own.

"Football is football whether we play in the fall, winter, spring or summer," said Justin Schenck, FHS assistant football coach. "I think the lack of an off-season may affect some games since teams will have had less time to prepare, but overall the timing of the season really shouldn't have a large effect. We sent out workouts to athletes to complete on their own which could be done without having any equipment."

Timing, restrictions and protocols did play a role in some players deciding not to return to the field this season. Even with fewer players, FHS still was able to man a freshman, junior varsity and varsity squad.

"As some players have opted out this season for obvious reasons that we fully support, we felt that we had a great turnout for our freshmen, JV, and varsity teams," Schwarz said. "We were able to get enough players to play at all three levels, which can't be said at every school in the county. We have been in consistent communication with players





that have decided not to play this year, and they do have a place in our program when the pandemic is over."

The freshman team's season ended abruptly due to COVID, but not before bringing home a 3-2 record. It's not the way players and the coaching staff wanted to see the season end, but precautions were in place to prevent the spread and play as many games as possible.

"We have been asking our players to continue to keep the end goal in mind," Schwarz said. "The end goal, being able to play as many games as possible, has been something that our players have taken very seriously. We have educated our players on ways to limit transmission of COVID, have precautions built

into our schedule such as regular wearing masks and using hand sanitizer, and we ask players to limit possible transmissions from outside our program. Our players have been doing a fantastic job of this."

The JV started the season with a big win, 44-0, over Potomac Falls, but the team wasn't able to keep up the momentum ending with one victory and three losses. Two games were cancelled during the season.

"Our athletes have great work ethic and I believe the future is bright for Freedom football," Barnisky said. "All three programs had wins this year and we are excited for the future. We will continue to work toward becoming complete football players and building the understanding and concepts of

the game in our program. The sky is the limit for the future."

For the seniors, it wasn't a fairytale ending, but the effort to build the program was not in vain.

"A big thanks to our seniors that worked hard and took the program to new heights," Barnisky said. "They set a new standard for our program, and I was lucky to have the opportunity to be their Head Coach. They leave the program better than they found it, and that is the goal of every graduating senior class. I look forward to where the underclassmen will take the program as the seniors have passed the program to them.

# CELEBRATING OUR D1

Began playing in 2010

## Favorite Memory:

Winning the state championship Freshman year "because we were not expected to win and everyone worked so hard to get there."

"I enjoy being a part of the Freedom lacrosse team because we are a successful group and everyone is driven and works towards the same goals."

-Morgan Koeneke



**Morgan Koeneke**  
**University of Virginia**  
**Lacrosse**

## Val Taddei

**Lehigh University**  
**Baseball**



Began playing in 2012

## Favorite Memory:

"We had the best record in our conference, probably something like 13-0(finished 17-1-1) and Mickey Gordon, in the bottom of the seventh, put us ahead to win with a sacrifice bunt keeping our undefeated season alive. It was incredible. Nothing I've ever seen before. That years' team was special and that moment would sum it up perfectly."

"Cherish every moment you get and don't take these times for granted. They're gone in the blink of an eye"

-Val Taddei

[Story by Camille Desjardins]  
[Photos provided by the athlete]



**Sam Tiong**  
*George Mason*  
*Track & Field*

Has ran for 7 seasons

**Favorite Memory:**  
The girls indoor track team winning their first regional championship last year.

"As a member of the freedom team, I have grown to be who I am today and became pretty successful in my sport thanks to my coaches and teammates that helped me along the way."

-Sam Tiong

Began playing in 2019

**Favorite Memory:**

"My first season of indoor track and field I qualified for states in the mile. I was fresh off of a big PR having run 4:33 at districts, breaking the school record. At the state meet I was seeded 12th, 2nd to last. Upsetting a third of the field I came 8th, grabbing the last AllState spot. Dazed in fatigue and disbelief, I still to this day remember walking over to my coach, tears in her eyes and giving her a hug."

"When I moved back from Switzerland, the track and field team gave me a home. My teammates became my friends, my coach became my mentor, and the shared goal of self improvement binded us all together."

-Ryan Borden

**Ryan Borden**  
*Columbia University*  
*Track & Field*



# ATHLETES



**Connor Kolarov**  
**William & Mary**  
**Baseball**

Began playing in 2007

**Favorite Memory:**

"Moe Monday after practices. Burritos starting at \$5.99, unbeatable."

"I've had a blast being a part of the Freedom Baseball Program over these past few years. It's a competitive culture and has helped me develop into the player and person I am today. I've been fortunate to play alongside great teammates under an awesome coaching staff."

-Connor Kolvarov

Began playing in 2009

**Favorite Memory:**

A tie between pasta parties and midnight IHOP runs

"Being on the Freedom Swim team is such an honor. Everyone shows up and works hard in and out of the pool. The support from the team is so uplifting and I am so thankful for all the memories and friends I've made through the years. "

-Jennifer Joung



**Jennifer Loung**  
**U.S. Naval Academy**  
**Swimming**

**Abby Church**  
**East Tennessee**  
**State University**  
**Triathlon**

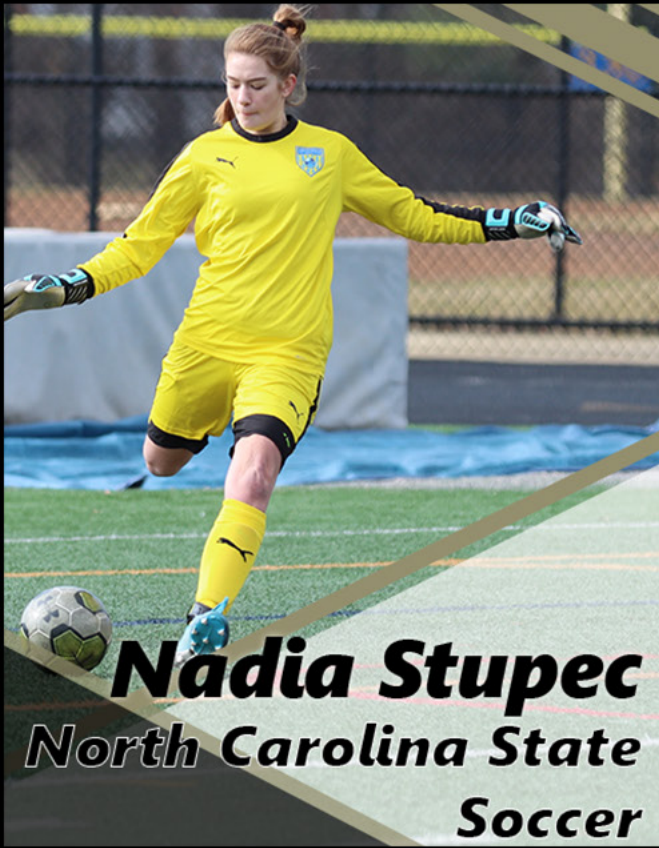
Began playing in 2015

**Favorite Memory:**

Winning regionals with the cross country team

"Don't worry about the outcome, just enjoy the process"

-Abby Church



**Nadia Stupec**  
**North Carolina State**  
**Soccer**

Began playing in 2007

Favorite Memory:

Traveling with her team all over the world

"I have always loved playing soccer, and I have gotten to play for some great coaches over the years that have helped me build my skills. I have pushed myself to always strive for greatness and I think that has definitely helped me."

-Nadia Stupec

Began playing in 2009

Favorite Memory:

"My freshman year we played Stone Bridge in the Regional semi-finals. Stone Bridge was favored to win the state championship that year and nobody expected us to win but we fought hard until the end even when we were losing most of the game and we ended up winning in extra innings. At the end everyone dog-piled and it was great to be able to go to states with my family."

"Freedom softball is one of the greatest teams I've been a part of. This year we have one of our most talented teams yet, top to bottom and if everyone works together, I'm excited to see where this season takes us!"

-Morgan Hess



**Morgan Hess**  
**Presbyterian College**  
**Softball**

# Quitting Over COVID-19

[Story by Morgan Maiden]  
[Photos by Chong Chung]

In a year where it may feel the world was turned upside down, a different reality is created with limited sporting events and opportunities for athletes. As sports can be the center of many high schoolers' career, not having a chance to play like normal can create a feeling of loss and resentment.

Many high school athletes use sports as a way to reduce stress and control the rapid pace of high school. Additionally, earning a scholarship is a large part of competing. Due to changing competition and the risk of having a season cancelled altogether, there are less chances to be seen by college coaches and scouts.

Senior Lindsey Ahn played lacrosse for the past three years at Freedom.

"If COVID-19 was not a thing, I believe that I would still be playing," Ahn said.

This is a new reality for many high school athletes, as the impact of COVID-19 has crept

into their sports.

"COVID-19 affected my decision to stop running indoor track, as the season would not have been the same as the past and the experience being different was the reason why I chose not to participate this season," senior Taylor Lech said.

As the world begins to open up again slowly, there is a new normality that is seen with sports. Empty stadiums, mask mandates, and limited team bonding events are just some of the implemented changes that affect these athletes day to day.

"I knew the season would look extremely different and in my mind I want to remember my time playing lacrosse as fun times singing along on the bus on our way to games or our pre-game day Jersey Mike's boxes," Ahn said.

Sports may not look like they used to, but they still continue to go on following all the precautions. Many athletes have used extra time as well to work on their sport outside of a team setting.

"Even though I am not running officially with the school, I run on my own often and running is still

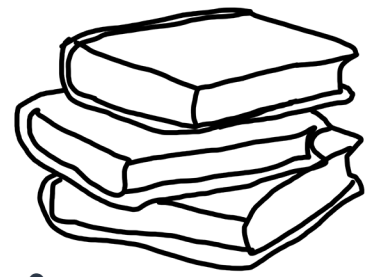
a very prevalent part of my life," Lech said.

Sports play a large role in the high school experience. The unknown of when or how you might be playing deters individuals from returning. This may cause a loss of identity and shaky grounds as many approach working out on their own for the first time.

"My life is different because it is a lot harder to run on my own," Lech said. "When I ran track I was able to run with friends or groups which made the workouts a lot easier and more fun."



# Junior Year? Take it from a Senior...



[Editorial by Lindsay Brisson]

A few weeks ago, I watched my 15 year old sister put her head in her hands and struggle to pick classes for her junior year of high school. She is currently a sophomore, and even talking about junior year was enough to stress her out. She asked me multiple times which classes to take, such as, "should I be taking AP Calculus?," "Should I be trying AP Lang?," "Some of my friends are doing research chemistry, is that class hard?" When she had finally narrowed everything down, I noticed she was still super stressed about her 2021-2022 school year, and I wanted to do everything I could to help.

Long story short, yes, junior year is pretty challenging, but it is all up to you. If you feel the need to load your schedule with AP's and Dual Enrollment courses, you will definitely have to prepare yourself for a long and hard year. However, if you decide to take more academic courses and less AP's, junior year will be no different than the others.

Junior year, as I have learned, is all about mindset. I went into my sophomore year of high school with a terrible mindset regarding my school work. Then approaching junior year, I turned my head straight and went into the school year with a good work ethic and a drive to succeed. I took a good amount of higher level courses junior year, and I did not find myself drowning in work or unable to obtain good

grades. Thus being said, it's super important to prepare yourself for a work-filled year if you are in fact taking harder classes. This way it will be easier to stay motivated throughout the school year.

As a senior, I want to reach out to all of the rising juniors and let them know that you're going to be okay. If you decide to load your schedule with hard classes, as long as you are prepared to work, you are going to be fine. If you know that in the past you have struggled to keep up with work, just take a little break next year. Take less challenging classes so you have the chance to catch up. If you feel obligated to take harder classes because you feel you won't get into a good college if you don't, do not stress about that. You will be fine.

I ended up sitting my little sister down and telling her exactly what I just told you. I told her to keep her head up and prepare for a year filled with hard work and motivation, but to not let school take over her life. Students often get so caught up in work that they miss out on the social experience of junior year as well. Obviously, this year is a little different than normal, considering our battle with COVID-19, but having free time is a must when it comes to being stressed all the time.

So, if you are a rising junior, do not stress. Whether you're taking super hard classes or super easy ones, you will be okay. Don't forget to enjoy your junior year as well, since after next year, your time as a high schooler begins to fade away. Enjoy as much as you can of next year, and don't forget to stay motivated and work towards your own success.

# [Uncaged.] Class of 2021 is off!

VIRGINIA TECH



VIRGINIA TECH



JMU

JAMES MADISON



CLEMSON



Duke



Montana State



VIRGINIA TECH



George Mason

