



Photo courtesy of Katherine Rudolph



Moments before a life-changing surgery, Mrs. Rudolph and her father, Dr. Thomas "Reggie" Stennett, stop for a picture. Even through this long process, they have kept a smile on their faces. To read more about Mrs. Rudolph and the surgery, go to page 2.

# Colonial



# COURIER

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# Rudolph saves family member's life

by Riley Bridgman

According to [www.mysat.org](http://www.mysat.org), less than five percent of all adult liver transplants are from living donors. Although the percentage of living organ donors is low, Mrs. Katherine Rudolph, Spanish teacher, pushed through the rarity of living organ donors to help someone extremely close to her.

In April 2022, Dr. Thomas Stennett, Mrs. Rudolph's father, was in liver failure, causing a life-or-death situation.

"I felt helpless and not very hopeful, especially given my age," said Dr. Stennett. "The facility I originally went to did not encourage or even mention their ability to offer me a liver transplant."

When Dr. Stennett and Mrs. Rudolph found out that organ donation, especially living donation, was an option, Mrs. Rudolph immediately volunteered.

"As soon as my dad

mentioned liver donations, I said 'I'll do it' before ever reading about it," said Mrs. Rudolph. "I was fine with doing it; I just didn't realize how big of a surgery it was at

Living donations require a thorough process to get approved to donate.

"It was a big, long process," said Mrs. Rudolph. "I had to do blood work, had to talk to

Photo courtesy of Katherine Rudolph



Dr. Stennett states that this process has been the toughest experience, both physically and mentally, he has ever had to go through in his life.

the beginning, but just the benefit of saving his life makes it worth it."

a psychologist, talk to the doctors and had to do complete body scans, like CT scans and a MRI. They

essentially tested me head to toe: physically, emotionally and psychologically.”

After everything has been approved and checked, surgery is able to take place. The surgery for living organ donors requires general anesthesia.

“I think [the surgery] was my biggest fear,” said Mrs. Rudolph. “I’ve never done general anesthesia. I’ve had two C-sections so I’ve been through surgery before, but not to this extent.”

To prepare for the surgery, Mrs. Rudolph talked to doctors about any worries, concerns or questions she had.

“I didn’t really do research,” said Mrs. Rudolph. “I preferred just to talk to the doctors themselves than get on Google at 1 a.m. and go that route, which isn’t very healthy.”

Though this surgery has taken a lot out of her, Mrs. Rudolph’s family has supported her through it all.

“With my immediate family, I definitely had amazing support,” said Mrs. Rudolph.

“My husband has kind of been like a single parent during surgery with my two small children. My sister and I really share responsibilities. I was able to do the surgery, and she’s more of the day-to-day person. She checks on [my parents], goes to the grocery store and prepares meals.”

Mrs. Rudolph has had the support of not only her family, but her friends and coworkers, too.

“I already thought Mrs. Rudolph was pretty fantastic, but now I think she’s also even more fantastic, kind, giving and such a brave person,” said Mrs. Laurie Melis, Spanish teacher. “I have only met her dad briefly a couple of times, but I can tell by the way she talks about him that he’s an amazing person. I have been worried about him and his family as his health has declined over the last couple of years. We are so excited to have Mrs. Rudolph back with us once she recovers.”

Mrs. Rudolph is now at home recovering and resting from her surgery. Both she

and her dad have an even bigger appreciation and respect for the medical field.

“Even after working in the medical field for over 40 years, I was amazed by the skills and technology available with the liver transplant team at VCU,” said Dr. Stennett. “I feel fortunate that we live in close proximity to such an impressive facility.”

“I have an enhanced appreciation and respect for the medical field,” said Mrs. Rudolph. “I think it’s just incredible what they can do now with doctors and nurses.”

Such a major surgery can be hard on anyone, but Mrs. Rudolph is willing to do all she can to help improve her father’s quality of life.

“The benefit of this is my dad’s quality of life improving,” said Mrs. Rudolph. “Especially being on the other side of this, I definitely say it was worth it because his quality of life has improved so much. It’s worth it to know that my sister and I will have a dad around and our kids will have a grandpa.”

# Coach Thomas added to the VSU Hall of Fame

by Terri Miles Moody

In addition to his titles as basketball coach, assistant principal and CTE director, Mr. John Thomas, Jr., can now add Hall of Famer to his resumé. Coach Thomas was inducted into the Virginia State University Hall of Fame on Friday, Feb. 3,

an event he said “is a blessing.”

“Looking back on the many obstacles I overcame in my life to achieve this great honor, it is truly amazing that I was able to receive these accolades,” said Coach Thomas.

During his time as a VSU

basketball player, Coach Thomas was part of a team that won its division three years and claimed the title of conference champions. As a basketball coach of 38 years, he has led teams of both boys and girls on both the high school and college level. He also coached baseball.

“I am very fortunate to have the opportunity to work with an outstanding colleague and, more importantly, a friend,” said Mr. Gerald Carsley, director of student activities. “VSU chose a wonderful person to represent their university with this prestigious honor.”

Mr. Correy Watkins, JV boys’ basketball coach and English 9 collaborative teacher, also believes the honor is well deserved.

“Coach Thomas as the varisty boys’ basketball coach is an outstanding mentor and teacher of life and basketball,” said Coach

Photo courtesy of Vanessa Thomas



Coach Thomas was inducted into Virginia State University's Athletic Hall of Fame for his hard work and dedication as a basketball player while attending VSU.

Watkins. "The students benefit from his talks, kind spirit and willingness to be a key figure in their lives. He teaches that hard work and commitment can bring success. Coach Thomas never misses and will give the shirt off of his back so our students will never miss out."

Mrs. Vanessa Thomas, Coach Thomas's wife and English 11 collaborative teacher, also notices her husband's commitment to improving his players' lives and teaching them how to grow as individuals.

"I'm proud of Coach because he gets to do what he loves -- what he's passionate about," said Mrs. Thomas. "I'm proud of the impact that he makes on his players on and off the court. Yes, he's interested in teaching his players basketball skills, and, yes, he wants to see them win games. However, he's most interested in teaching them about the game of life -- how to be

successful, how to be a productive man, how to persevere and never give up. I'm proud of him because he genuinely cares about his team. He's always trying to figure out how to help them improve. It makes me very proud to know that he never puts his team down. He always lifts them up."

Coach Watkins believes that Coach Thomas's influence extends beyond the CHHS gym and his own players.

"Coach Thomas has left an imprint in every place he's touched," said Coach Watkins. "He deserves all the flowers. Standing beside Coach and watching how people light up when we visit other schools solidifies his imprint."

Basketball isn't just about drills and skills; Coach Thomas believes student-athletes develop character traits that will help them succeed in life.

"Sports teach athletes so

many things about life," said Coach Thomas. "Discipline, organization, team work, confidence, problem solving and so many other qualities are learned through athletics."

Mrs. Thomas knows that the time her husband has invested in his players has reaped rewards.

"Coach has made an impact on many of his former players -- high school and college," said Mrs. Thomas. "He has formed life-long relationships with a lot of them. Some of his former players contact him regularly to see how he's doing, some pay him visits and introduce him to their newly formed family, and some even call to get his 'handyman' advice, as well as words of wisdom. Coach is and always has been a teacher, father figure to some and an encourager. He's one of a kind in my book."

# Robertson gives insight behind the scenes of the food in CHPS

by Jenna Mason

Many people who work behind the scenes of CHHS, some of whom the students haven't heard of or possibly even seen. One of these people is Mr. Aaron Robertson, food service director.

Mr. Robertson has worked for Colonial Heights Public Schools for almost seven years. With his love of cooking starting from a young age, he found his way to the food service department of CHPS.

"I actually came here from doing similar things at colleges and universities," said Mr. Robertson. "I used to be a food service director at VCU and up north at a couple of schools up there. I always liked the area, and I wanted to come back to Virginia, where I'm from, so here I am."

As the food service director, Mr. Robertson is responsible for operating the USDA's food programs in CHPS. He makes

Photo by Jenna Mason



**Mr. Robertson manages the food services department for all Colonial Heights Public Schools. His job requires anything and everything involving food.**

sure that the CHPS's cafeteria staffs are able to source and buy ingredients and products, hire and train staff and put together menus that meet the government nutrition standards.

"This is my favorite job I've ever had; the challenge is

taking healthy and nutritious foods that maybe we don't always like to eat and making them appealing to students," said Mr. Robertson. "The trick is to make menu items that a student wants to eat, not just things they know they should eat. I'm proud of the fact that

our schools serve more fresh fruit and vegetables than divisions twice our size. It's not just a testament to my kitchen teams, but to our students' abilities to make healthy choices."

Mrs. Michelle Greathouse, CHHS food service manager, has known Mr. Robertson and worked alongside him for five years.

Mrs. Greathouse and Mr. Robertson work together to ensure an efficient operation of the CHHS cafeteria. Together they manage the kitchen personnel and enforce safety policies and procedures.

Out of the five years of working together, some of Mrs. Greathouse's favorite memories with Mr. Robertson have been made through catering for after-school functions.

"While he might not be cooking in a restaurant, his food definitely makes a five-star rating," said Mrs. Greathouse. "Seeing his passion for food gives me the

opportunity to learn by venturing into new territories, which motivates me further. One of his knacks is making an impressive fruit platter. It's always an assortment of different in-season fruit with textures, flavors and colors."

Some skills that Mrs. Greathouse has learned from Mr. Robertson is to pay closer attention to detail, to work better in a team and to communicate better.

"He has taught me how to be better at my job during my years of working with him," said Mrs. Greathouse. "He has taught me how to learn the operation by doing the work myself, be a manager who isn't afraid to get their hands dirty and know how a kitchen operates."

Not always wanting to end up in the food service industry, Mr. Robertson found his way there through his love of cooking and the jobs he had when he was younger.

"Like anybody else, I wanted to be a million different

things," said Mr. Robertson. "I always worked in some type of food service during school, starting with farm work and then restaurants: washing dishes, peeling potatoes, stuff like that. After that it was moving my way up in restaurant kitchens, a stint as a butcher and then transitioning into running college dining programs. When Colonial Heights was looking for a director, I trucked down from Pennsylvania, where I was managing college dining programs, to shoot my shot and, thankfully, I was successful. I'm happy my journey took me here. This has been the most rewarding and fulfilling job I've ever had, and I hope to be here for a very long time."

Two of Mr. Robertson's favorite aspects of his job are where he works and the people he works with.

"My favorite thing about my job is, well, really it's where I work," said Mr. Robertson. "I mean, it's getting to see the



Photo courtesy of Aaron Robertson



One part of Mr. Robertson's job is managing CHHS's cafeteria staff. He is always there to pick up shifts when needed.

students, it's getting to see the staff. You know, if I'm having, like, a really bad day, I can go to one of the elementary schools when they're serving kindergarteners, and, like, try to be mad when you see a bunch of kindergarteners

getting ice cream. You know what I mean? You can't be, so that's what I like about it."

Working alongside someone for five years, Mrs. Greathouse has become aware of the many special qualities Mr. Robertson has, some of her favorites being

the altruistic person Mr. Robertson is and his ability to find the best memes irrespective of how tough or not the situation is.

"He will go out of his way to help people in any way he can," said Mrs. Greathouse. "I would say he has a genuine passion for being of service to other people. He is a great boss; he's honest, listens, and makes me feel valued. He works all the time either running around to the other schools to check on them or to help out with service, or if he's working in his office. Truth be told, he is the hardest-working person on our team."



# Junior class prepares for their upcoming Ring Dance

by Shaquira McKoy

Experiencing their first exclusive dance, the junior class students are getting ready and preparing for the 2023 Ring Dance. This exciting event gives students the opportunity to express themselves while also getting their class rings.

Not having the traditional experience of the eighth grade dance due to the pandemic, juniors are finally able to get together to create new and unforgettable memories. Another highlight is the 2023 Ring Dance will be returning to the gym for the first time in four years.

The 2024 class sponsors, Mrs. Betsy Johnson, counselor, and Mr. Mickey Alderson, art teacher, are working behind the scenes to present Ring Dance 2023: Enchanted Garden.

Ring Dance is known for being quite a long-term tradition. The juniors receive their class rings, which they ordered at the start of the school year, as they walk

Photo courtesy of Betsy Johnson



Walking through the giant ring is a long running tradition for Ring Dance. Students can be escorted by their guest, their parents or even just themselves to begin the memorable night during junior year.

through a large ring decorated to complement the theme of the dance. Afterward, the juniors have a special dance with their parental figures.

The Class of 2024 sponsors

want to organize an occasion that will be magnificent and entertaining for all juniors, allowing them to enjoy this milestone with their relatives and friends.

As the class sponsors, class

Photo courtesy of Betsy Johnson



Another similarity to Ring Dances of the past will be the set up and the decorations of the bridge. To go along with the "enchanted garden" theme, there will be bushes and lights all around the gym.

officers and volunteering parents are working hard to make Ring Dance memorable and exciting, they are also looking forward to seeing their hard work finally pay off.

"We've been planning and looking forward to the Ring Dance since September," said

Gavin Jarvis, junior class president. "Seeing students and parents come together to decorate and express their ideas is the most exciting and most rewarding part of working on this dance."

Students should prepare by determining what they want

to wear. This is a formal event, so formal dresses, tuxedos or suits are appropriate. They should also make plans to attend with a date, guest or friend or join a group of fellow juniors.

Any junior who would like to shop at the Free Dress Shop should email Mrs. Terri Moody to schedule an appointment.

Juniors must have paid their class dues through their junior year to attend. If they are unsure, they should check with Mr. Alderson or Mrs. Johnson to find out if they owe dues. They will also need to sign up to attend and complete a guest form and attend the mandatory outside guest meeting if their guest/date does not attend CHHS.

"Your high school years go by quickly, and this is one of the exciting milestones that everyone should experience," said Mrs. Johnson. "This is a very momentous occasion, and one that they will not forget. I love that they can come with a date, a friend, on their own or with a group of friends."

# CHHS swim and track teams break school-wide records

Photo courtesy of Colonial Heights High School Instagram



Pictured from left to right: Brennon Gilmore, 12; Travis Marks, 11; Parker Hanshew, 11; and Austin Galyen, 10. The boys' 200 medley and 200 free relay teams broke school records. Austin Galyen also broke the 50 free and 100 breast school record. The boys' relay team timed at 1:42.37. Galyen's time was 22.37 seconds.

Photo courtesy of Colonial Heights High School Instagram



Pictured left to right: Kenyez Mungro, 11; Christian Bell-Martin, 12; Marcelle Hill, 12; and Ryan Ayi-Bamah, 12. They broke the school's record for 4x200m indoor track relay. This record has been standing for almost 20 years. This relay qualified them for the 3A state indoor track meet.

# Valentines bridge generation gaps

by Nathan Frasier and Emma Horan-Knode

A simple act of kindness has connected the elderly with young people. Samantha McKinney, 11, nursing student, asked children to create hand-crafted valentines for residents at a rehabilitation and nursing facility.

"My science teacher Mrs. Barefoot inspired me to make cards for the residents," said McKinney. "I also had been thinking about doing something for the residents ever since I went to the nursing home but never knew what to do."

McKinney soon started to take action and make some changes. She decided to look for some help at a local children's center, where she is employed.

"All the kids at Wesley Children's Center ages K-5 made the cards," said McKinney.

The residents of the

Photo courtesy of Samantha McKinney



Children at Wesley Children's Center decorate colorful cards to help bring joy to the residents of Colonial Heights Rehabilitation and Nursing Center.

nursing home appreciated the kind gestures.

"The residents had the biggest smile on their faces," said McKinney. "Walking past the residents' room and seeing them

smiling at their cards was so exciting. It was really nice to see them smile and forget about their pain for once."

McKinney has the opportunity to work with

Photo courtesy of Samantha McKinney



McKinney thought that having the children make cards for the elderly would help bring the community together by narrowing the gap between generations.

the residents because of the CHHS nursing program.

“Yes, I intend on getting into the medical field,” said McKinney. “I love working with people and helping people out. I also love learning about the human body. I’ve always been a person that people can come to for help!”

Getting involved in the

medical field is making her see different sides of who she really is. She is also helping elders see a different side of life.

“It has really made me realize that I need to enjoy my life while I am young and enjoy everything I can do on my own,” said McKinney. “Some residents tend to get mad at

themselves for not being able to do what they used to do when they were younger.”

Working in the nursing home has taught McKinney patience and new ways to communicate.

“The residents need care, compassion, patience and someone to talk to,” said McKinney. “It’s super important to be patient with the residents and let them explain what they’re trying to say or let them take their time doing something they want to do on their own.”

McKinney has encouraged some people to believe that different generations are more connected than ever.

“It’s important to have an understanding over age gaps. Younger generations remind older generations what it was like to be young,” said McKinney. “It also shows younger generations what it’s like to be older.”

# Students, staff vote best restaurants in CH

by Gavin Jarvis

Colonial Heights has a variety of restaurants that diners can enjoy, but which ones are actually the best? That was up to the CHHS students and staff. The *Colonial Courier* staff sent out a poll to all the students and staff, and they got to vote for what they think are the best restaurants in the city in a variety of categories.

## Vincenzo's (Italian)

Whether it was for the pizza or garlic knots, Vincenzo's took the top spot with 33.7 percent of the vote for the best Italian restaurant in Colonial Heights. Vincenzo's has been family owned since 1993.

While his father and uncle own the restaurant, Marco Randazzo, manager, runs the restaurant for them. Since he was 12 years old, Randazzo started off with flipping pizza boxes and cleaning tables. He developed new skills as he got older and then advanced to manager. With 7 to 8 years of experience in the

managerial role, Randazzo has been at Vincenzo's almost his whole life.

"I have always loved restaurants," said Randazzo. "I grew up in this business."

Randazzo hopes that having a good attitude and treating people the way they want to be treated will bring people back over time.

"I just love people, seeing customers over the years, and putting a smile on their face with our food," said Randazzo. "It's one of the best compliments you can

ever get."

While Randazzo believes personality is a big factor in a good restaurant, he believes that ultimately determining the success of a restaurant is good food.

"You can have a great personality, but if your food's not very good, people aren't going to come back a second time, usually," said Randazzo.

The restaurant has been around for 30 years in March. Randazzo hopes the restaurant will be around another 30 years.

Photo by Terri Moody



Vincenzo's has been opened for almost 30 years and is currently owned by Marco Randazzo's father and uncle .

Photo by Terri Moody



Vincenzo's is an Italian styled restaurant known for selling pizza and their popular garlic knots.

"We love doing this. The restaurant business is our whole life," said Randazzo. "We enjoy seeing new customers and old customers that keep coming in. We love being a part of Colonial Heights."

Olive Garden came in second place with 29.1 percent of votes, and Colonial Italian restaurant in third with 21.4 percent of votes.

### **Chick-fil-A (Fast Food)**

Known as the home for the original chicken sandwich and the phrase "my pleasure," Chick-fil-A swayed the hearts of 55 percent of students and staff.

Chick-fil-A was founded in

1946 by Truett Cathy and has expanded across the United States. While McDonald's is more popular and widespread, customers value Chick-fil-A because of their excellent customer service.

"On Tik Tok they say we run after cars to give them a cookie or a sauce," said Michaela Dash, drive thru shift leader. "We go the extra mile above and beyond."

Dash has been at Chick-fil-A for six years and has been the drive-thru shift leader for two years, most recently becoming an on-board lead since last August.

"Others kind of just motivated me and told me that they can see me doing

this position," said Dash. "At first I didn't really think that it was something that I was meant to do, but then I took the time and effort to do it, and now I'm here."

The Colonial Heights Chick-fil-A locations are noticeably almost always busy. The establishment strives to show that good customer service and good food will always bring people back wanting more.

Even if it gets busy and even stressful, the Chick-fil-A workers still strive to provide everyone with good food and exceptional customer satisfaction with a "my pleasure" and a smile on their face.

Cook Out came in second place with 16.8 percent of the votes, and McDonald's came in third with 9.2 percent of the votes.

### **Little Caesars (Pizza Delivery)**

Taking the top spot in a very competitive business is Little Caesars with 20.4 percent. No matter how much Crazy Bread you go crazy for, Little Caesars will manage to draw



customers back in to eat the variety of pizzas they offer.

Little Caesars was opened in 1959 in Michigan by Marian and Mike Ilitch.

Terence Jones, general manager, has been working six years as manager, and 13 years overall. He started working at Little Caesars because he was young and trying to get a job to make money.

"I found out there was more opportunity, so I just worked hard to get it and it paid off," said Jones.

Jones thinks that everyone likes Little Caesars because it's the cheapest. Even with the increase in prices lately, it's still affordable enough for families.

Whether you like pepperoni pizza, Crazy Bread, or a deep dish pizza, it won't top what Jones says is the most popular: Italian cheese bread.

Jones does his best to offer a fun work environment while still getting work done to give everyone a good experience at Little Caesars.

"We're going to get the job

done, try to get the customers in and out, and keep everyone happy," said Jones.

Marco's was in second place with 19.9 percent, and Domino's was closely behind in third with 19.4 percent of the votes.

### **Mission BBQ (Other)**

Only opening just last year, Mission BBQ pulled in 29.1 percent of the vote for the best restaurant in the "Other" category.

Even just opening last year, the Colonial Heights Mission BBQ has increased in popularity because of its being the closest location of the chain to Colonial Heights residents.

Craig Briggs, area director, has served in this position for nine years, so this is not his first rodeo.

"I love developing and seeing my teammates grow," said Briggs.

Briggs believes that the good people that produce great food and customer service are a factor in why the establishment is as popular

as it is. Mission BBQ values customer service to put a smile on their customers' faces to keep them coming back for more.

Briggs strives to be humble, loving and inspiring toward his team members so that he can understand them and build trust between them all.

"The mission of Mission BBQ is to serve, honor and thank the men and women that keep us free and keep us safe," said Briggs. "We also love making good BBQ."

Applebee's was in second with 26.5 percent of the votes, followed by Sedona Taphouse with 24.5 percent of the votes.

### **Panera Bread (Cafe)**



Panera Bread, earning 45.4 percent of the vote, is the go-to place for many to study, do school work or just relax

and eat food. It may be studying or it may be just eating food, but no matter what it is, Panera Bread is the most popular cafe among students and staff.

Founded in 1987 by Ronald Shaich and Louis Kane, Panera Bread has successfully thrived in Colonial Heights.

Andrew Davenport, 11, has been a worker at Panera Bread for four months. He usually works on Fridays, either washing dishes or working the cash register.

"I am good with my time management and a quick detailed worker," said Davenport.

Davenport recommends the Bacon Turkey Bravo sandwich or maybe the broccoli cheddar soup.

Davenport claims that the variety of food and great atmosphere is the reason Panera is so popular among students in Colonial Heights for a calm work environment.

Starbucks came in second with 38.3 percent of the votes, and Tropical Smoothie came in third with 16.3 percent of the votes.

## **Texas Roadhouse (Steakhouse)**

Just one mention of this restaurant, and everyone will be rambling on about how good their rolls are. Texas Roadhouse is the most popular steakhouse among students and staff and pulled in 59.7 percent of the vote.

Texas Roadhouse was opened in Indiana by Kent Taylor in 1993. Since then, it has expanded to 49 states.

Malaya Clay, 12, has been a hostess at Texas Roadhouse since July of 2022.

"I'm really good at working the board and communicating with the customers, servers, to go, and managers and other hostess all at the same time," said Clay.

Even if their rolls are very popular throughout the city, Clay thinks that their steaks get more recognition than the rolls do.

To no surprise, Texas Roadhouse is most popular because of good food like their rolls and steaks and good customer service, an obvious trend in all the other

restaurants. It is no wonder why they've been so successful in recent years.

Outback came in second with 20.9 percent of votes and Longhorn in third with 19.4 percent of votes.

## **Mi Rodeo (Mexican)**

When students and staff think about Mexican restaurants, El Caporal may come to mind, or maybe Don Jose; however, 40.3 percent of voters think about Mi Rodeo, triumphantly winning in the Mexican category.

Photo by Terri Moody



Mi Rodeo opened in 2006 and is partly owned by Brayan Beltran's parents.

Mi Rodeo has been around since 2006. Brayan Beltran, 11, started working there when he was 13. His dad and uncle are part owners of the restaurant.

"My primary role is a cashier," said Beltran. "I usually am all over the place, though. Sometimes I sit

people down, give the customers their food, and I also take on managerial roles at times."

Beltran believes that the family-like environment that creates a feeling of joy for customers is a factor in the popularity of the restaurant.

"Many customers that come to Mi Rodeo are regulars, so they're loyal to the restaurant and their taste," said Beltran. "The prices are also cheap and affordable compared to our competitors."

To contribute to that "family-like" environment, Beltran exercises good service. He always tries to be friendly so that the customers will feel welcomed and want to come back to the restaurant.

"I also help translate for some of the workers, so I can ensure that we can give the best service we can possibly give," said Beltran.

Beltran's go-to is the lunch A.C.C.P. consisting of rice with shrimp, chicken and cheese dip on the top. If that's not your taste, then he suggests the arroz con pollo or the

Photo by Terri Moody



No.1 New China was the most popular restaurant in the Asian category. It had 20.9 percent of votes from students and staff in the *Colonial Courier* poll.

taco birria to make your visit at Mi Rodeo memorable.

El Caporal came in second with 25 percent of votes, followed by Chicken Fiesta with 10.2 percent of votes.

### **Red Lobster (Seafood)**

In the seafood category, Red Lobster was voted the most popular with 25.5 percent. The management declined to comment.

In second was Skrimp Shack with 21.9 percent of the votes, and in third was

Volcano Crab with 18.9 percent of the votes.

### **No. 1 New China (Asian)**

In the Asian category, No. 1 New China was the victor with 20.9 percent. The management declined to comment. In second was Top's China with 20.4 percent of votes. In third, Tokyo Hibachi Express had 19.9 percent of votes.

# Teachers pave the way of the world

by Caroline Woodward

As high school students, many of us are beginning to plan out our lives by trying to figure out what to do as a potential career. Many people may plan on attending college to become accountants, lawyers, doctors or even engineers, but what about the career that made all of those occupations possible for people to reach? Teachers pave the way of the world, and without them there would be no future for the public.

“We are the rock, the foundation,” said Mrs. Kathleen White, library and media specialist and Power Research teacher. “Everything is built on your education, and we are the base of everything. If there were no teachers, society wouldn’t be, you couldn’t succeed.”

Figuring out a career path can be one of the

Photo courtesy of Tabitha Strickler



The Teachers for Tomorrow course celebrates Educators Rising Week to spotlight teachers that inspire them. Pictured from left to right are (back) Kellie Roche, 12; Hannah Mitchell, 11; Ms. Tabitha Strickler; Shauntel Samuels, 12; and Alisson Benavides, 12; (front) Georgia Grubb, 12; and Catherine Alderson, 11.

hardest decisions to make, and many may change their minds about the track they are on. Mrs. Christy Major, Virginia/U.S. history and AP government teacher, was once a college student who struggled to figure out what she wanted to do with her degree. Mrs. Major majored in history, and when she graduated from college, she had no clue what she wanted to do for work.

“When I graduated from college I was kind of one of those lost souls,” said Mrs. Major. “I didn’t know what I wanted to do with my degree.”

Before deciding to become a teacher, Mrs. Major worked at an art museum, where she loved the environment she was in and the academics that surrounded the area of art. She eventually began taking

classes about art history and quickly discovered that she had a passion for learning.

“Eventually I tried a couple of different, other things, and what I decided I like to do was learn,” said Mrs. Major. “You don’t get paid to be a professional student, unfortunately, so this was actually the closest gig I could get to actually being a lifelong learner. You are constantly learning in this job.”

Being a teacher is by far one of the most important jobs that one can have. They not only teach their students specific subjects like math and English, but they also have the opportunity to encourage and guide their students to become contributing members of their community and well-rounded individuals.

“Teachers and schools are often filling in for gaps in students’ basic needs with regards to physical and

emotional support,” said Mrs. Jamie Wulfekuhle-Zaweski, French teacher. “This is in addition to the already large responsibility of preparing students to be independent, educated, caring, responsible adults.”

Teachers are vastly responsible for the development of students, not just in academics, but in many other aspects. Since teachers play such an important role in the lives of their students, there can be a lot of added pressure to the job.

“Teachers and schools are carrying a huge societal load,” said Mrs. Wulfe. “It’s daunting, and some people aren’t up for that challenge, particularly in the face of less stressful, more lucrative careers.”

The stress of the occupation of being a teacher, as well as many other factors have caused many teachers to either leave the profession or

steer away college graduates from entering the teaching field.

“I think so much more is being asked of teachers these days,” said Ms. Tabitha Strickler, English and Virginia Teachers for Tomorrow teacher. “All this can contribute to burnout, which may lead people to leave the profession.”

Because of this, many schools and districts have and continue to experience teacher shortages, which is not only detrimental to a developing students’ education, but also the occupation itself. If more and more people decide to avoid becoming teachers and the trend continues, society will ultimately pay the price.

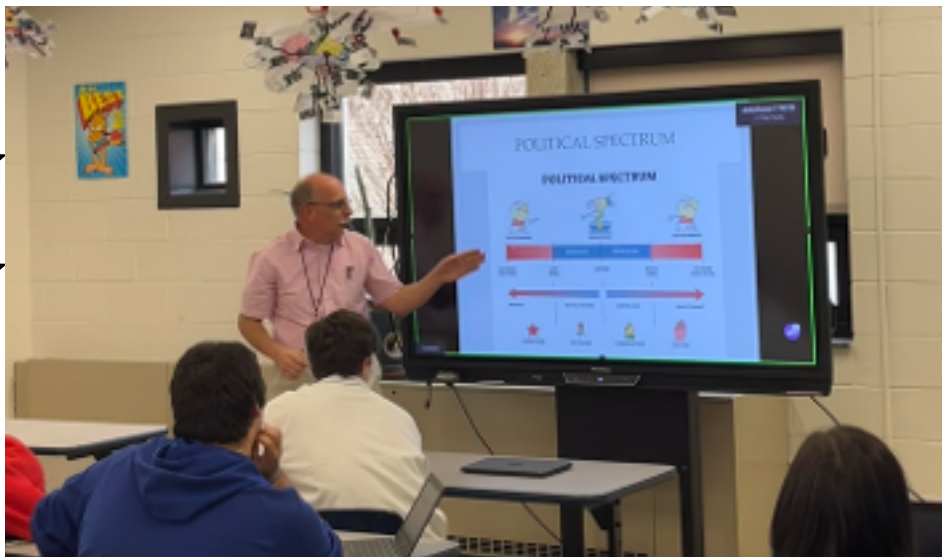
“We need to keep people teaching because who’s going to teach the kids if we’re not here? I’m not going to be here forever,” said Mr. Tracy Boyd, Biology 2 and Scientific Research teacher. “We know it’s

tougher now, but if people stop doing it, then how are they going to learn?"

Although some teachers feel that they're unheard and unseen in society, many have explained that the impact that they know they make in the daily lives of their students drowns out the unfavorable parts of the career.

"I think the most rewarding part is whenever you hear from someone about a difference that you made; I think that's a really rewarding piece," said Ms. Strickler.

Photo by Caroline Woodward



Mr. Michael Smielecki, psychology and government teacher, believes the best way to keep a classroom productive is for teachers to stay positive.

Despite having a stressful and demanding career, many teachers are still able to find the small things about the job that bring them joy.

"Every year, I fall in love with my kids, and I feel like my students have kept me young, and they bring life to me," said Mrs. White.

A crucial component of the job for most teachers is the formation of healthy and strong relationships with their students. Many teachers feel that without effective relationships with their students, their

students will not benefit from their education.

"The most important parts of teaching are the relationships you form with your students because you can't teach without a relationship," said Mrs. White. "If you can't connect with them, then they don't have a desire to learn."

Teachers feel that the relationships with their students are important because they not only help students succeed in the classroom, but also in other aspects of their lives.

"I think the most important part of teaching is helping all of your students to be the best person they can be, which I also find to be the most rewarding part when I see and hear about all of the cool and interesting things my former students are doing," said Mr. Michael Smielecki, psychology and government teacher.

# Valentine's Day buys out people due to commercialization

by Caroline Woodward

Valentine's Day is one day a year that many Americans and others around the world celebrate to show their love and appreciation for the significant others and special individuals in their lives. Weeks before the holiday, the grocery stores, malls and even pharmacies begin to stock their shelves with gifts associated with Valentine's Day, such as heart-shaped boxes of chocolate, red roses, cherub-themed cards and even giant teddy bears. Although this holiday is

rooted in the idea of showing the people in your life that you care for them, some may believe that buying gifts to show your appreciation is buying into the commercialization of the holiday.

According to Fox News, data collected in 2022 by the National Retail Federation presented that there was a total revenue of \$23.9 billion in Valentine's Day purchases, which is the second largest point of spending for the holiday in retail history. Because of the increasing

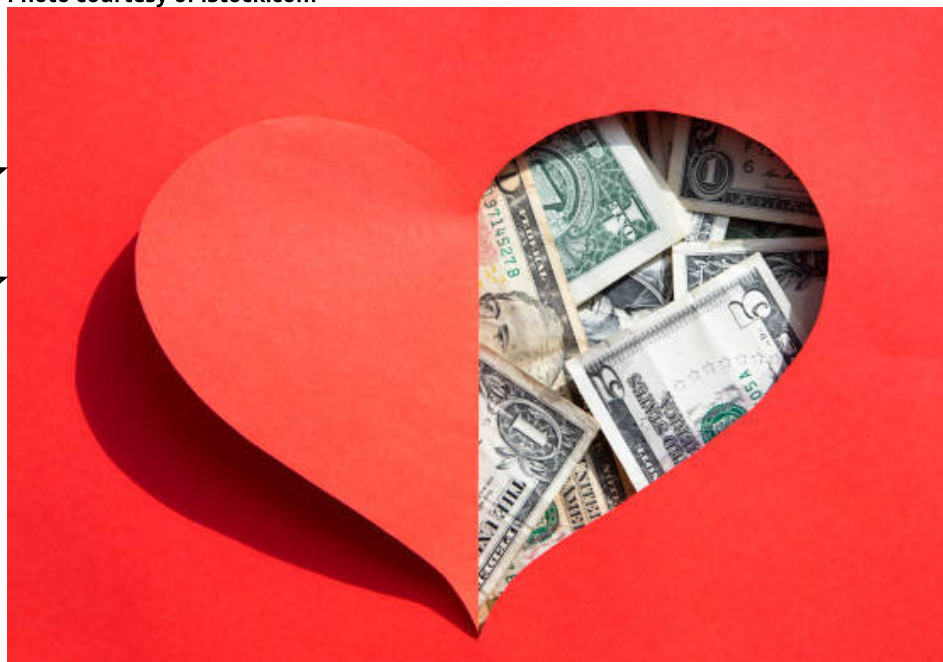
gain that businesses, companies and corporations continue to make from Valentine's Day, it's quickly becoming one of the most profit-oriented holidays.

Although many people give tokens of love and appreciation on this holiday, why we celebrate Valentine's Day and where the holiday originated from is a bit of a mystery. From what we know, Valentine's Day appears to have some relation to both pagan and Christian customs and traditions. While there are many theories as to what created the holiday, the story of St. Valentine is the most widely believed origin for the holiday of love.

According to Fox News, the Roman Catholics believe in legends of saints who were imprisoned and executed for practicing their religion or for assisting someone else who had been persecuted; St. Valentine was one of those saints.

In ancient Rome, Emperor Claudius forbade young men

Photo courtesy of iStock.com



Valentine's Day has quickly become one of the most commercialized holidays, after Christmas and Mother's Day.



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from marrying in his city because he wanted the men to remain in his army. St. Valentine thought that the emperor's intentions were antagonistic and began marrying couples in secret; he eventually was caught, imprisoned and martyred for his doings.

Because of St. Valentine's actions, many believe that people named the holiday after him because he was characterized as the hero of romance after his execution.

How did a legend of a saint turn into one of the world's most profitable holidays?

In the 17th century, Valentine's Day was celebrated by writing letters of appreciation to show affection, but two centuries later that all changed when companies and businesses began to advertise Valentine's Day-related products to target consumers. The most notorious culprits of Valentine's Day commercialization were among jewelers and florists. Now that businesses could cash in on the holiday and

buying gifts began to become more common, the new definition of love on Valentine's Day puts money straight into the pockets of marketers.

Valentine's Day shouldn't focus on buying gifts, but

rather on the people that we adore and value. Furthermore, there are ways that one can show another admiration without materialistic items, like spending quality time with one another or making a sentimental, homemade gift.

Photo courtesy of CBN.com



St. Valentine was the Roman patron saint of lovers and beekeepers. It is believed that he was executed on February 14, 269 AD in Rome, Italy.



## Freshmen reflect on their first semester of high school

### What was your first semester of high school like?

- Makayla Poindexter:** "Good and not nearly as busy or hard as last year." but the fun after-school activities and making friends was awesome!" with missing work sometimes, but overall did good and finished with all A's."
- Blake Underhill:** "I enjoyed it thoroughly." **Aleena Nito-Powell:** "It was very up and down, but fun." **Rachel Walker:** "It was good, but kinda crazy."
- Maggie Gates:** "It was exciting for the most part. My classes weren't as good as I was hoping, **Fletcher Grubb:** "Pretty fun, I had friends in most of my classes, had some ups and downs **Davan Pruitte:** "It was cool, but I could've been better on my grades."

### What's one thing you didn't expect about high school?

- Blake Underhill:** "I expected it to be more difficult." **Rhilee Shook:** "I don't know, maybe meeting new people." **Riley Ford:** "The amount of pep rallies and the amount of nice teachers there for you."
- Aleen Nito-Powell:** "I thought kids would be more mature, so I didn't expect a lot of people not to be." **Selvin Osorio-Davis:** "It to be so chill. I definitely expected it to be harder based on what I was told in elementary and middle school." **Mikayla Tiller:** "Some of my teachers would be more chill."
- Fletcher Grubb:** "The confusing 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th lunch thing." **Destiny Jones:** "How nice the teachers are." **Shirley Parra Curiel:** "Getting really good grades."

## What was your highest point during your first semester?

**Makayla Poindexter:** "Getting good grades."

**Blake Underhill:** "Grade-wise, I had two 100's in my classes, but I would say that my highest point was my history class due to the fact that I had the most fun in that class."

**Maggie Gates:** "When I finally got through geometry and passed my SOL."

**Dulce Marroquin:** "Passing Algebra I, Part 1."

**Fletcher Grubb:** "Dropping 18 points on Petersburg."

**Rhilee Shook:** "I don't know; all my points were pretty high. I just got along with everyone pretty well."

**Shirley Parra Curiel:** "Getting straight A's and B's."

**Mikayla Tiller:** "Passing my history SOL."

## What is the biggest difference between high school and middle school?

**Blake Underhill:** "Middle school was much smaller, easier and we were less mature."

**Maggie Gates:** "They are a lot stricter in middle school, and middle school was a lot easier to keep up with everything."

**Mychaela Burns:** "In high school you can do a lot of activities, and in middle school you really can't do much."

**Dulce Marroquin:** "People are more careless about other people and drama."

**Fletcher Grubb:** "The long classes and chiller teachers."

**Rihlee Shook:** "High school has more classes than the middle school, and the food is way better than the middle school."

**Davan Pruitte:** "High school is more lowkey and chill, but you gotta be more on top of your grades."

## What is something you thought you knew about high school, but it turned out to be wrong?

- Makayla Poindexter:** "We use lockers, but we actually don't." **big change and my teachers would be extremely strict."** **Mychaela Burns:** "I thought high school would be strict, but it's not that bad."
- Blake Underhill:** "I thought that I wouldn't have fun in my classes, but they turned out to be very enjoyable." **Aleena Nito-Powell:** "I thought the older kids would be more mature, but it's not all of them." **Davan Pruitte:** "It would be super hard. It's not easy, but it's not as hard as I heard."
- Maggie Gates:** "I thought it would be a hard but they are actually pretty easy."

## What were some things you participated in?

- Makayla Poindexter:** "Group projects and the school dance." **class, I was on the sideline and competition team, I am in the SCA and I went to several of the basketball and football games."** **Mikayla Tiller:** "Sideline and competitive cheer."
- Blake Underhill:** "I participated in pep rallies, Interact Club and Pickleball Club." **Desiray Walker:** "Blast!" **Riley Ford:** "Clubs"
- Kamiyah Johnson:** "Track" **Rachel Walker:** "SCA and spirit weeks" **Mychaela Burns:** "During football season I was the water girl, and I run track and field."
- Maggie Gates:** "I am the vice president of my and Crime Solvers Club." **Fletcher Gubb:** "Basketball"

## Did you have any expectations of how high school was going to be? If so, what were they?

**Makayla Poindexter:** "I thought it was going to be extremely hard."

**Blake Underhill:** "I thought that high school would be scary and I wouldn't know how to navigate it, but I was proven wrong in both."

**Maggie Gates:** "I thought there were

going to be more exciting events and the pep rallies were going to be better, but they are very short and not as fun as I thought."

**Aleena Nito-Powell:** "I expected high school to be hard and exhausting."

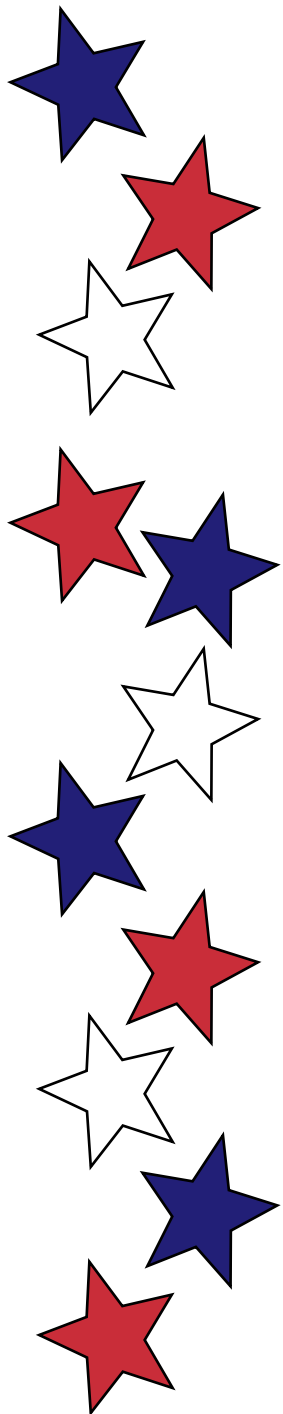
**Aidan Kelley:** "My siblings made it seem a lot harder than it actually is."

**Shirley Parra Curiel:** "I thought it would be hard and it is a little, but you just have to take your time with things and not rush through your test, quizzes and classwork."



# Colonial Courier Word Scramble

Show your Colonial Pride by participating in the Colonial Courier Word Scramble! The scrambled words below are from different stories of the February issue. The first person from each grade level to email Mrs. Terri Moody with the correct answers will win a **PRIZE!** Hints are the words written within the pages of the issue! **Be sure to put your first and last name and grade level in the email!**



1. senafrhm
2. rMs.udolhRp
3. aabbslel
4. njiruso
5. ubrryFea
6. oofd cveieSe
7. tsrrteanuas
8. ponnoii
9. aVenenlit's aDy
10. igRn ceDna

