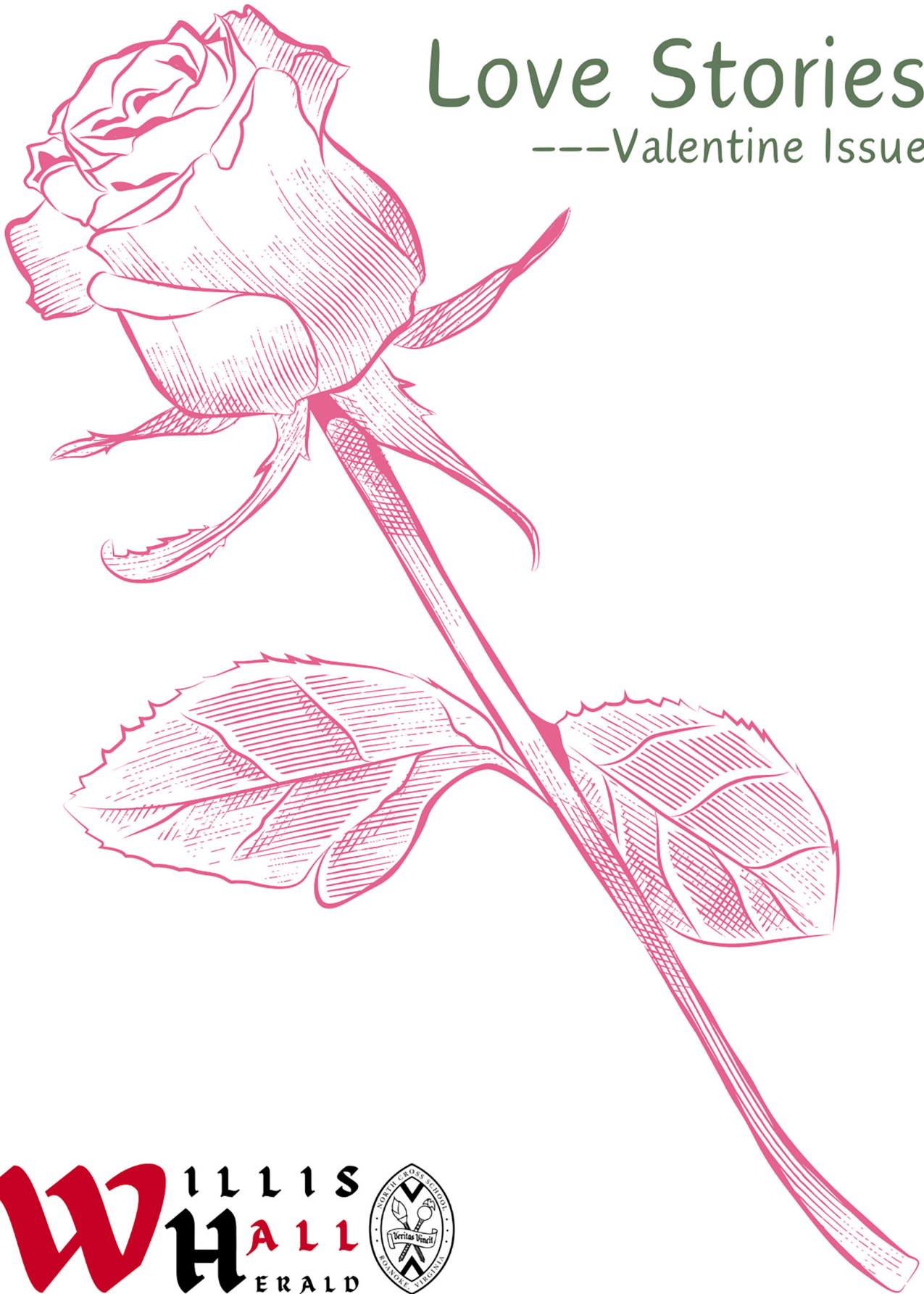


Love Stories

---Valentine Issue



WILLIS
HALL
ERALD



Oh how we love February!

Valentine's Day rolls around and we celebrate our designated month of love. As flowers and chocolate sell out, the spirit of love fills our hearts. Cupid reloads his love bow, and everyone begins to show and feel their love.

We have a lot to love in our lives including that of our very own school. When asked in a survey about what students love about our school, the most common response was about our community and people.

After all, what's not to love about our community?

From our caring students, to passionate teachers, everywhere you look, there's people to be admired. As we share our day to day lives with these people, we are surrounded by our beautiful campus atmosphere. Love is not shy to visit our school, especially in Willis Hall, where our students and faculty love one another.

But if you find this love cringey and overused, just know that love is more than just a romantic trope. Love can come in many emotions and feelings, and everyone should love and admire things and people in their lives.

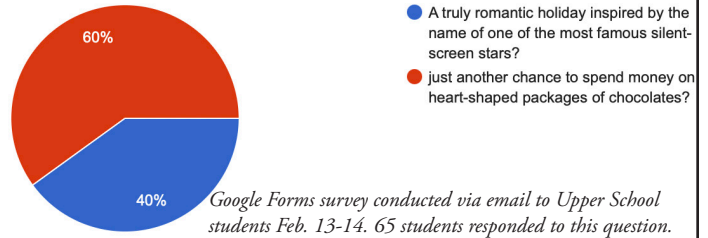
Not only that, but everyone should feel loved. From the Willis Hall Herald to the rest of our community, we want you to know how much we love and appreciate you!

Believe us we do!

We truly love our community, a community full of amazing and talented people. After all, the Herald is all about you, and without you, we wouldn't have your unique stories to share! So as Valentine's Day passes and February comes to an end, don't let it stop you all from continuing to love. Love your relationships, love your hobbies, love your environment, and love yourself! Make sure to share your love and don't ever be afraid or ashamed to express it. So even though Cupid won't return until next February, we'll keep on loving with our everlasting love.

After all, the Herald is all about you, and without you, we wouldn't have your unique stories to share!

To quote a famous song,
"What's love got to do with it?"
In other words, is Valentine's Day . . .



Willis Hall's favorite love songs:

- Love Story by Taylor Swift
- She's Mine, Part 2 by J Cole
- Kiss Me by Sixpence None the Richer

Inside the Issue

1. Eason Zhou designed the cover. He also designed the pink backdrops for the love stories and a special green centerfold background that includes use of lovely cursive and san-serif fonts.
2. Anna Ciccozzi summarized the feelings of our staff and students.
3. Caroline Welfare writes why we feel more secure with Chris Kuyper.
4. Caroline also writes about Kit Prillaman's departure from CrossWalk
5. Muses at Bay and Symposium photos allow a peak into a big day.
6. "More Happens Here" might summarize an array of lessons.
7. Love stories begins with photos from the Sadie Hawkins Dance
8. Mike Koss's dog Cleo helped him win Nicki Dabney's love.
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10. Camera shy Donnie and Annie Akers married 34 years ago.
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15. Anne Bradley Cullen writes about love and heartbreak.
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20. Boys' tennis and lacrosse teams reload to fight for more titles.
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24. Indoor track stars won two individual state championships.

The Willis Hall Herald

Founded in 2010 and based in the Journalism elective, The Willis Hall Herald is the official student-led publication of the Upper School at North Cross School. The Herald may be published in magazine form three or more times per year. Founded in 2017 and produced by the Herald staff, GeoPrism: A Global Studies Journal may be published in magazine form once or twice per year. The Herald welcomes letters, commentary and submissions of original content that adhere to the Herald's dedication to factual journalism. Letters and other content must be signed and may be edited for length and Herald style. The Herald does not guarantee publication of outside submissions. Submit letters to willishallherald@northcross.org. The Herald won Gold Medals from Columbia Scholastic Press Association in 2012 and 2015.

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Feeling safe at NCS during a wild week

By Caroline Welfare

When the threat had initially been posted, and the parents of students had been emailed to keep their kids in the public schools home, I was awake and getting ready for the school day. I had been listening to music through my earbuds, like I always do, because my little brother, who turned 10 in the fall, was not as early of a riser.

My mom knocked, and came into my room to tell me that the public school system had received a threat. My brother, Charles, was still asleep and would be until he woke up two minutes before the bus would have arrived. Charles was only told that he didn't have school that day, the threat factor was not mentioned. Naturally, he was happy: one, because he didn't have to rush to eat breakfast; two, because he didn't have to go to school.

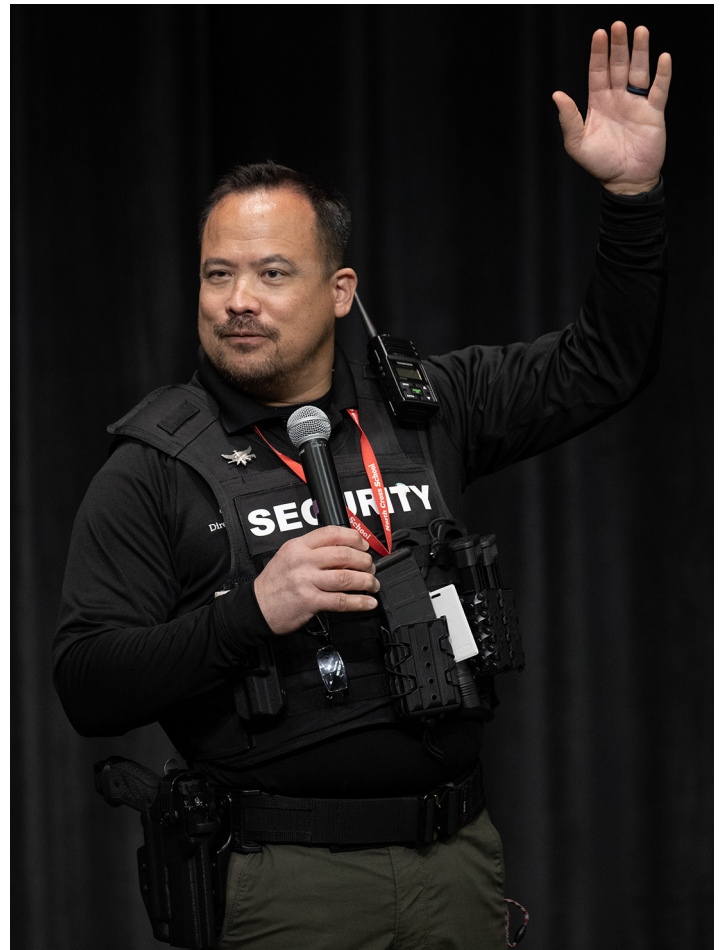
Charles goes to Highland Park Elementary, not Patrick Henry, but his school is still out the day after, and he stayed home with my mom and dad while I came here.

Kuyper reassured us on Friday morning that we were safe, and the person responsible for the threat had been apprehended. He also told us how all levels of jurisdiction -- even the FBI -- come together in threats to schools.

"We will sometimes get warrants for searching social media, unless the companies want to get charged with a crime," Kuyper said in his answer to how they pursued the person who had been the one to post the threat.

He continued to tell us to report suspicious things if we saw them, that it wasn't the same thing as ratting someone out.

A big thing I took away from the speech was that North Cross is a safe campus, and that malicious threats to schools are taken seriously. The security staff's biggest concern is our safety, and getting help to people who need it.



SECURITY: Officer Chris Kuyper informs assembly how threats are handled. Photo by Eason Zhou

Advisor's dream come true: Keynote speaker notes importance of journalism

Nancy Agee's Symposium keynote speech, on her career leading to becoming the CEO of Carilion, had something for every adult in the room, if not every student.

For Head of School Armistead Lemon, she emphasized how an institution's leaders must stay focused on the mission. For directors of the STEM program, Agee exemplified the power of a career in science, including the need for financial literacy. For Global Studies, she noted how important language learning and travel have been for her family. For Fine Arts Distinction advocates, she recounted the importance of her time volunteering at Mill Mountain Theater. All of these character components help her lead the biggest employer in our region.

She made my day near when she answered questions by students. Agee mentioned how many of her decisions must be tempered by the way they may be perceived on social media.

In response to a question by Ned Tower

I usually read three papers a day, or four. . . . to connect dots . . . thinking about what the future is about, what's happening now."

'24, she said words that encapsulate the reasons why Journalism should be a core class, not just an elective.

"You've got to be careful. First of all, one thing

that I always think about; is every text, every email, could be on the front page of the paper, sometimes."

Then, she answered a question about what a typical day might be for her. She mentioned how rare it is for something to be typical -- that she might have various meetings starting as early as 7 a.m and lasting well into the evening.

Agee went into more detail about how she starts each day:

"I'll probably get a cup of coffee. And interestingly, I usually read three papers a day, or four. I read The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post, and usually The New York Times, or scan it. And I read the Roanoke paper.

"And I do that because I'm interested, you know, not just because it's something to do. But I'm trying to see if there's anything in the paper I should know about that's going to affect Carilion and try to connect dots . . . thinking about what the future is about, what's happening now."



Carilion CEO Nancy Agee accepts applause and a gift from Head of School Armistead Lemon at the end of her Symposium keynote. Photo by Eason Zhou

Prillaman announces retirement

Educator created the CrossWalk program at NCS.

By Caroline Welfare

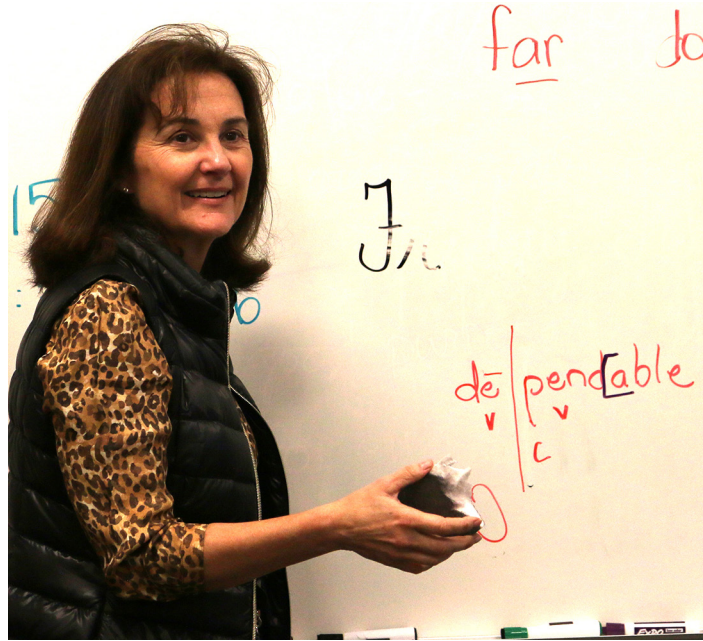
All of the Crosswalk students have had their hearts touched in some way by its Director Kit Prillaman, so it's fitting to have an article about the retiring faculty member in the February issue.

Prillaman started in 2014 as the Director of Crosswalk, coming with a Master's Degree from Virginia Tech, where she learned to help dyslexic students through the Orton-Gillingham method.

"I learn more from my students than they could ever learn from me," Prillaman said as she shared what working with her students has been like.

She is proudest of the Crosswalk Foundation, the building is named after her; and how it helps students learn and grow in a safe community. Prillaman has made a new family at North Cross, one of both students and fellow faculty members.

Her husband, Grayson Prillaman '88 went to school at North Cross, and played on our soccer team as did



DEPENDABLE: Prillaman breaks down a word that happens to describe her. Photo by Nola Daninger

their son, Grayson '23. His time at North Cross helped her feel more welcome when she first arrived.

"He graduated here in 1988, and we just celebrated our school's 80th birthday, so it's just so neat to see how our school has grown," Pril-

laman said "It's really enriched my experience here."

Prillaman started at the same time as Mrs. Albright, the owner of the beloved CrossWalk dog, Sadie. She kindly said that she loves all the dogs on campus, and doesn't have a favor-

ite, but she did comment on what it is like to work in a campus that welcomes faculty pets.

"I love working in an environment with dogs," she said, "because they're so therapeutic for our students."

Prillaman is stepping down from her position at North Cross to be able to better lend support to her children, who have made their homes in Washington, DC and New York.

"I don't think that my work with dyslexic students is done, but I feel like this is the right time for me to step down as the Director of Crosswalk and maybe support from behind the scenes so I can enjoy some time with my family," Prillaman said.

Prillaman has had a huge impact on North Cross, and will be missed dearly. But she hopes to leave a message for her students, and all other lives she has touched here, to "to just always keep learning, always keep improving, and learn from everyone."



Dr. Hood shaves a leg that will become part of a stool similar to the one at his right. Against the window, Uzair Mirza '24 and Jeroen Van der Elst '25 discuss the process. Mirza convinced Dr. Hood to let him split the log with the handmade mallet Dr. Hood made. Photo by William Hendrickson

Dr. Hood returns to show how to build wood stools without power tools

By William Hendrickson

For one of the symposium activities we watched Dr. James Hood make a leg of a stool from wood.

The father of NCS history teacher Dr. Daniel Hood, he explained every step and process that he takes to make these stools in his session called "Making a Stool from a Tree with Hand Tools." For the beginning of the activity he told us where he got the wood and the size he needed the wood to be for it to work.

Dr. Hood got the wood from a dead tree in the forest of Guilford College, where he teaches a summer class in woodworking without power tools.

He said he could make "200 or more stools from this tree." The class was shocked that he could

make that many stools.

Dr. Hood also taught us about the circumference and the radius he needed the wood to be to make the legs. He had a homemade tool to show the correct size he needed it to be. He also told us that he made the tool he is sitting on from scratch. The extra shavings that are at his feet can be used to start fires. But the shavings were too moist to use them at the moment.

Near the end of the activity he used a shaving tool to create the circular shape he needed the leg to be. By the end of the activity he had one leg for a stool and taught us many things about wood work.

"It was fun to watch him explain how he used each tool to create the legs of a stool," Lauren Boone '25 said. "He explained how wood worked and the easiest or best ways to work it."

Talent caps day of Symposium with Muses at Bay

By William Hendrickson

Photos by Eason Zhou

For the finale of Muses at Bay, Kam Johnson '24 and Jase Rhodes '26 traded lead vocals and danced around the stage, while Evie Eagan '25 played lead guitar on Brain Stew by Green Day. J2 Rhodes '24 played drums and Dr. Mike Koss played bass. (1)

Jadyn Rhodes '24 and Kaeleigh Howlett '24 sang "You love who you love" by Zara Larsson as a duet. (2)

Umair Rasul '24 played "Riptide" by Vance Joy on acoustic guitar. (3)

Dajah Garrison '24 sang "Classic" by MKTO, which had the crowd jumping and singing. (4)

Helen Hertz '24 and Dami Bankole '24 had their own comedy skit called the "North Crosscars" and had the whole room laughing. (5)

Josh Miao '25 and Leyton Sturm '24 played piano. Sturm sang "Wondering Why" by The Red Clay

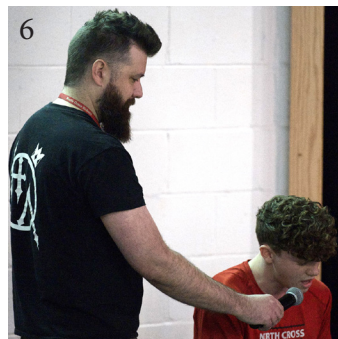


Photo by Sarah Sledd



Finch discusses Peace Corps journey

By Lauren Boone

My favorite session was "Peace Corps: A Two-Year Adventure That Will Change Your Life" led by new CrossWalk teacher Kevin Finch, who has two daughters in the Upper School.

Finch gave a great presentation; he provided a lot of information, facts and photos from when he worked as a Peace Corps officer in Honduras. I thought his presentation was the most interesting, because I love the topics of healthcare, travel and different languages. Finch taught Honduran children English. I think his story is wonderful. It made me think about working for the Peace Corps myself.

Les crêpes sont délicieuses Biology goes on SeaQuest



LA CRÊPERIE: French 4/5 student Maggie Bibby '26 pours batter onto a crepe pan held by Indira Weed '25. Photo by Chris Brandon

By Aadeetri Pandey

When students passed the classroom they could see a table full of strawberries, Nutella and loads of whipped cream. A sweet scent filled the hallways that led to the French classroom. Many students wondered what was happening in fifth period French.

Crepes day for the French 4 and 5 students was a blast. It took place on Feb. 20 in French teacher Chris Brandon's room. All the students in French 4 and 5 brought different ingredients to make the crepes such as milk, eggs, butter, Nutella, and many other crepe staples. Students also brought pans, bowls, and other cooking equipment. They used the

hot plates from the chemistry rooms as a heat source.

"It was kind of a group effort like we all really wanted it to happen," Indira Weed '25 said. "Mr. Brandon said that if we organize it ourselves, we could do it."

The students first read the directions and ingredients in French. Then they started making the crepes.

"We made the crepes using the French recipe, and then made like a ton and they had extra time leftover," Indira said. "So we made another batch and gave them to teachers. It was really a good way to spend a Tuesday."

After, the group was done making a crepe for themselves they started making them for the faculty.

"We made the crepes using the French recipe, and then made like a ton and they had extra time leftover," Indira said. "So we made another batch and gave them to teachers. It was really a good way to spend a Tuesday."



FISHY FIELD TRIP: North Cross students sit in the underwater-tank viewing box during the Seaquest Aquarium tour. In the front, Abby Landry '26, Peter Anderson '27 and Thomas Friebe '27 among others observed fish in the tank. There were an array of stingray, small sharks and various tropical fish. "Was really fun," Annabelle Coles '27 said. One of the activities included students offering small bits of approved treats to some of the animals. STEM students and others went to learn about how science is applied in the aquarium. Photo by Caroline Welfare.



SMARTER THAN ROBOTS: Seniors Paul Schueler, Uzair Mirza and Konur Onufer analyze the performance their robot in competition at Harrisonburg High School on Jan. 20. Fourteen students, including many eighth-graders made up North Cross Raider Robotics this year. Photo by Mike Koss

Showdown at Sadies hoedown



By Lauren Boone

This year the SCA had a Western theme for the Sadie Hawkins dance.

Students had the choice of dressing in casual Western attire such as flannel shirts, jeans, denim skirts and jackets.

But most girls wore dresses, some being plaid, monotone, floral, sparkly, colorful or silk. Some attempted to correlate to the Western theme with sundresses.

Another way girls correlated to the theme was with white and brown, ruffy and soft dresses.

Students wore cowgirl and cowboy boots until stepping on the dance floor. Once on the dance floor, guys changed into sneakers if they weren't already wearing them. Girls changed into slippers or sneakers.

Red and blue cowboy hats were passed out and among students in the gym.



Evie Eagan '25 gets a lift from Kaeleigh Howlett '24. Jeroen Van Der Elst '25 wore a metallic gold suit and tie to the dance, which seemed to appeal to Sander Frogner '25. Photos by Sarah Sledd



SADIES LADIES: Cate Overton '25, Julia Corliss '25, Nadia Hosny '24, Tea Hash, Dami Bankole '24 and Dajah Garrison '24 Right: Yearbook editors Blake Shaner '24, Eason Zhou '24, Indira Weed '25, Paul Schueler '24 pose with the most wanted cow and Ashton Shannon '24 (on phone). Photo by Sarah Sledd



Forget Cupid, Cleo matched Koss and Dabney

BY ANNA CIGCOZZI

Pets play big roles in people's lives, but some may be surprised to find that Nicki Dabney and Michael Koss's bulldog is not only a furry friend but a matchmaker.

Nicki and Mike first met while they were attending graduate school at Indiana University. They both were living in Bloomington, Indiana, but originally met online. Not wanting to tell his parents how he met Nicki in fear they would think it was some weird stranger, Mike told a little lie.

"He told them that he met me walking his bulldog, Cleo, in the park," said Nicki.

In fact, ironically, Nicki essentially agreed to go on the date with him because he had a bulldog. On their second date, however, they ended up copying their "first date" by actually walking Cleo in the park.

Once Nicki finally met Mike's parents, she realized that they still believed that they met in the park. The two joked about how if they got married, somebody was going to make a speech about this at their wedding. Sure enough, their prediction was right and Mike's dad ended up referencing how they met in the park.

"My brother and my mom just gave me a look," said Nicki, "and it was kind of an inside joke with the wedding party and my family."

But finding a "perfect match" or so-called "soulmate" can be hard and confusing for most. It makes you wonder how people like Nicki and Mike knew they were "the one" for each other.

"I think early on, he was being very intentional with our relationship," said Nicki, "And I had been on enough bad dates to realize that he was very different than all of the flawed men I had previously dated."

One of Mike's admirable qualities in their relationship is that whenever Nicki is in a bad mood, he can easily get her out of it. Hidden behind his "all business at work" look, Mike is a very humorous person that can always find a way to make Nicki laugh. Along with this, something that Mike said with his philosophy background and was even related to a reading that his sister did at their wedding has stayed with her to this day.



"He said to me, 'relationships are a choice', right?" Nicki said. "Passion can fade but being committed to a person and being reliable and choosing to show up for them is a choice. And that's what a relationship is."

With the month of February, the couple make sure to share their love along with their daughter, Natalie '38. For Valentine's Day, Mike doesn't enjoy gifts very much because he would rather just buy the things he wants. With only little gifts to one another, Valentine's Day is usually not a big deal for

the couple. Regardless, they still try to do something fun every year like the time they traveled through a snowstorm and then made M & M cookies and watched *The Office*. But with all these Valentine's memories, one sticks out to be very special.

"So in 2020, like right before COVID, we had professional development. The Lumineers were playing in Charlottesville, and [Mike] was like, why don't we just go and make a weekend out of it. It was right around Valentine's Day, and I was like, Oh, this is so fun, but I was so sick. I was like, we have these tickets, so I'm either going to be sick at home in bed or sick but having fun. So we had this whole fun weekend in Charlottesville, and we went to so many good restaurants. He was working on Symposium, and I was writing letters of recommendation and grading tests. So we were so busy, but we had a fun weekend. We drove back that night, and I wasn't feeling better. I was actually getting worse, and I was running a fever. I just remember thinking this is so unusual for me. So I went to urgent care on my way home after work. And they're like, well, we think you might have the flu, but we want to give you a pregnancy test first because you know if you're pregnant, you can't take a lot of medicine. So I was like, okay, and they gave me a pregnancy test. I just had to wait there and it turns out I was pregnant. But, so it's kind of like a first little Valentine's Day celebration as a family of three. So I actually very much love the month of February."

Just last year, the three had a little chocolate fondue party for Valentine's Day, and I can't wait to see what else is in store for this happy, loving family.

FEBRUARY 2024

LOVE STORIES

How the Dickensons fell in love



By Liam Rippel

If you travel around our school you will find many married couples, but you won't find a happier and stronger relationship than that of our very own Ed and Mistie Dickenson. I have had the opportunity to be taught by both of them, and I can truly say that both of them are excellent teachers.

Ed Dickenson is serving the longest teaching tenure at our school. He is very versatile in the subjects that he can teach. He has taught English classes to Middle and Upper School students, every level of French, and has taught running for three decades.

Mistie is well known as our Biology and Environmental Sciences teacher. She also brought AP Biology to NCS. Both of the Dickensons are hard working and excellent teachers, who are incredibly important to our community, so it only makes sense that they ended up together.

The two met 20 years ago, when Mistie moved into the same apartment complex that Ed Dickenson lived in, and they hit it off. They have been together for 19 years and have been married for



20 YEARS! Mistie and Ed Dickenson pose for a photo in 2004 a month into their relationship. Ed was meeting her mother for the first time.

18. "Never wait for the perfect moment," is what Mistie had to say about her time before being married. They loved each other very much and decided there was no reason to wait. It was clearly a great decision. They had a more private wedding in March of 2006, having just fami-

ly and close friends in attendance. When I had asked her how much she loved him she said that she couldn't do that because how can you describe infinity.

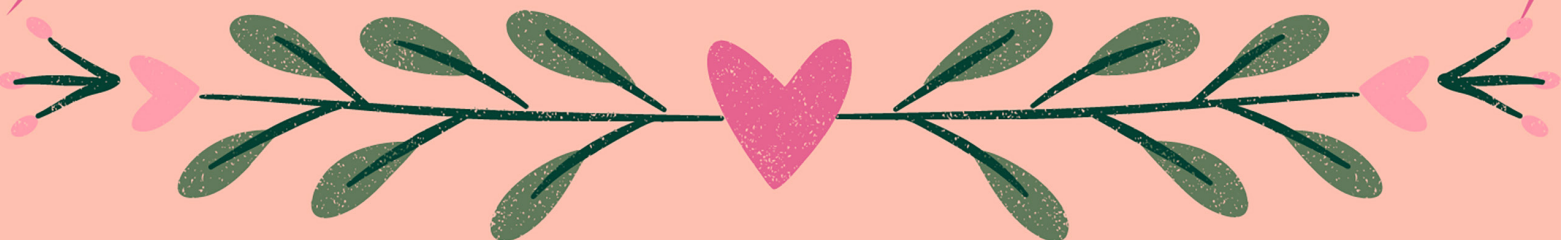
Mistie Dickenson loves her husband so much and is so thankful for everything that he does for her. She said that

the nicest thing that he has ever done for her was then she was studying and working to get her endorsement for social studies, Ed Dickenson would take their son Alex out of the house and go take him to see the trains pass by on the railroad track so that the house would be quiet so that she could focus.

Mistie Dickenson says they are perfect for each other, and one reason is that Ed Dickenson always knows exactly what to get her as a gift. She said that her favorite gift she has gotten were the Tom's that he bought her, which are a popular shoe that just so happen to be her favorite.

Lastly, one thing that Ed Dickenson did for her that she really appreciated was that he spent time out of his day just to fix up her bike so that she could ride it for the first time in 10 years. She was so thankful that he did that for her, and she really enjoyed being able to ride her bike again. The best part for her was that she was able to ride with Ed and spend time with her husband and best friend.

**"Never wait for the perfect moment."
- Mistie D.**



Showdown at Sadies Hoedown

By Gracie Munro

Each winter we celebrate a favorite tradition, the Sadie Hawkins dance.

Unlike most school dances, where it is traditional for the boy to ask a girl, the Sadie Hawkins tradition is for the girls to ask the boys. The month leading up to the dance is filled with excitement and anticipation, all leading up to a night of fun with friends in the North Cross game gym.

To get a better understanding of what it is like for students, we interviewed a few people who attended the dance and asked them how the night was for them.

Grace Sheppard, '25, told us that she spent an hour getting ready, and then went to dinner at the 202 Social



Grace Sheppard '25 and Kathryn Hancock '25 pose together at the 2024 Sadie Hawkins dance. Photo by Sarah Sledd

House with her friends and her date.

She said that this year was the first year she had been to with a set

theme, and that she had a lot of fun.

"I really enjoyed myself," Grace said, "but I think for the country theme they should've played more

like line dancing music or something to fit with it. But besides that, it was really great!"

To go with the theme, students were also welcome to come dressed up in their best country attire, and most people came in colorful flannels and cowboy boots.

One of the highlights of the night was the mechanical bull. Many students had their go at it and tried their best to hang on, with everyone else cheering them on and waiting to see who would get the record. In the end, it was Leo Lampros '26.

Donnie and Annie Akers represent a loving couple

By Lauren Boone

When the Herald asked students which couple on campus represents love, many students said the Akers.

Donnie and Annie Akers have worked at North Cross since 2004. They met at Chi-Chi's, a restaurant in Virginia Beach, while Donnie was the manager and Annie was a hostess.

Donnie was born and raised in Roanoke with his family. He was transferred to a job in Virginia Beach where Annie lived and worked. The couple started dating



shortly after. Eventually, Donnie decided to move back to Roanoke and Annie moved with him. The Akers got married in 1990. They owned a bar downtown called Confetti's for 13 years, from 1991 to 2004. It later shut down and the Akers were hired at North Cross.

For 20 years, Donnie and Annie Akers have

worked together in the cafeteria. Annie's mother and their daughter joined the cafeteria crew years ago. They provide breakfast and lunch, set out snacks, check out students and cook for special occasions. The Akers bond with students as they work every day. Annie greets each student with her unique, animated and delightful personality. Donnie has always been a pleasure to talk to as he checks students out. The couple is a great contribution to our school.



FEBRUARY 2024

LOVE STORIES

Schlachter dynamic duo becomes family of four



*"I knew I wanted to marry Anneliese when we moved in together and didn't kill each other."
- Ryan Schlachter*

By Aadeetri Pandey

The Schlachters are a dynamic duo, and sometimes they might be the only thing keeping Willis Hall from plunging into a chaotic mess that would probably lead to the destruction of the school. Both of them are always ready to help North Cross's faculty and students wherever and whenever they are in trouble. All you have to do is ask and they will go out of their way to make sure everything is taken care of. It is very obvious that they are both extraordinarily hard workers who have so much love for the school and each other.

"They're so nice. I love Miss Schlachter because she does everything for the school. She basically runs the school, and she always helps me print stuff. And if I need Advil, she gives me some," Catherine Ferguson, '26 said. "I love Mr. Schlachter because he's my tennis coach, he's a really good coach, and he's super nice. I love their kids. because they're so adorable and I just love them because they're really helpful."

"I think they're both the coolest and nicest people ever," Izzy Snyder, '26 said.

Ryan tirelessly works all around the school and helps students whenever they have issues with technology, coaches the girls' tennis team, and is the assistant coach of the boys' tennis team.

Meanwhile, Anneliese does the same with her home base as Assistant to the Upper School Director. She is always ready to open the door for the students when they forget their



FAMILY FUN: Ryan holds Emma Jade '37 who is 5, and Anneliese holds Sadie, who recently turned 3 at Disney World over Thanksgiving break in 2022.

keycards and is equipped with cough drops and ibuprofen at all times. The super couple first met at a wedding when they were both 22. As if it was by fate, the groom was one of Ryan's buddies that he met when he was in the Army. However, the bride was Anneliese's cousin. They started talking to each other at the wedding and they clicked. Love was in the air for the soon to be couple, probably because they were at a wedding. The wedding was in June and they started to date each other by July. Fast forward about six months, they decided to take a big step in their relationship and move in together. After they lived together for some time and didn't completely hate each other, according to Ryan with his dry sense of humor, they knew that they were meant to be.

"We pretty much knew within the first year it was headed in that direction," Anneliese said.

"I knew I wanted to marry Anneliese when we moved in together and didn't kill each other," Ryan said in an email.

Ryan proposed in June of 2016 after watching the sunrise in Kitty Hawk, North Carolina around four years after they first met at that fateful wedding and started dating. Being the romantic he is, he videotaped the proposal so they could always look back on it.

"I love Anneliese's work ethic, her ability to get along with anyone, and her laugh," Ryan said in an email. "I love my family's support."

"I love his sense of humor, his intelligence, and how he is [annoyingly] good at everything he does" Anneliese said in an email.

A little fun fact that most people might already know is that Ryan is proudly the main chef of the Schlachter household.

Ryan proposes to Anneliese at Kitty Hawk, NC.



LOVE STORIES

The Return of Rain

By Anna Ciccozzi

I hate the smell of rain.

In fact, I hate everything about it, really.

Each time I feel the mushy, wet feeling trickling down my body, it makes me sick to my stomach. As I'm surrounded by the inescapable downpour, the slimy water leaves my skin chilled against the wind. I would rather be anywhere else than in the rain. I would rather tread through a tornado than have to stay in the pouring rain.

Today out of all days, it just had to rain. As I rolled out of bed, I sluggishly grabbed my glasses and rested them on the bridge of my nose bridge. I took my daily morning shower and stared at my reflection in the fogged-up mirror. My short brown hair flopped across my forehead as I shook it to the side. Good enough, I thought to myself after doing my bare minimum appearance check. I used to care more about how I looked, but now it wasn't that important. I hadn't shaved my beard in a couple of months, but I kind of liked the look. I mean, after all, it hid the scar along my chin, which was a plus. After getting dressed, I grabbed a yellow umbrella and made my way to the bus stop off Wallace Street.

The street was packed, cars end to end, as crowds of people pushed around one another trying to reach their destination. The bus rounded the corner, and I climbed inside. My eyes scanned passing scenery, and I caught a glimpse of a billboard to my right: "Love is in the air" As I pondered about the cliché phrase, I couldn't help but think of Lina. After all, today was all about Lina. The corners of my mouth rose as a smile took over my face.

After what seemed like 20 minutes of waiting, my stop finally arrived. Quickly, I scurried down the steps and into the building straight across from me. I opened the door, and the sound of a bell alerted the cashier to my presence. "How can I help you?" said a short old woman. Her bright blue eyes brightened up her wrinkled pale face. She reminded me of Lina's eyes, and for a second my mind drifted imagining her face. I need to stay focused, I reminded myself fighting the urge to stay in my imagination.

"I'd like to buy some flowers please."

"What kind! Roses are very popular this time of...." Before she could finish I interrupted her.

"Tulips please. Tulips would be great."

"You're just a lucky duck today aren't ya, we have one bouquet of tulips left."

I tried to let out a friendly chuckle to the woman's remark, but the woman saw the cringe expression on my face.

"Who is your lucky lady?" The woman asked, scrunching her face in a playful way.

They were for Lina. Tulips were her favorite flower.

"They are for my mother," I said, feeling a little guilty for lying.

This wasn't the first time I'd lied about Lina.

Regardless, the woman praised me for "being such a sweet son" and I thanked and waved goodbye to the woman.

Leaving the flower shop I went to a bistro down the block

and grabbed a bite to eat. After

satisfying my hunger, I looked

down at my phone and read

the time. It was two o'clock

and I needed to hurry to the

bus stop before it would be

too late. I couldn't be late. If I

missed this bus, the next opportunity I would get would

be the next day. I didn't

have that time to waste, so

I began sprinting. With each

puddle I stepped through,

water splashed up my legs.

Hurry, just hurry. Slouching

into the damp seat, I relaxed

my muscles and caught my

breath. I made it.

By the time we reached my

stop, I was the only remaining

person on the bus. Clutching the tulips

in my right hand and umbrella in the left, I

hopped off the bus and took a deep breath. Lina

I'm coming.





LOVE is only a four letter word,

but unconditional LOVE is not spelled out

By Mia Starr Rueda

For every kiss there is lust
For every person there is love
What is love?

Why do we have such a desire to have love? To feel loved,
Unconditional love,

If the silence of your presence echoes in empty halls,

And anger and sadness has knocked down all your walls,

The ground seems to crack and crumble into rubble, or your heart might shatter,

It will all not matter,

Because unconditional love is what is not lost, nor never was,

It was never the imagination or a small thought, it was a tenderhearted act of caring

The Return of Rain continued

After a little searching, I finally spotted her. From her familiar ocean blue eyes and silky curled hair to her vibrant smile and button nose, nobody could compare to Lina. Not only was she the most beautiful girl in the world, but she radiated in every room she entered. One of the kindest people you would ever meet with the most lighthearted sense of humor, no one knew Lina like I did. She wasn't perfect, and we sometimes had rough moments, but she was mine. She was mine until they took her.

She was everything to me, and that night she was gone.

If only we had stayed home. She told me we should wait it out, but I refused.

"A little rain don't hurt anybody" I lightheartedly told her...

I decided to drive out that night, that horrible, horrible night. I couldn't stop it from happening... The car came right towards us and there was nothing I could do. I couldn't save her. I couldn't save them... As I lay half conscious, I heard the distant ring of sirens. The last thing I remember was watching a raindrop flow down the windshield. As I closed my eyes and lost consciousness,

little did I know she wouldn't be there when I woke up. That was the last time I'd see her. Truly see her.

As the events of that night flashed through my mind, I wave of emotion took over me. I moved my hand along her picture as the taste of my salty tears mixed with the rain around me. I desperately love that picture of her, and I come every week to visit her, to see her smile one more time. Even if it is only a picture. I delicately placed the tulips on top of Lina's grave as I sat in the wet grass surrounding her. Usually I visit Lina in silence, but today I decided to speak to her. "Happy Valentine's Day Angelina, my love, not a day goes by that I don't miss you."

In the four years since Lina's death, it's still hard for me to cope sometimes. Each time I feel the scars on my face or get inside a car, I can't help but feel uneasy. With each passing storm cloud and raindrop that falls, I'm transported to the night of the accident. The night I lost my wife and future child.

I've come to realize that no matter how much I wish I could take back what happened that day, I can't. What's happened has happened, and there's no going back. The rain will return to me another day, but I can't say the same about them.



LOVE STORIES

Modern Day Cupid

FEBRUARY

By J Cupid

Born on February 14th, 2007 at 11:11 p.m. Jay Fleming, aka Jay Flem, loves to make matches of love for people all over the school.

Everyone in the school knows J Flem's abilities to help anyone fall in love, but let me inform you, J Flem has one rule with these powers, there has to be mutual feeling. He believes that if it isn't mutual, it won't work and eventually the connection will fade and disappear. Nobody truly knows how he does this, but no one questions his powers if that's what you want to call them.

Now that you're all caught up, let's tell you about his mission before this Valentine's Day, getting his own date for this Valentine's Day. The only reason this is a problem is because he spends so much time getting people together he never figured out what works for him. When Jay gets around girls he freezes, especially Janiyah. Jay has had the biggest crush on Janiyah since elementary school, but never made a move due to how close they were. With this friendship, he didn't want to 'make it weird' between the two of them. Janiyah moved to Jay's neighborhood in the fourth grade, and as they grew closer as friends, Jay's feelings grew for her.

Jay and Janiyah are so close she just rides to school with him every morning in his 2013 Lincoln MKS with tan interior. They both are in love with Hip-Hop, Spanish music and R&B. Even though they argue about who's better, they still love each other's taste in music. While Janiyah is more into Drake, Kendrick and Biggie, Jay is heavy into J. Cole, Nas and JID. Both agree J. Cole is one of the best lyricists of all time, but with no meat-riding of course.

As soon as Jay steps foot on the school premise he is bum rushed with requests for matches. His most recent was the school nerd who had a thing for the captain of the cheer team, who secretly had a thing for the nerd ever since they were partnered up for a chemistry project. Jay always joked saying, "They always had Chemistry." He really only said this to close friends and Janiyah, he would do anything to make her laugh. Jay, at 11:11, came up with the perfect plan. He talked to the nerd, Urkel, and the cheer captain, Laura, at different points of time. First he asked



how they felt about the other, due to the only rule, and both to his surprise said they were mad for each other. Now, out of respect for the practices of the modern Cupid and the happy, newly made couple, he's the best at what he does.

As Valentine's day creeps up more and more people are piling requests on the already busy man of love, but he gladly does it to make people happy. Ever since he found out what he was capable of in the eighth grade by just messing around and saying Joe should be with Jane, Jay has been spreading love free of cost because he says, "the world needs more love not for me to have more money."

Jay's school decides to have a dance this year, and Jay is trying to muster up the courage to ask Janiyah. Yet like always, he chickens out. Before he knows it Jalen, the starting point guard for the basketball team, asks Janiyah, and just like that Jay's only chance to step out of the friendzone closes. The day of the dance comes and Jay is convinced to go by Urkel because he wouldn't be there without Jay. He shows up late in a pink suit with a tie covered in hearts, looking fresher than any other guy in there. He goes to grab some punch from the bowl, and just so happens to look up and see Janiyah sitting alone on the bleachers. He dashes over to check on her and she said the second they walked in the dance Jalen went to hang out with his teammates. He asks why she went with him anyway, and you'll never believe what she said next. She said, "because you didn't ask me." Jay felt like a complete idiot. "I didn't know how you felt and didn't want it to be weird." Then as he asked for a dance his voice cracked and they both laughed. "And you're Mr. Love, huh?" Janiyah said as they both danced the night away to "In The Morning."

Ever since that night Jay and Janiyah have been the talk of the school as the 'couple who didn't need his magic.' Driving to school, getting out of the car, and walking hand-in-hand into their future together. Jay continued to help others find love, and wouldn't you believe it, his match making abilities improved after finding his match made in heaven.

FEBRUARY 2024

LOVE STORIES

Homecoming Heartbreak



By Anne Bradley Cullen

It was a warm summer day, June 5, 2019, and Ellie was getting ready to go hangout with Jack. They were planning to have a beach day together and then get some dinner afterwards at their favorite pizza place.

As Ellie grabs her stuff and is right about to leave, she gets a call from Jack. While she answers, she begins to hear the tone of disappointment in his voice as he breaks the news that he can't hang out because one of his dad's new co-workers' family is coming to stay with them for a few days prior to their move.

Ellie grows very annoyed due to Jack having to cancel on her the past two weeks. "Whatever Jack, it's fine," she says. She then hangs up the phone and calls one of her best friends to go to the beach with her instead.

Meanwhile, over at Jack's house the family arrives and all of the sudden Jack sees a very beautiful girl get out of the car. He is in shock and immediately goes to introduce himself. "Hi, I'm Jack," he says. "Hi I am Bailey," says the girl, "nice to meet you!" Jack and Bailey end up spending most of that day together getting to know each other more and more.

Meanwhile, Ellie lays on her king size bed in her bright blue room growing more and more annoyed due to Jack not texting her back since that morning. She then decides to drive over to his house and give him a piece of her mind. Once she arrives, she parks in the driveway and goes up to the front door. Jack's dad answers and says, "Um Ellie what are you doing here, we have visitors." "I need to speak to Jack," she responds. "With a great look of annoyance, "alright he is upstairs," says Jack's dad." Ellie hurries upstairs and knocks on the door to Jack's room. Jack comes and opens the door and is shocked to see Ellie standing there. As Bailey tries to hide, Ellie spots her and immediately says, "Who are you and what



are you doing here?" As Jack tries to calm her down she begins to throw a fit accusing Jack of cheating on her. She then breaks up with him and storms out of the house.

A few hours later, Bailey and her family leave, but having exchanged numbers, Jack and Bailey continue to stay in touch all throughout the summer. Right before school starts, Ellie and Jack get back together, even though Jack was still secretly talking to Bailey.

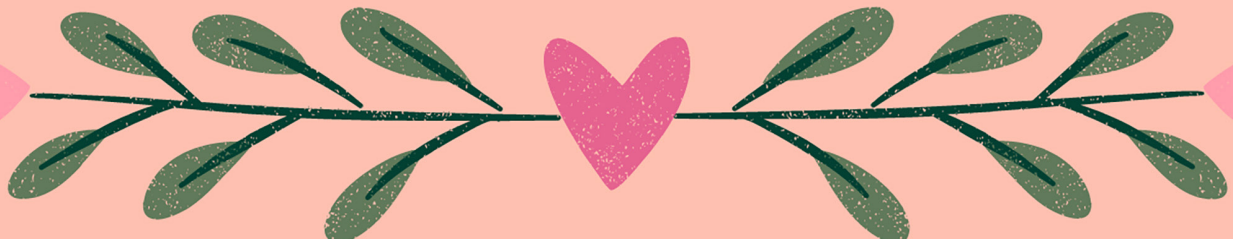
Finally it was the first day of school. To try and avoid conflict, Jack and Bailey agreed that they should not

interact at school. A few weeks pass and homecoming comes around, and Jack has to decide which girl he has true feelings for and wants to take to the dance. He had been sneaking out to secretly meet up with Bailey and they had formed a very close relationship. As time passes, Ellie begins to wonder why Jack has not asked her. After a few days of contemplation, Jack decides that he is going to ask Bailey to homecoming after her soccer game later that week. He goes to the store and buys her flowers and makes a poster for her. However, he still needs to break up with Ellie prior to asking Bailey.

The next day, he goes up to Ellie at school and asks her to take a walk. The two of them go outside and Jack explains how their relationship is very unhealthy and has made things very stressful for him. "What are you talking about?" asked Ellie. "I have been nothing but good to you."

All of the sudden, Jack admits that he has been seeing Bailey and is going to ask her to homecoming. Ellie immediately bursts into tears and storms off. That was the last Jack ever saw of Bailey, for she never returned to school again.

Later that week, Jack asks Bailey to homecoming and they go and have a great time together. They eventually start dating and develop a healthy and stable relationship.



Carmen asks Eelsie to dance

By Scoop Deuxdieux

Slithering, sliding, scooting, squirming. Call it what you want, but few would call his seemingly spastic fits dancing.

Maybe you're not aware of Eberhard Edward Larry von Slingeneimer, but you probably know the freshman who goes by the name Eelsie, which is based on his initials: EELS. The truth is, we're not sure he knows himself too well. Who is this guy who nearly shut down the Valentine's Day dance with his "electric eel" boogie?

Maybe we should blame Carmen "Caramello" Perez. Rumor has it that she invited Eelsie to the dance only to wait half the night for him to stop propping up the wall and dance with her. That should have been her first clue something was wrong.

When her friends Cindy Webb and Charlotte Miller (AKA: "Cinebuns and Chocogirl") convinced her to ask him to dance, he awkwardly agreed barely making eye contact.

The gym looked kaleidoscopic that night -- just what the school needed in the middle of a long and wet winter in Idol City. Reader, if you were one of the few people who did not go to the dance, you would not have recognized that dreary place where Coach Mo Matematica tortures us in PE. Mrs. Cherie O'Hart led the SCA to make it look like a psychedelic movie scene. It appeared as if someone turned and twisted the walls into tie-dye t-shirts with bright pinks, blues and greens all swirled together to transport the dancers to another realm.

Carmen and her girlfriends knew it would look this way, because they helped Mrs. O'Hart decorate. The best part might have been the fact the English teacher knew it would take so long to



DOOMED DISCO: *This AI image captures a more joyous moment before Eelsie unleashed his worm-like squirms on the floor. Image by Scoop Deuxdieux*

set up, that they would have to move PE classes out of the gym for the Friday before the dance. It really was a relief for those students who suffered from Coach's old military-based ideas about getting kids fit.

Carmen walked around the perimeter of the gym, which took long enough that Eelsie noticed her coming his way. As she approached, she waved and said, "Hey Eelsie!"

Eelsie felt a surge of confusing energy. He did not understand the feelings, but he composed himself enough to mumble, "Hey Carmen."

"You can call me Caramello if you want," she said. "All my friends do. Do you want to dance?"

Eelsie smiled. The DJ was playing a slow song -- "Always and Forever" by Heatwave. Eelsie loved this song. He had never touched a girl before, not even a hand shake, let alone a hug. He looked around to see how other kids did it.

Carmen noticed his hesitation, and put his arms around her waist and then put her hands on his shoulders. She started to move one slow step to the side and he naturally followed her. The repetitive motion allowed Eelsie some comfort and he relaxed. They kept their bodies apart and chatted quietly during the song. Eelsie spoke nervously, but she laughed when he said that he once sang the song to his dog. He felt more confident, so when Carmen asked him if he wanted to sing along, he said he would if she did.

"Always and forever/each moment with you/is just like a dream to me/ that somehow came true/and I know tomorrow/will still be the same/'cause we've got a life of love/that won't ever change..."

Then the song ended and the DJ said, "Let's keep it hot with Heatwave and play some 'Boogie Nights.'"

Carmen let go and Eelsie did too, but they kept dancing as the song went: "Got to keep on dancing." Initially, they seemed to be in sync, but as the song built toward its crescendo, Eelsie began looked up at the glittering disco light and he became increasingly erratic. Finally, he felt the need to wriggle like his namesake eel. As the DJ sequed into the next song, Eelsie got low and two quick steps later he dove on the floor, slid a few feet since his polyester clothes found no friction, and he writhed, slithering on the floor. He flipped on his back and kept wiggling and squirming. The DJ scratched the needle across the vinyl disc as he halted the song. Unlocked from his trance, Eelsie looked around to see he was in the middle of the dance floor by himself. Now everyone else pressed



By Nola Daninger

We've been talking for three months. Her name is Eliza Platel. I met her on Tinder. We clicked almost instantly. We've been on a few dates. They all went well and I really wanted to keep seeing her. So, I asked her to be my Valentine! I invited her to our local town cafe, Blue Moon. I really liked her because she made me finally get over the other girl I was obsessed with. It took me almost three years.

Her name was Vanessa. She was the prettiest, smartest girl I've ever met. I've known her since fifth grade. She had curly blonde hair and green eyes. She had the prettiest eyes I've ever seen. I don't know what it was about her. The way her hair was always shiny? The way she always kept a conversation going? The way she always wore hot pink socks? Weird things. We dated from college until I was 30. That's when she ghosted me. I didn't do anything, not that I know of at least. I haven't heard from her since. I'm 35 now. Now you're all caught up.

I got there early. We were supposed to meet at 5 o'clock. It's 4:30. Eliza was usually just on time, so I wasn't surprised when I didn't see her yet. I waited for 20 minutes. Maybe I should get a drink? 10 more minutes. 5 o'clock. She still isn't here. I waited 15 more minutes until I decided to call her. Ring Ring. No answer. Maybe she forgot? Maybe there's traffic? I waited, and waited, and waited. 6 o'clock. Stood up. I thought, I've been stood up.

As I was about to get up and leave, someone quickly sat down across from me. I looked up.

"Hi!" The lady said.



"Hi?" I said cautiously. This lady looked kind of weird. She had green eyes. Her hair slightly covered them. She had dark brown straight hair and wispy bangs. It looked so damaged, almost fake. She had a beanie on. It was dark green. She had a very mysterious tinge to her. Her clothes looked very hippy. Her long sleeve flowy shirt was orange with red and pink flower-like designs on it. She had a darkish green flowy skirt beneath. With silver and black Crocs.

She stared at me.

"Uhm, can I help you?"

"No, but I can help YOU," the lady said promptly.

My eyebrow raised.

There was something about this lady, something that felt comfortable, like

home.

"Okay?" I said questioningly.

"You've been stood up, haven't you?" she asked.

What the heck.

She smiled. "Here." She handed me a small, tall bottle. It was clear, with a reddish liquid in it.

"What's thi—"

"A potion." She interrupted me. She looked down and smiled. "A love potion."

"What? I don't need this!"

Before I could finish my sentence the lady got up and left. My eyes followed her out. She tripped on one of the chairs. Her pants jumped up her knees. Hot pink socks shone in her Crocs. My face went cold. She turned around and looked at me. Her eyes were targeting my face. The prettiest green eyes I've ever seen.



LOVE STORIES

Willis Hall's favorite romantic movies

By Maeve Parker

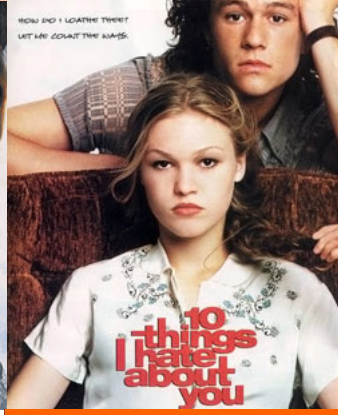
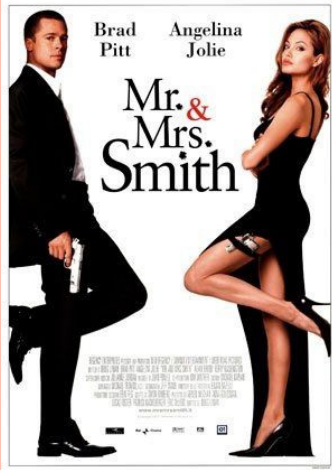
“If you look for it I've got a sneaky feeling you will find that love actually is all around.” This quote is from one of the most influential romantic movies of all time called *Love Actually*, and it just so happens that our school can closely relate to this quote, as it is clear that many of us have a deep love for romantic movies. Although there are so many different genres of movies, around the month of February, romantic movies are usually at the top of people's watch lists.

Out of so many romantic movies around the world, our school has some obvious favorites. The infamous *10 Things I Hate About You* with Heath Ledger and Julia Stiles is an interpretation of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* and it is the most loved romantic movie at our school.

For Jahanvi Patel '25, *10 Things I Hate About You* is easily her favorite romantic movie. Jahanvi says, “I love the storyline, it's so good!” she said. “I like the ‘I don't care girl’ and the ‘bad boy’ character that go so well together.” Jahanvi was obviously not the only person who shared this strong opinion on the movie, as the majority of Willis Hall students wrote it as their favorite in our recent poll.

Another classic which was met with affection by students was the classic, three-hour long tragic love story called the *Titanic*. This movie is so popular that it has been seen and admired all around the world, making it an especially popular movie with our dorm students.

Brooklyn Chen '25 recognizes the *Titanic* as her favorite romantic movie, saying, “It is special because it portrays a love story between two individuals from different social classes, Jack and Rose,” she said. “Their love was interpreted under the test of a



unique shipwreck disaster,” making this movie different.

There are many types of romantic movies, with the choice of romantic comedies being popular among our students. *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*, an iconic romantic comedy, is a favorite of senior Atilio Ciccozi '24. Despite this movie not being well-known, it is definitely a movie that has touched people's hearts with its memorable characters and funny plot.

Atilio remarks his love for the rom-com saying, “The romance is nice, but I particularly enjoy the comedy and action laced throughout the story,” he said. “Couple that with some great performances by Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie, and you get a classic romcom-esque movie with all the fun but none of the cringe.”

Along with this rom-com style of movie, comes the infamous *Juno* from the early 2000's. Helen Hertz '24 along with many other students in the Upper School love *Juno* and its focus on teenage love.

Helen '24 loves *Juno* because, “I think it does a really great job capturing what it's like to be a teenager,” she said, “navigating romantic feelings for someone else, while being kind of awkward and just taking life as it goes.” This movie should especially speak to Willis Hall because we are all teenagers doing exactly what Helen said and taking life as it goes.

As you can tell, our student's absolutely love romantic movies, and even if you don't, you have definitely seen one. They are so prominent in our world's culture that not having seen one, would be truly missing out on some amazing stories. However, if you haven't seen one or you are simply looking for a good movie to watch, consider the movies listed above by our own students in Willis Hall and you should be in for a good time.

FEBRUARY 2024

LOVE STORIES

Kaeleigh Howlett shows love for theater



MIDDLE MAN: Colonel Pickering (Howlett '24) interacts with Eliza Doolittle (Valeria Dancea '24), while Mrs. Higgins (Kenzie Raub '24) and Henry Higgins (Jamey Davis '24) look on. Photo by Sarah Sledd

By Maeve Parker

Earlier this winter, a buzz filled the auditorium as Theater Director Polly Jones announced to the school that this year's winter play would be the infamous Pygmalion. Immediately after this announcement, a variety of students rushed over to Jones to express their interest in joining the play.

Throughout the winter, this special group of students worked vigorously memorizing lines, making sets, learning their characters, and so much more. Finally, on Jan. 26, the cast was ready for opening night and they couldn't be any more excited.

"We all worked together to create this show and had such a fun time creating it," said Kaeleigh Howlett '24 who played the character of Colonel Pickering. Kaeleigh enjoyed the play especially due to her love of the story. "My favorite part of the story is probably the transformation from how Eliza is a low common woman in the

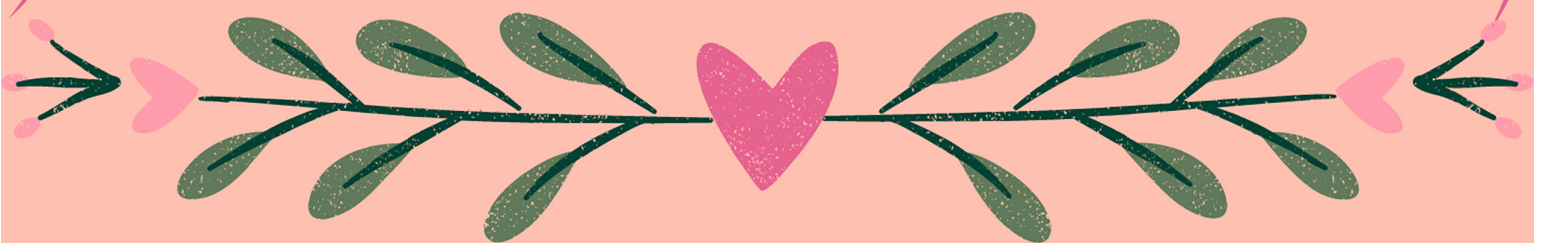
beginning," she said. "But by the end, Eliza is a well off lady in higher society."

While she loved the plot of the play, Kaeleigh has a love for theater and her role as Colonel Pickering helped challenge her in new ways.

"This was the first time that I have ever played a male role on stage!" she continued. "It helped my acting skill more since I have never had to play a character like that." From memorizing and utilizing different gestures and postures of the character, Kaeleigh learned a lot.

She talks all about her love for theater saying, "I will always have a love for theater, and this new experience just improved my passion to pursue it in college."

Question: Is Pygmalion a love story?



Boys tennis reloads in attempt to defend titles

By Anne Bradley Cullen

Striving to win their third state championship title in a row, the boys varsity tennis team has many strong returning players as well as some new international players already practicing hard with their first match against powerhouse public school Blacksburg coming up in just a few weeks.

Out of the 16 players on the roster, only 4 are new to the team. Eighth grader George Lugar, Gabo (Puerto Rico) Casar Suarez, and Alejandro Zuniga (Spain) are all new to the team. The Raiders will play 17 regular season matches before conference and states. Head Coach Jim Schaefer says, "We will have to work hard all season," Head Coach Jim Schaefer said in an email, "and I imagine a few of the matches will be closer than they were last year as well."

This year, the match format has officially changed to all three3 doubles matches being played before the six6 singles matches.

"Doubles will be especially im-



Jacob Juneau prepares to hit a forehand. The sophomore will likely play No. 2 or 3 singles and No. 2 doubles. Right: Sam Schaefer plants himself before hitting a forehand. Photos by Anne Bradley Cullen

portant if we want to give ourselves a cushion going into our singles matches," Schaefer said.

To win a team match, you need to win five5 of the nine9 total matches played.

This year, after wearing Adidas for the last 10 seasons, the Raiders will be switching up their gear to Nike!

When asked about the upcoming season, top singles player, Tyler Bloomfield '25, said in an email:

"I am most excited for the chance to win three state championships in a row for tennis. I think our team does have a good chance to win, but we will have to work for it a little more this year because we are young."

With the practices only just beginning, the boys warm up against Blacksburg and then host their first official home match on March 14 against Hargrave Military Academy. Their second match will be played away at St. Anne's Belfield in Charlottesville, Virginia who they beat last season with a score of 6-3. Due to the loss of a few strong players, it is expected that some of the matches will be much closer than they were last year. Will the Raiders be able to win their third state championship in a row?



Lacrosse boys prepare to defend 3-peat titles

By Liam Rippel

Coach Christopher Pollock warms up sophomore goalie Justin Jones as they get ready for just their third practice of the season.

North Cross is known as being a powerhouse lacrosse program, and the Raiders do not plan on changing that this year. They are on the back of a third straight championship, and are looking to repeat for the fourth straight year.

Many were initially worried that the team would struggle with the loss of the Division 1 workhorse, Ian Cann '23, as well as instituting a completely new starting defense and goalie.

However, the first few practices, all things considered, have been a success. There have been young guys that have matured and grown over the off season, as well as some returning players finding new positions that more suit their style of play. Coach Pollock has said he needs his young guys to step up, say-

ing that,

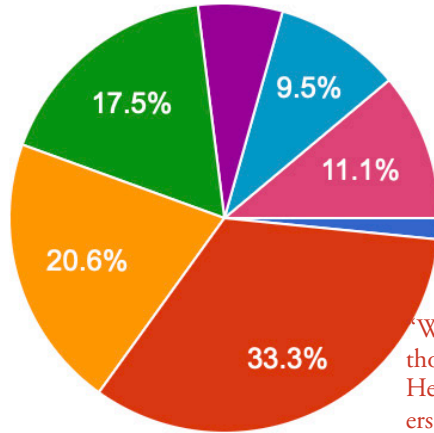
"We had some horses last year. This year, I need some new horses." Last year the Raiders had a strong senior class, including multiple college players, many of which boasting All-Conference and All-State awards, as well as last year's State Player of the Year in Will Hoff '23.

So there is no doubt that the Raiders lost some great players last year. The team has no doubt that they are still capable of being a great team, and have their sights set on a fourth straight championship in May.

The lacrosse team has a tough schedule this year, featuring teams from Tennessee such as McCaullie, a rematch of last year's state championship with Virginia Episcopal School, not to mention the defending conference champions in Blue Ridge School.

The Raiders are ready, and will have a chance to show off their talents with their scrimmages on March 1 against Hanover and Douglass Freeman.

Which spring sports team has the best chance of winning a state championship?



- Baseball
- Boys Lacrosse
- Boys Tennis
- Boys Track
- Girls Track
- Girls Lacross
- Girls Soccer

Google Forms survey conducted via email to Upper School students Feb. 13-14. 63 students responded to this question.

“What happened to golf?? We have a higher chance than any of those sports.” A justly indignant reply to the survey. Indeed, the Herald forgot to include Golf, the team that returns its top scorers after placing second in the state tournament by three strokes.

Boys basketball makes state hoops tourney



TRE FOR TONIO: Tonio Mack '24 rises high to shoot a three-point shot over Hargrave. Mack scored 24 points that game and averaged 25.5 points per game all season. The eighth-seeded boys ended their season against the top-seeded Seton School, but the young players show great promise next season. Photo by Eason Zhou

Girls soccer wins first game

Scout Kappes '25 and Isla Whittle '28 scored on assists from Sophia Brown '24 and Kathryn Hancock '25 to help the girls beat Southwest Virginia Home School in the first game of the season on the Richard and Nancy Cook Soccer pitch.

Baseball starts soon

After an accomplished and fun season last year, the Raiders baseball team is ready to face RVCS the Friday after spring break. The biggest plan is to beat Carlisle. “Hope and pray ball doesn’t get put in play.” Leyton Sturm '25 said. “and hope to win games and improve new players.”

Vivian Pickeral swims to be a General



BRILLIANT SWIMMER! Vivian Pickeral usually swims the 100 and 200 backstroke but also swims the 100 butterfly as shown in this photo. At Washington and Lee, she will most likely be doing backstroke races and the 100 fly. Swimming has given Pickeral “a second family” and a “second home.” “It’s definitely an outlet for me,” she said. “I sometimes have downs.” Pickeral is very passionate about what she does and wants to continue swimming in her future. “Some races will be better than others,” she said; “It’s your ability to move past a race and get focused for the next that sets you apart from other swimmers.” Photo by Eason Zhou. Caption by Mia Starr Rueda

Uzair Mirza leads golf into spring of high hope

By William Hendrickson

Few fans get to watch our golf team play live, but anyone can watch our best golfer, Uzair Mirza '24, play ping-pong -- usually with his phone as a paddle on a make-shift table in Room 16.

"I love how I can just play with my friends," he said, "and it's really fun but it also gets competitive. It's a great addition to the Student Center."

Uzair was a state and conference golf champion in the 2023 season. He hopes to go back-to-back and defend the title.

objective, when George Mason offered him a scholarship.

"This is the best feeling in the world," he said, "because I have worked so hard my entire life and to finally make my dreams of going Division 1 come true, there's no better feeling."

Now that the season is starting he is excited.

"I am really excited for this season because we have a really good and talented group of guys this year," Uzair said, "and I think we should have a really successful season."

The golf schedule starts on April 13 against a tough opponent Carlisle



Above, Uzair Mirza practices putting. Below, Mirza plays ping-pong with fellow seniors Abram Sherman, who hits the ball to Alex Dickenson and Dylan White.



"I also have a goal of going undefeated this season," Uzair said. These are his big goals for the season.

When asked about what got him into golf, he said, "My dad got me into golf. I used to go with him when I was really young and just hit balls with him on the range."

Since Uzair started playing golf, a big goal for him was to play Division 1 golf in college and he achieved his

School at Chatmass Country Club.

Most of the opponents are similar to last year, but this year North Cross will play Smith Mountain Lake Christian Academy at Mariners Landing Country Club. Conference this year for golf is at Heritage Oaks Country Club and States is all the way in Williamsburg at Williamsburg National Golf Club.

Ping-pong at break and lunch

By William Hendrickson

The ping-pong table is a big part of the student center. A certain group of boys always play ping-pong during breaks and lunch. Brandon Carey '26, Mason Jolley '26, Tilden Ayers '26, Cole Hoff '27, and Ethan Griggas '26 all play ping-pong during school every day. They play so much

ping-pong that the school banned it on Wednesday for playing too much and being too loud. Tilden Ayers '26 convinced SCA Advisor Susan Wenk to set up a ping-pong tournament for the school to play. The popularity of the ping-pong table has skyrocketed since the beginning of the school year.

Track and field athletes set multiple records

By Eason Zhou

“Ahhhhhhh!” With a roar, Jase Rhodes ‘26 won the VISAA Indoor Track and Field triple jump with a school-record jump of 46-1.5.

Also winning the VISAA title was Kerrigan Chaney ‘25, who completed the 1,600m race in a stunning school and state record time of 5:00.33. She also set school records of 11:06.92 in the 3,200m, 3:06.15 in the 1,000m and 1:20.83 in the 500m during the season.

Those are not the only highlights of this excellent indoor team.

Also heading to college to continue his track and field career is Alex Dickenson ‘24. He’s headed to Division I Radford University, where he’ll also join them as a member of the Cross Country team. He broke the school record in the 1600m with a time of 4:36.97 during the season.

Also at the state finals, Dylan White ‘24 broke the school record for the 1000m with an eighth-place finish of 2:41.78. He set the school record for the 3,200m during the season with a time of 10:32.71.

In addition to the triple jump Jase set the high jump school record at 5-8. And Harper Kappes ‘24 broke



LEAP YEAR! Jase Rhodes calmly lands his championship triple jump. Photo by Eason

the school record in the 55m hurdles with a sixth place finish of 8.48 in the state finals.

On the girls’ track, Maeve Parker ‘26 broke the school record for

55m during the season with a time of 8.32, while Gabby Miller set a school record of 47.67 for 300m. Brooklyn Chen ‘24 in the field made a stunning shot put and improved

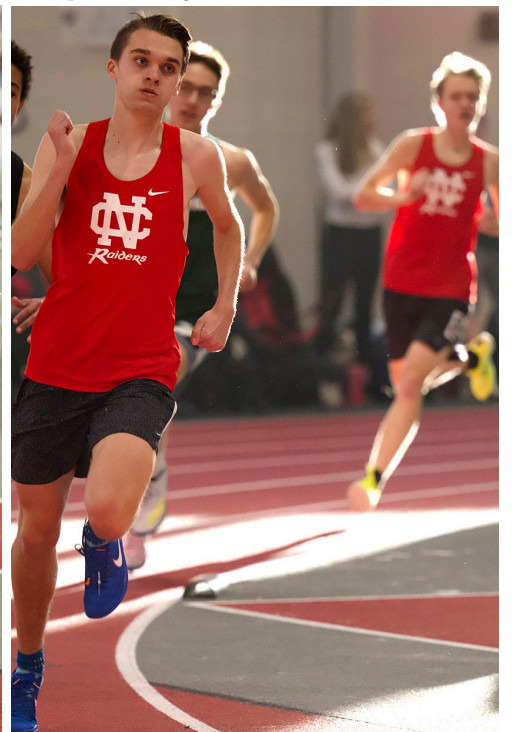
the school record to 31-1.

Jadyn Rhodes ‘24 extended the school record to 28-0.2 in the triple jump, as if the Rhodes family’s strength was the triple jump. Jadyn will move to Hollins University to continue her track and field career.

“The reason I chose them is because I feel like Hollins fits where I need to be at the time and now,” Jadyn said in a <10/10> interview. “And the people there, the community, the students, everything was just amazing and I loved it.”

In the team events, the girls 4 x 200 meter relay set a school record of 2:04.67 while the boys had 8:56.34 for the 4x800 meter relay school record. With numerous school records, the Indoor Track & Field team reached a historic peak this season. Kerrigan, Jase, Dylan and Alex qualified for Adidas Indoor Nationals.

“I was proud of everyone who participated yesterday,” Coach Dickenson said in an email to the team, “and the incredible effort and focus that I saw from our team. This was the largest VISAA indoor meet ever, and placing in the top-15 of any event was exceptionally challenging.”



Left: Dylan White runs the 1600. Center: Kerrigan Chaney runs away from her competition in the 1600. Right: Alex Dickenson runs ahead of Harry Anderson ‘25. Photos by Eason

CHANEY AND RHODES WIN STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS, AGAIN



KICK IT: *Kerrigan Chaney kicks past Molly Weithman on lap three of eight in the 1600 at St. Christopher School in the VISAA State Championship meet on Feb. 17. With a time of 5:00.03, she set the state record in the event. This was her third individual state championship overall. Chaney was five seconds faster than the second place runner from Bishop O'Connell. All but one of the top-10 runners came from Division I schools, although Chaney's main rivals from Covenant did not attend the event. "So sad. I was not happy." The VISAA mixes all schools together for track and field. Photo by Eason Zhou*

What was your strategy going into the race?

"I knew that I was gonna be right with the other girl who had a seeded time of 5:08 and mine was 5:09, but I wasn't sure how she was gonna run, so I was pretty nervous.

"My strategy was to sit behind her, and then if I felt good, to kick. So I sat behind her for the first three laps, and then I passed her with five laps to go, because I felt really good."

What did it feel like at the finish?

"In the final stretch, I saw the clock and I was like, 'Oh, that's really close.' And so I started sprinting as best I could. And when I crossed the finish line my mind was thinking like 'Please, God, be under five.' Yeah, and there was a video of me throwing up my hands like, 'It's okay.' I was really happy but really mad."

Interview by Anna Ciccozzi



Photo by Eason Zhou

By Jacob Johnson

Two time state champion triple jumper, Jase Rhodes '26, jumps 46'03" in the state meet to reset the school record and win again.

On Feb. 17, Jase walked into the state meet ready to take home the gold again. Last year he took home gold in the triple jump also.

Rhodes isn't new to the pressure of competing for the gold in a state meet.

"I knew that with me being in first 45.9 and second with 45.2, I would have to jump a 46'," Rhodes said. "I carried peoples marks would have to go past mine to win, and I wanted to go back-to-back."

Jumping takes poise. Athletes need to be able to change the way they do things while they're waiting even

while they're jumping.

"I was thinking that I can't scratch, and I have to expand both of my phases," Rhodes said, "Right before I had a lot of adrenaline from the moment."

Winning states two years in a row is a huge accomplishment, especially only being a sophomore. Jase feels accomplished and ecstatic.

"I felt like I was on top of the world. My dad told me I was going to hit 46' and the whole season I was hitting 44' then 45' so that put me on for this outdoor season," Jase said. "If I'm being honest, it felt good, different from freshman indoor and outdoor, but it means something but the jump was more important."

Can he go for a three peat next indoor season? "Yes I'm definitely going three peat," Jase said.