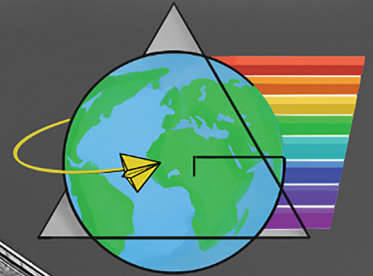


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UAE hosts successful climate conference

By Caroline Welfare

In December, diplomats and environment activists assembled in Dubai for the United Nations climate summit. Not many had real hope for progress, with peace-keeping in the Middle East failing and sound geopolitical leadership deteriorating and the chosen host country, United Arab Emirates, one of the world's petrostates, and the chairman, Sultan al-Jaber, the head of the national oil company. The last one of the three threatened to turn this important event into an exercise of greenwashing.

With sighs of relief, the UN's summit Cop28 defied bleak expectations and brought the world's nations, most of them, together in an agreement to move away from coal, oil, and natural gas, finite resources that are main fuel sources for global warming. The 198 parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change agreed on a text angling for a transition "in energy systems, in a just, orderly and equitable manner" away from fossil fuels.

Still, compromises that let down many environmentalists had to be made. The European diplomats hoped to "phase out" fossil fuels altogether, but fossil-fuel producers refused to agree. Small island nations feel their voices were not heard, as the deal determined only "unabated" coal power was to be phased down, leaving dirtier options free to continue so long as the burnt emissions are caught at the source.

Pessimists claim that the deal was "politically naive and economically unfeasible. COP operates by consensus, meaning that the big petrostates had veto on any deal" the Economist states.

Despite this milestone, fossil fuels are likely to remain prominent for coming decades. Even optimists believe that the battle will continue.

However, vast strides were also made. Mr. al-Jaber allowed for climate diplomacy to be stronger than many had hoped for. He proved more concerned with securing a negotiating triumph for the UAE rather than distorting the summit's process for economical gain. 50



oil companies made early pledges to reduce methane emissions, a powerful, not to mention dangerous greenhouse gas.

Many other successes led up to this deal, including the United States and China's agreement, two of the largest polluters and historic rivals working together to lay the groundwork for this event. Even next year's summit location - Baku - is seen as "a symbol of harmony".

Larger fossil fuel corporations have seen the warning: because of the financial changes that must be made globally, business will become more challenging and struggling nations will require aid now more than ever, with companies inevitably fighting back. But the bleak progress that still must be and challenges that still must be faced is made dull in comparison for the beacon of hope that COP28 shines

Op-Ed: We should honor National Freedom Day

February 1st, 2024, is National Freedom Day. The date is not significant simply because of its illustrious title of freedom, a revered principle in this great nation, but because of the commemoration of the never-ending struggle of liberty for all. On February 1st, 1865, led by Pennsylvania Representative Thaddeus Stevens, the House of Representatives passed, by a vote of 119 to 56, the 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution. The amendment postulates that:

"Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction."

In layman's terms, this states that slavery is effectively illegal inside of the territory of the U.S. or anywhere within its authority. It created a new sense of unity in this nation, although there was still an uphill battle to be fought. Still, the landmark decision to change for the good cemented the U.S. as a nation willing to do what is just, moral, and operate on the side of the Right. National Freedom Day has become a beacon of what America stands for. Our fathers set us on a trajectory—a destiny—for prestige and power used for the greater good of humanity.

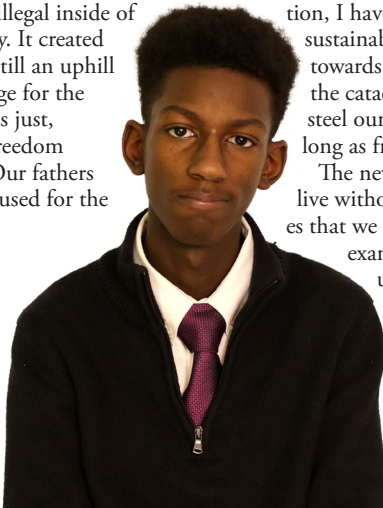
Obviously, I must have a personal connection to this concept of "freedom". The revered principle of personal liberties is a concept which has unmatched importance. In my journey of life I have found that there is no greater gift, given by the sacrifice of millions throughout our nation's history, than the right to be fairly represented, treated, and judged. In this nation, and every such nation dedicated to preserving the rights and legal guarantees for all who inhabit them, should be a nation venerated and exemplified on the world

stage. My individual connection with egalitarian principles and democratic engagement stems back to my early days of middle school. As you all know, the year 2020 was a turbulent period in not just American, but world history. As I saw even the adults in my life plagued by uncertainty, questioning the future of our planet, I knew that if such an event would happen again, there needed to be someone who could stand up and advocate for the true founding ideals of America. As the year progressed, and the unrest became ever apparent, violence and injustice became the only solution for some. That was a particularly haunting premise for me. Was this nation not founded on liberty and justice for all? Ever since I asked myself that question, I have dedicated my life, studies, and efforts to the furthered sustainability of freedom in the hearts of anyone willing to work towards its survival. We have come a long way since the days of the cataclysmic divide of this country in 1861. However, we must steel ourselves, and rededicate ourselves to the proposition that as long as free men live, not a man shall be a slave.

The new generation—this generation—must find what it means to live without fear. We must learn to revere the rights and privileges that we are endowed with from birth, and to hold ourselves as examples for others. As I conclude, I implore you to reflect upon my statement. What freedoms are you guaranteed? What do you want to see change? What is the most ideal life you can live in this nation? If everyone reading were to answer these questions, then there is no doubt in my mind that a more prosperous, successful, and free society would exist in our future years.

- Mason Bibby '27

Photo by Eason Zhou



Autumn arrives in winter!

By Aadeetri Pandey

Capybaras are the world's largest rodents that are native to South America. Willis Hall now has a few ourselves in the form of plushies in Autumn Coleman's class. Coleman first saw a capybara when she went to study abroad in Mendoza, Argentina, and ever since then she has loved them.

Coleman is the new Spanish teacher. She recently earned degrees in education and Spanish from Roanoke College and then went to be an assistant teacher at Glenvar middle school. She was born and raised in Roanoke and went to Salem High School.

She is excited to be teaching in the Upper School and is impressed with her student's Spanish speaking abilities. She doesn't have a favorite class because she enjoys the different subjects they have discussed so far. In comparison to her middle school students she feels as if they can have more deep and impactful conversations while also being on topic.

Coleman didn't always want to be a Spanish teacher. When she first went to college she hoped

to be an English teacher. While many of her professors said she should minor in Spanish, it wasn't until she talked to one of her teachers that they convinced her to major in Spanish. She hopes that one day she can go back to school to get her master's degree.

While Coleman isn't a native Spanish speaker it has been a big part of her life. She first started to learn Spanish in sixth grade. It wasn't till she went to college she realized that she truly loved the language. A lot of her close friends she met during studies abroad don't speak English and she wouldn't have met them if she never learned the language.

"My host mom spoke no English. And I adore her. I miss her. I still talk to her. And if I didn't speak Spanish, I wouldn't be able to communicate at all with her," Coleman said. "So those relationships are really special."

She hopes to continue being able to teach in North Cross but understands if she can't. She says her welcome to North Cross has been very positive and is excited to see how the rest of the year plays out.

"I love it here," Coleman said. "Have you ever



ANSWERING THE CALL: Autumn Coleman teaches Spanish 5 on her first day at NCS. Photo by Anna Ciccuzzi

had that feeling when you go into a room or a new place and you kind of feel like the oddball out? I have not felt that way at all here. That's great. It's been really enjoyable. The faculty has welcomed me with open arms. They treat me like I've been their friend for a long time."

Coach Allen becomes interim dorm director

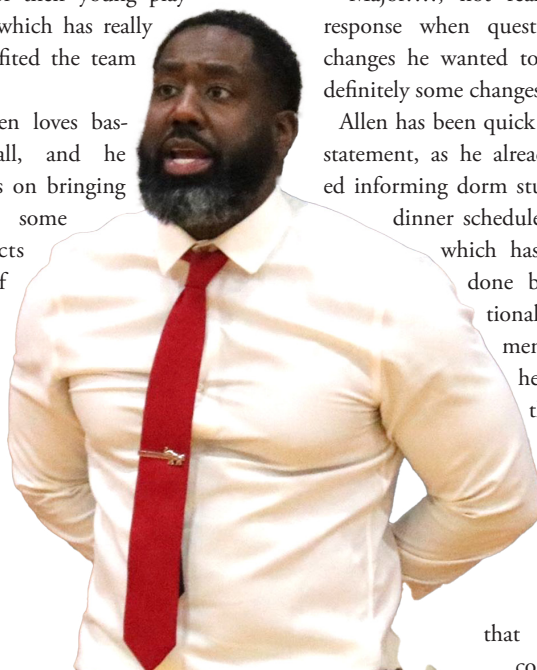
By Liam Rippel

Many were saddened to hear the news that Josh Kier left his leadership position at the dorm in January. But rest assured Jamiel Allen, the head varsity basketball coach, is ready and eager to fill the role and begin work in the dorms. For those who haven't met Coach Allen and conversed with him before, you may not know much about him, but you undoubtedly have seen him in the Carter Athletic Center, or walking around the halls of the Upper School, making his rounds and checking on students.

Basketball has always been a huge part of Allen's life, as he has coached for some years, and played collegiate basketball as a guard at Roanoke College. Allen played under legendary ODAC coach Page Moire, who coached the varsity basketball team in the '21-'22 season. Allen was an assistant coach under Moire that

year, and when Moire decided to retire, Allen stepped up as the co-head coach in the '22-'23 season, where the team ended up earning a state playoff berth and developing a lot of their young players, which has really benefited the team now.

Allen loves basketball, and he plans on bringing over some aspects of basketball



CLASSY: Allen dresses well on the sideline. Photo by Sarah Sledd

with him to the dorm. Allen mentioned that he wants to elect captains of each floor on the dorm, and have those captains make decisions for their floors.

"Major?... not really." was his response when questioned about changes he wanted to make, "but definitely some changes."

Allen has been quick to fulfill this statement, as he already has started informing dorm students of the dinner schedule in advance, which has never been done before. Additionally, he has mentioned that he realizes that he has a fair amount of young adults that he has a lot of trust in. He mentions that with trust comes more re-

sponsibility, so things like later curfews for those who earn such privileges may be in order.

"I think kids having new ideas is great," Allen said. "I want to hear about kids' ideas."

It is clear that Allen is willing to listen to suggestions and concerns, and will act on them as such, which is something to look forward to for dorm students. Allen is excited to begin working in the dorms, praising his staff that he finds friendly and hard working. Allen intends to provide a safe environment for kids to be successful and be the best version of themselves, he has said he is going to work hard to be the best version of himself to provide the best chance of success to the kids in the dorm. Allen is excited to begin work, and he has given the international students something to be excited about.

"Everyone here wants to provide the best environment for these kids," he said.

Dabney helps school connect with China

By Anna Ciccozzi

When Director of International Operations and Chinese teacher Nicki Dabney traveled with Head of School Armistead Lemon to China in November of 2023, they visited what Eason Zhou calls the “Florida of China.”

The two NCS administrators went with leaders of the NCS campus in Shanghai to visit a school in Sanya, Hainan, China that would like to partner with an American school.

Thirteen students so (far) will go to China with Dabney in June of 2024. The group will visit Beijing, Xian, Chengdu, Dujiangyan and Shanghai, where they will extend their stay so they can connect with students at the NCS campus there.



Director of International Operations and Chinese teacher Nicki Dabney will help students celebrate Lunar New Year, although this year, the event's timing happens on a day most students will not be on campus, so there will not be games.

Global Studies Program to explore Britain in summer

By Nola Daninger

Global Studies Director Ryan DeMarco says that one upcoming highlight of the Global Studies Program will be 18 North Cross students along with three chaperones including Upper School history teacher Dr. Dan Hood and Middle School Science teacher Kate Clark going to the United Kingdom. They will be there for 10 days, from June 18 to 28.

“I am really excited about it!” DeMarco said enthusiastically.

The group will fly through Edinburgh, where they will stay for a couple of days. They will go to Lon-

don, making little fun stops along the way. “We’re going to stop at Oxford and then visit Shakespeare’s home which is in Stratford upon Avon.”

DeMarco got his masters degree in Scotland at the University of Edinburgh.

“I loved living there, it’s one of my favorite places because it’s so pretty,” he said. “The castle is so cool.”

Recently, DeMarco went to Italy on spring break with his brother. They visited Rome, Florence and Venice.

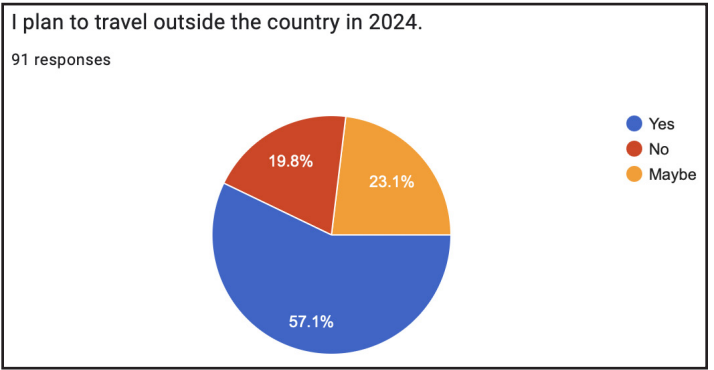
“Italy is also extremely pretty,” DeMarco said, “that’s another place I love visiting.”

Argentina trip this summer

Six students plan to travel to our sister school, Scuola Italiana, in Mendoza, June 8-23.

- Lucy Paige Ellett '26
- Turner Fraires '26
- Suvi Hansen '26
- Ollie Lacy '26
- Gracie Munro '26
- Joaquin Lamas '27

Chaperone: STEM Co-Director Mike Koss
Students will host even Argentines when they visit April 22 May 5!



Hertz pursues passion of international studies

Hertz will lead NCS delegates back to New York in March for four days of debate.

By Gracie Munro

Helen Hertz, '24, steps up onto the stage at one of her first conferences. Her mind is filled with frantic thoughts. What if they laugh at me? What if they think I'm dumb? Nervously, she starts to speak, offering her opinion to the rest of the delegates.

This was Helen's first time speaking at a conference, and it had gone better than she expected. Even though the day was her 16th birthday, she didn't want to miss her Model UN trip for anything. Helen had wanted to do MUN ever since she heard about it at a young age. When she switched schools for high school, she was overjoyed to discover that North Cross had a Model UN team.

"I had heard about it when I was younger, I want to say, and I had planned on doing it in high school," says Hertz, "when I switched schools and

found out we had it here, I was very excited."

For college she is hoping to go to Virginia Tech, and major in political science and history. Helen says that her favorite aspect of Model UN is how much of an engaging environment it is.

"It's like a place where a bunch of nerds go and just hang out."

For her future career, she wants to be involved in something to do with global issues or political science, Which is why she is doing MUN in addition to just having fun and meeting new people.

"All of the times that Helen has done Model UN, she has approached her committees with absolute dedication,"

said Hannah Ewing, the supervisor of the Model UN team, "She researches really thoroughly and is able to develop a really complex understanding of very specific topics."

Helen demonstrates a great understanding of

*"I am doing it for my future career, to be able to understand the world and how it works."
- Helen Hertz*



MUN MULTITASKING: While preparing for MUN, applying to college, leading the tech crew for Pygmalion, and preparing her senior speech, she also played tennis. Photo by Sarah Sledd

complex research topics and always stays very close to her country policy when debating. She shows excellence in writing position papers, including every detail in her clauses.

"Helen is really good at writing papers. She's and incredibly strong writer, so her position papers have always been really fantastic." Says Ewing, "I think one of her strongest points is being able to make connections."



Photo by Sarah Sledd

Paola plays volleyball

By Maeve Parker

Paola Gorris Aroca '24 came to North Cross for the first time this year from Spain.

She has loved her time in Roanoke and enjoys playing sports such as volleyball.

This fall she was honored as a senior volleyball player alongside Jady Rhodes '26 and fellow dorm student Nerea Cruz Calleja '26.

Paola has made the most of her dorm experience with her favorite memory being the snowball war that the dorm students had during the snowstorm after our long weekend break.

"My favorite part of being in the dorms," Paola said, "is the people I live with."

While she misses home due to her family, she has found a second home at North Cross.

Viktoriia Iarkova brings cool vibes from Siberia

By Alexandra Isabelle Stone

Viktoriia Iarkova '25 is from the city of Kemerovo in Siberia. She last saw Russia on Aug. 4, 2023, when she moved to the U.S.

She came to the U.S. in order to move out of Russia. Her aunt and uncle still live nearby and decided that North Cross was the best school for her.

She says that everything is different here. People are calmer, happier, everyone smiles and tries to make small talk. She says that there is more freedom here in America and more stores than in Russia. But she doesn't care about that, what she cares about is people's freedoms and in Russia they don't have that.

What she likes about America are the people, the education system, the laws and the weather.

What she doesn't like about America is the food, she says that the food is fatty and has a lot of sugars.

What she likes about NCS is everything. The dress code at her school is a lot more strict, so she



AT HOME IN SIBERIA: Viktoriia poses in front of her home in Kemerovskaya Oblast, Russia.

not only likes the dress code but the teachers, the students, classes, and she thinks that the campus here is beautiful. She says it's hard for her to sit still in class for an hour and a half. Sometimes she just can't concentrate. What she likes about the dorm is the activities they do, like haunted houses, mini-trips, and cinema.

She says she doesn't miss Russia, but she does miss her friends a whole lot. She says it was hard to adjust to living in America and still is. She says that her parents didn't move with her but her grandma did, and her two aunts are living here with their families. She chose to live here because even though her family's house is too far away and she wants to get the experience of living in an international community.

What she loved to do before she lived in America was dancing. She says she would dance everyday in Russia. She says that she is a Vogue dancer, and now that she lives here she can't find a spot to dance.

She has become a really hard worker and is just motivated to study and improve her knowledge.

DeMarco teaches Russian history and leads club

By Alexandra Isabelle Stone

"Who are the Russian?" was a class in which we would be taught the history of Russia, given projects like presentations, papers to write and homework.

Global Studies Director Ryan De-

Marco leads the Russian Club and taught "Who are the Russians?" as a term elective.

"That question has eluded many outside and inside Russia, and the answer hides behind the thick white veil of an Arctic blizzard. This vast land, stretching from Europe to Asia and from the Baltics to the Pacific, continues to captivate many scholars."

At first there was just the Russian Club but DeMarco saw how interested the kids were in Russia and decided to make it into an elective.

The reason why he thinks we should study Russian culture and history is because Russia plays a big role in the world and how we view it. It's also responsible for some of the most

important things in history, like the music of composer Tchaikovsky, including "Beauty and the Beast," "The Nutcracker," and "Swan Lake." The music has been shared all over the world and was modified throughout history.

Even though he teaches about Russia and really loves its history, he has never actually been there. DeMarco meant to go in 2020 but, that's when COVID happened.

The things that he loves about Russia are the history, the language and the culture. He thinks that the history is very interesting and nuanced, and he loves learning about Russian language and culture. The term had gone where he had wanted until the end where he wanted to talk more about the So-

viet Union but couldn't because he ran out of time. He wants Russia to become a democracy, something like the U.S., but he thinks it should be up to the Russian people to make that choice. He thinks that the Russian people are really resilient.

"This vast land, stretching from Europe to Asia and from the Baltics to the Pacific, continues to captivate many scholars."

They have gone through some really tough times, but even then they were able to create meaning from that. That's why he really admires the Russian people. He

says that Russia has an authoritarian government because it's being run by Vladimir Putin. There is repression against those who choose to go against Putin.

But, overall he sees Russia as a puzzle he is continuously trying to tinker with but he can't quite get right.



Russian teacher Ryan DeMarco teaches a class about the Russian castle. Photo by

the most

Memories of a cruise to Mexico when I was 8

By Mia Flores

We are ready to get off the ship to go to Mexico. When I was 8, I went on a Disney cruise for my spring break during my third grade year with both my parents and my family from Texas. We chose this cruise specifically because my family is from Mexico, so they wanted to take us kids on a cruise showing us how beautiful it is. Out of all of my family members, I'm the only one who could not speak Spanish, but it never bothered me, because I was so young and had no time to learn it. We flew to Florida and boarded the ship there. I can remember boarding the ship. I remember looking up at it and feeling so small compared to it. We stayed on the ship for seven nights and we traveled around different parts of Mexico. We went to Cozumel, Mexico and Puerto Costa Maya.



What is travel's impact on mental health?

By Maeve Parker

Travel is a part of our everyday lives. Whether you are walking your dogs, driving to the grocery store, or even traveling across the world, it affects us all. As you engage in each of these tasks, you are allowing time for your mind to process things going on in your daily life. Simply getting away from your everyday life for just a moment can instantly decrease stress and improve your mood.

As traveling connects us to the world around us, I believe that it can have a very positive impact on our mental health. According to WebMd, it is scientifically proven that traveling relieves stress, enhances creativity, and boosts overall happiness and satisfaction.

With these powerful impacts, travel can be a tool to help a person through a hard time. Some days, getting out of bed seems impossible, but the benefits of getting out of bed and getting a simple breath of fresh air can be transformative and positively impact how the rest of your day will go.

Many people at North Cross engage in some form of traveling. When asked about how traveling affects her mental health, student Fiona Parnell '26 has a unique outlook on the topic. For as long as she can remember Fiona has gone to Ireland to visit her family. Also, her sister, alumni Maeve Parnell '23 is currently attending

Our lives can sometimes feel like they are in non-stop motion and there is no time in between to focus on yourself. However, by focusing on this motion, you can learn different ways to use movement to help improve your overall well-being.

college at Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland.

"It is where I get my happiness from," Fiona said. "Ireland is my home. It is where I feel like I belong. It has helped me improve my confidence as it gives me a connection to my culture." In Fiona's instance, traveling improves her mental health because it is a way she can "destress from the rest of the world" and opens her to new connections with people in another country.

Another student with a one of a kind experience with travel is sophomore Ameer Albishah. Ameer has been to many countries in Europe and the Middle East, and so naturally travel has become a huge and important part of his life.

"It helps me improve my mental health a lot because it's so relaxing and calming," he said. His favorite part of traveling is getting to visit his family in Jordan every summer.

"I visit my grandparents, uncles, aunts, and my

best friends in Jordan," he said. "It's so much fun and I always look forward to it"

Travel is very meaningful to Ameer and he agrees that travel very positively benefits his life because, "Traveling is a big part [in] improving my mental health."

My personal experience with travel has improved my life in similar ways to Ameer and Fiona. I was born in Brisbane, Australia, however my family moved back to the United States when I was still very young, so I don't remember my experience very much. However, due to being born in such a unique place, it has led me to become very interested and curious in the world around me. I have always wondered what Brisbane was like, and the dream of going back has motivated me to become interested in traveling in general.

One of my favorite activities is walking my dogs on the Fern Park trail near my house, and although it seems like a simple thing to do, it means much more to me. It makes me feel connected to my neighborhood and Roanoke, while also allowing me to destress from the rest of the world just like Fiona and Ameer.

Our lives can sometimes feel like they are in non-stop motion and there is no time in between to focus on yourself. However, by focusing on this motion, you can learn different ways to use movement to help improve your overall well-being.

NCS students explore aspects of STEM in Iceland



PARAGLIDING OVER ICELAND: *Someone paraglides over the infamous Reynisfjara Black Sand Beach in Iceland. The black sand is formed by water erosion of lava rock after a volcanic eruption, which is simultaneously beautiful and dangerously razor-sharp. The earthquakes add to the list of geologic forces that create sharp rocks. Photo by Maeve Parker*

By Maeve Parker

In June of 2023, I traveled with 29 students and five faculty from North Cross all over Iceland. It was a trip I will never forget.

When I heard the flight attendant announcing our arrival, I looked out the window and saw nothing but a big clearing of rocks for miles and far in the distance a tiny little airport. My first thought was: Are we on the moon? I was so shocked about how Iceland looked, especially because it looked so different from any picture I had seen.

Once we had made it off of the plane, we found our guide for the next week and stepped on the big tour bus for the first time of our trip. Little did we know, we would become very fond of that tour bus because we would be spending a lot of time on it. And I mean a LOT of time.

One of the things that made this trip so special was the people we met along the way.

The group was exhausted, but it was only 6:30 a.m. in Iceland, so we faced a long day.

The first day was so much fun! Iceland was not at all what I had expected, but in the best way possible. I had expected to see only beautiful grass and mountains, but instead I saw a different landscape everywhere I turned. There was always something to look at, which is definitely the reason it makes Iceland so unique.

I very soon realized a couple of things about Iceland: Everything is spread out, there are not many people, everyone is so nice, it is so clean, and almost everywhere you look there is either a green scooter or construction.

Iceland leads the world in eco-friendly policies, everything was organized and clean, which made the country as a whole so beautiful.

One of the things that made this trip so special was the people we met along the way. The third day into the trip we made it to our last hotel, and

we found out that we were not the only school group visiting. The hotel had a huge basement with a game room. We decided it would be fun to check it out. When we got there we found around 50 kids that were our age from the UK.

Over the next couple of nights, everyday after touring Iceland, we went to the game room and met up with our new friends from the UK.

Despite this being a highlight, my favorite part of the trip would definitely have to be the glacier hike. For the glacier hike, we all wore special shoes with spikes, helmets and harnesses. The glacier was huge and so pretty, and once we got to the top, we all got to drink some glacier water that was flowing down the glacier. It was definitely the best water I've ever had.

Finally, on the last day of the trip we got to go to the Blue Lagoon. I was unsure if I would like it or not because some people were saying that it was really gross due to having thousands of visitors everyday. Nonetheless, we all got in and I wasn't surprised to see that the lagoon, like everything else in Iceland, was beautiful and clean.

Food and mental health

Our relation with food is so important.

By Aadeetri Pandey

You are what you eat but does that mean anything? People have to eat in order to stay alive, but it is also fun to eat. People find comfort in eating their favorite dishes and excitement in trying new food. People know that food affects their physical health but what about their mental health?

There is no correlation between people's mental health and the food they eat. Someone may have a diet that consists mainly of vegetables and proteins but that does not mean they are not struggling with depression or other mental illnesses.

One big mental health struggle people have, mainly young girls, is an eating disorder. A common misconception about them is that only girls have them and they starve themselves. While this is true, anorexia is an eating disorder with a toxic mindset. Binge eating is a disorder when someone eats a large amount of food usually after they starve themselves. Sometimes after their binge, they forcefully throw up all the food they ate.

Another thing that can lead to

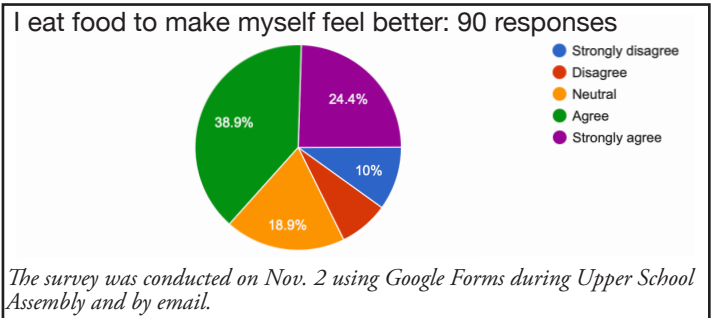
eating disorders is people's culture and environment. For example, a lot of Asian countries have high eating disorder rates, specifically anorexia because being extremely skinny is the beauty standard or they get pressured by their family or friends to lose weight.

While I have never had an eating disorder, I have my struggles with food such as having a hard time eating in front of people. North Cross is an amazing school with great people, however some of the students don't quite like foods from different cultures. I am Nepali, so in lower school I would bring cultural foods. Many of my peers were interested in or liked the foods I brought, however, some ridiculed the food I ate. This snowballed to me just not wanting to eat in front of people. I have overcome this difficulty however this has also led me to be cautious when discussing food with others. Although we may not realize it, our words have a big impact on others.

At North Cross School out of 90 students, 63.3 percent of students agree that they eat food to feel bet-



This is a California-roll-inspired poke bowl. I, along with my friend, got it at Rainbow Cafe after we got our haircut from the nearby salon Bliss. It's not a traditional poke bowl because it contains crab instead of raw fish such as tuna or salmon. It was just as good anyways. Photo by Aadeetri Pandey



ter. On the contrary 17.8 percent of students disagree. While 18.9 percent of students feel neutral on the matter. While a good majority of people said food makes them feel

better a good amount doesn't feel that way. Whatever it may be, food is a prevalent part of our lives that is why it is so important to have a good relationship with food.

Brandon will lead students to France



French Promenade

NOUS ALLEZ EN FRANCAIS: French teacher Chris Brandon will lead more than 18 students and at least three chaperones including Dr. Britton Andrews and Anneliese Schlachter to Paris, the French Riviera, San Remo, Cinque Terre and Milan Italy before returning home in the summer of 2024.



MAGIC MINH: Known for his sense of humor on social media, Minh '25 from Hanoi, Vietnam this year to live in the dorm and prepare for college. Photo by Eason Zhou

Otaegui makes home base in dorm and with Suvi

By Maeve Parker

Walking around Willis Hall, you may notice the incredible braids that often line the heads of many of the dorm students. Braiding hair may seem like such a simple task, but it means so much more for exchange student Sara Otaegui '26.

Sara learned to braid when she was younger and it came to her almost as a natural talent. Ever since, Sara has been braiding her friends' hair. Now, Sara has introduced her amazing talent to North Cross through the friendships she has made in the dorms.

"Being in the dorms at North Cross has been very good," Sara said, "because it has allowed me to meet new people and become very close with them."

Sara is from San Sebastian, Spain which is a beautiful place. It is a long way from Roanoke, but it only takes one picture of the city to draw you in.

While Sara has settled into the dorms and met new friends within them, she has also done the same in the North Cross community meeting so many new people this fall.

One of the first people Sara met was Suvi Hansen '26'. They first met when they sat next to each other in Chemistry one day, and ever since then Suvi and Sara have become close friends.

Over the break, Sara stayed at Suvi's house where they had a great time doing all sorts of fun activities. Suvi loves hosting students because "the friendships that I make at school make it so that I want to be around them more and introduce them to my family's holiday traditions," Suvi said. continues "I'm so glad that the school offers this to us"

Suvi also was able to introduce Sara to some of her favorite things to do in Virginia.

They started off the break with excitement by going on a trip to Richmond with Suvi's family.

"We did lots of fun things on break but my favorite part was probably Richmond," Sara says.

Still, Richmond was not all that the two did over the break. It was also Sara's first Thanksgiving, so she was introduced to new foods and fun traditions, with her favorite food being turkey.

A day after the great meal, Suvi's family practices their unique tradition of deep frying all of the leftover Thanksgiving food, and it was something that both of the girls enjoyed.

"It was a fun little family tradition that I'm so glad Sara got to be a part of this year" Suvi said.

Sara had an awesome break filled with trying new things with new friends. She has also had



MI CASA ES SU CASA ES PAN DE JENGIBRE: Sara and Suvi show off the gingerbread houses they made during Thanksgiving break. Sara also shows her talent for braiding hair.

a great time bonding with new people at North Cross. So, the next time you see a dorm student walking around with perfectly crafted braids on their head you will know they were done by the amazing Sara Otaegui.

During Thanksgiving break, most people stick to celebrating Thanksgiving, but for Sara and Suvi Hansen '26, they got fully into the holiday spirit by making some Christmas gingerbread along with the traditional Thanksgiving turkey.

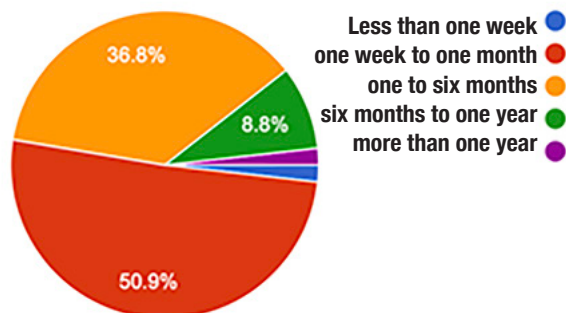
Sara misses San Sebastian mostly because she

misses her family, however, she has met many people and families in Roanoke that have helped with homesickness.

However, while Thanksgiving was fun, Sara and Suvi were immediately on to the next holiday... Christmas! "I really enjoyed making Gingerbread houses with [Sara]," Suvi said. "It was fun to introduce her to a little American thing we do."

Sara agreed with Suvi about the gingerbread houses. "It went really well" Sara said, "I made four small ones and they were really nice."

What is the longest amount of time you have spent away from home? 57 responses



Responses to Jan. 18 emailed Google forms survey question of students and faculty.

Instagram: whh_ez_exclusive
By Eason Zhou

Episode 3

Jeroen Van der Elst '25 becomes first Swiss student

1. How do you pronounce your full name?

A: (See video)

2. How did you come to North Cross?

A: A friend of mine from Switzerland went to the program I did (Gridiron Imports), he went to Pennsylvania and I chose North Cross.

3. How long have you played football and what positions do you play?

A: In Switzerland I always play Center except first year I played guard and I play Defense Tackle and now I play Defense Tackle and Center.

4. Who is your favorite student that is not living at the dorm?

A: I will say Nate and Trace.

5. Who is your favorite teacher so far?

A: Dr. Hood.

6. What are the differences between high school in the US and Switzerland?

A: I will say the amount of school, hours we have school from 8-5 or 6 then we go to practice till 9:30. Here we have school until like 3. And we have much more homework.

7. What is your favorite American food?

A: Definitely cheeseburger.

8. What is one secret people don't know about you?

A: I'm able to speak three languages, English, German and Italian. In Switzerland we speak a lot of different languages.

9. What is your favorite thing to do in your free time?

A: To be honest I don't have a lot of free time at the dorm. If I have I will say watch movies with those German guys.

10. Anything you want to say to the camera?



A: I love you mom, my dad, and my young siblings.

BIG MAN: Listed at 6 foot 1 and 235 pounds, Jeroen played an important role on the offensive line as the starting center. He walks the sideline after the state championship game. Photo by Compass staff



NAPOLEON: While in Dr. Hood's study hall, Bob

'Bob' '25 is a

Episode 11

1. What is your real name?

A: Alejandro Almenas Hernandez.

2. Why did you choose to come to NCS?

A: We looked it up on the website and we thought it's a classical American experience, private school, a good sports program, seasons pronounced.

3. How did you become a soccer player in Puerto Rico?

A: I started really really young, like 2 or 3. I started playing for my neighborhood club. In front of my house there is a park that has a really really big field. I played six years there, after that I moved on to another team, I played all positions. My last year I played defense before I became goalkeeper, about two or three years ago. I got lots more action as a goalkeeper. It's a huge opportunity for me. I think it's the best position I played.

4. Do you rather play goalkeeper or play on the field?

HIGHLIGHTED DORM STUDENTS INCLUDING THESE NEW STUDENTS.



drew the famous French warrior. Signed Alejandro. Bob played goalie in 15 games and even scored.

goalie . . . and an artist

A: Goalkeeper is special, but out field is fun. I missed it a lot.

5. Who is your favorite soccer player?

A: I have two that I really really like. Of course the goalkeeper who fired me up is Gianluigi Buffon, Italian national. The other one is Gareth Bale. Seeing him play just changed my perspective of the game, just really enjoy it, super fast super skill.

6. What sport are you playing besides soccer?

A: I played basketball when I was really young. Recently I played volleyball for three or four years. I tried baseball. I tried football. I ended up focusing on soccer.

7. What are some differences for schools between Puerto Rico and the US?

A: In Puerto Rico private schools are not expensive. Here they are really really expensive. And those private schools (Puerto Rico) are really really good. Here the system is more lenient and it really makes you adapt a lot quicker and make

you comfortable.

8. Who is your favorite student at NCS?

A: Has to be Cesar, he is such a good person. He fixes my mood. We have so many interests together. We both play soccer.

9. What is your favorite NCS event so far?

A: So far it's had to be Homecoming and the black out night of the football game at Salem. So many people at the stand, the peak American experience. Homecoming was great, having dinner with friends, dancing, singing.

10. What is one secret people don't know about you?

A: One of my favorite hobbies is astrophotography. I loved just looking up to stars and taking photos. Even though I am really really bad at it, I still want to learn astron-



SHOOTER: Aleksa shoots in the JV game at Roanoke Catholic. Photo by Eason Zhou

Aleksa Zivanov '27 becomes first from Serbia

1. What is your real name?

A: Aleksa Zivanov.

2. Why did you choose to come to NCS?

A: I was just looking for school in America and NCS was my best option.

3. Who is your favorite basketball player?

A: From Serbia definitely Nikola Jokic but overall Kobe Bryant.

4. What is your favorite basketball team?

A: Denver Nuggets.

5. Are you planning to play any other sports at NCS?

A: Yes when I come back next year I want to play soccer and maybe after basketball I will do track.

6. What are some differences between schools in the US and Serbia?

A: A lot, in Serbia school is a lot harder and some teachers are very rude to kids, but friends are the good part.

7. Who is your favorite student at NCS?

A: Probably Martin Greer.

8. What is your favorite NCS event by far?

A: Games (Football and Soccer)

9. What's your favorite movie and song?

A: Spider-Man (First version), "Till I Collapse"—Eminem

10. What is your favorite thing to do in your free time?

A: Go to the gym, play basketball and play FIFA with my roommates.

International students find ways to show style

By Lauren Boone

Is there a difference in the way international students and American students dress at North Cross?

Although students must wear red, white or black polos, khaki or black pants and khaki or plaid skirts, every student has their own style.

Both international and American students dress and accessorize uniquely in ways that they can without breaking the dress code. With their jewelry, jackets, sweaters, shoes and socks, students can express themselves.

In the fall and winter, boys usually wear hoodies, quarter-zips and jackets with their khaki or black pants. Girls usually wear any sweater or hoodie they choose, as long as it is black, white, gray or red with their jackets as well. Some wear complimentary vests with their sweaters or polos. North Cross has a modest dress code but students are able to include accessories and personal pieces in their daily wear.

I have noticed a trend in some international students with their shoes and hoodies. Spanish student Mercedes Herrera '27 customizes them with signatures, drawings and quotes. Her white shoes and white hoodie are covered in colorful writing and pictures. Spanish speaking countries' flags are pictured, such as Spain and Puerto Rico. I have also noticed it with Bob Almenas '25, who wears shirts with signatures written on them. I

also see a trend in shoe brands. European boys tend to wear the popular Nikes, New Balances and even Converse. Besides Adidas, they wear American brands instead of European ones. Girls tend to wear the same brands, especially Nike, and Converse. Gabriel Ramirez '25 wears navy New Balance sneakers and Alejandro Almenas '25 wears black New Balance shoes. Alejandro Zuniga '26 often wears black Adidas sneakers. Cesar Suarez '25 wears Nike Air Force 1s with a Naruto design. Nerea Cruz '24 wears white platform Converse and Paola Gorris wears white

"I have noticed a trend with some international students with their shoes and hoodies. Spanish student Mercedes Herrera '27 customizes them with signatures, drawings and quotes."

Air Force 1s. I haven't noticed any Spanish or European shoe brands among the students.

Our Chinese and Vietnamese students also follow the Nike and Adidas trend in their flashy Jordans and Foam Runners. Another student Nguyen Dinh '26 wears colorful blue and orange Hoka sneakers. Eason Zhou '24 has a diverse collection of Jordans but

often wears his "wheat" Air Jordan 6s. Brooklyn Chen '25 has Adidas Foam Runners in the color "Sulfur."

Students in the high school, whether international or American, wear pretty similar shoes.

Above right, Eason Zhou '24 wears the custom hoodie he designed using AI to celebrate the football team's second consecutive state championship and his role on the team. Right: Eason has a diverse collection of Jordans but often wears his "wheat" Air Jordan 6s. Photo by Lauren Boone



Brooklyn Chen '25 has Adidas Foam Runners in the color "Sulfur." Photo by Lauren Boone



Boaz Atia '25 wears brown boots. Photo by Lauren Boone



Cesar Suarez '25 wears Nike Air Force 1s with a Naruto design and pink socks. Photo by Lauren Boone

Bach 'Jason' Phan finds physics rather easy

By Aadeetri Pandey

Most kids think AP Physics is the hardest class anyone can take in high school but Bach Phan '25 loves it.

Most commonly known by his peers as Jason, he explains that while physics is a hard class, the physics teacher, Dr. Tim Naginey, helps explain it in such a way it is easier for him to understand.

Jason is Vietnamese born and raised. When he was younger he went to an English speaking kindergarten because he was adept at the language at a young age. It wasn't as difficult for him to learn English. This doesn't mean he didn't face a language barrier when coming to the United States.

"It's really tough for me when I first was here," Jason said, "because people were speaking faster than I can hear."

He does later on explain that just listening to how people speak here has helped him a lot with his English. In total Jason speaks three languages: Vietnamese, English, and Mandarin Chinese.

In terms of differences, Jason thinks the way the classes are set up

is the biggest. In Willis Hall and most other high schools in America students switch class by class. In Vietnam and some other countries in Asia the student will sit in one class while the different teachers come into the class to teach, then leave.

He went to Washington D.C. to visit his aunt for Thanksgiving. This was his first all American holiday. While he did enjoy spending time with his family he also liked the food. He said his favorite was the turkey.

Jason has had a positive experience with the Boxley Building, the dorm building for North Cross. "I adore my dorm; it's excellent and equipped with all necessities," Jason said in an email. "The community is both diverse and welcoming."

Jason found North Cross through an agency that helps students find schools for them. The one he used was ILU education Vietnam. They are relatively new, but that doesn't mean they aren't good. Agencies make finding schools for students who plan to study abroad a lot easier because they do all the work of finding and researching schools.

"When I was young, my dream was to study in the United States. I

was chasing my dream, looking for some ways to study abroad, it kept bringing me here, [to] North Cross School." After graduating from North Cross Bach Phan, plans to continue studying abroad in an



American university.

When prompted to make a hand sign, Bach "Jason" Phan goes thumbs down. Photo by Eason Zhou

"When I was young, my dream was to study in the United States. I was chasing my dream, looking for some ways to study abroad, it kept bringing me here, [to]North Cross School."

Kamen the math man from Bulgaria

By Liam Rippel

Kamen Petkov '25 is regarded by many as an academic weapon when it comes to mathematics, as he consistently earns grades topping the class in his AP Calculus AB class, and is always willing to lend a hand to a student who needs it.

I asked Kamen what his favorite subject was and he said, "I would say AP Calculus."

He loves math, and part of the reason he is so good at it is because he has taken specialized math courses in Bulgaria since he was around 10 years old.

Those who spend a lot of time with Kamen have come to know how much he loves Bulgaria, his home country. It is quite easy to tell as Kamen loves to compare everything he has and does to what it is like in Bulgaria, as "Well in Bulgaria..." has become a frequently used phrase of his.

Kamen has enjoyed his time here in the States, and had the opportunity to participate in a sport by playing soccer in the fall. Kamen is the first NCS Bulgarian student, and he has definitely set a high standard as an international student.

Kamen smiles through new student orientation. Photo by Sarah Sledd. Right: Danny Phung '24 puts a star on the tree at the dorm. Photo by Brett Odom



Jimena swims from Ibiza

By Nola Daninger

Jimena Garcia De Dios '26 came to America from Ibiza, Spain on August 17, 2023. She has been swimming since she was 3 years old and looked forward to swimming in America.

Jimena states that swimming in America is much different than swimming in Spain because it is not in meters.

"My coach teaches extremely differently than my coach here, in America."

I asked Jimena why she has a passion for swimming and what sparked it.

"It's the fact that whenever I have a problem I always want to swim," Jimena said. "For example, if I have an argument with my mom, I went swimming and it's like I didn't remember anything. I lose track of everything in my mind. It calms me down."

Jimena says that the biggest difference between America and Spain is that Spaniards walk more.

"It is weird that you guys just go in your car and drive around," she said. "In Spain we walk everywhere. That is just how it is, even though we have cars."

She then talked about how school in America is different from school in Spain.

"Yeah, America has a lot more subjects than in Spain. For example, Spain has three sciences, but here you can only take one at a time. Also, the fact that I have to learn and say everything in English makes learning a lot harder."

Jimena's first Thanksgiving in America, she said in an email, was "so much fun!"

"I stayed with a friend from swimming and she has a HUGE family," she said in an email. "I really enjoyed it, we ate A LOT."

Swimming also impacted Jimena to come to the United States as well as wanting to experience the culture here. Although, swimming in the United States also created problems for Jimena because it was a difficult adjustment. Jimena concludes that her first great experience in America was her first swim practice. Even though she is enjoying the United States so far, she still misses Spain.

"I stayed with a friend from swimming and she has a HUGE family," she said in an email about Thanksgiving break. "I really enjoyed it, we ate A LOT."



Jimena Garcia '26 reaches for some Sugar Magnolia dessert at Fall Festivus along with Spanish friends Paola Gorres '24 and Nerea Cruz '24. She loves hanging out with her friends and participating in fun things. Other things she enjoys are swimming and talking with friends. She enjoys American food, although she really misses Spain. Caption by Nola Daninger. Photo by Compass staff

Ezra joins volleyball team in playing for a good cause



Bich (EZRA) Ngoc Vu '25, or #17, who is a new student from Vietnam this year, made her mark as a right bitter in her time on the Girls JV Volleyball team. In this photo, she is posing before the Breast Cancer Awareness match, where all members of the volleyball teams wore pink. She played in five-plus games, and hit crucial shots. Photo by Ms. Sledd, caption by Caroline Welfare.

Alejandro Zuñiga makes the cut

By Anna Ciccozzi

“Angry Bird come here!” says Alejandro Zuñiga ‘26’s friends as they call him over.

Nicknamed Angry Bird because his friends think he looks like the yellow angry bird, Chuck, from the game Angry Birds, Alejandro Zuniga is a new addition to North Cross and its sports teams. This past season, Alejandro played on the soccer team, and has recently joined JV basketball this winter.

“Both sports are fun but basketball is my favorite,” said Alejandro.

Although the team has faced a couple challenges so far, Alejandro still consistently practices with determination alongside he teammates.



Jason Phan ‘25 listens to music while getting his haircut by Alejandro in the dorm. Photo by Alejandro Zuñiga

Nguyen fits into multicultural dorm

By William Hendrickson

Nguyen Dinh Nguyen ‘26 misses his family, house and his friends from Vietnam, but he has liked North Cross so far because he enjoys school and has made many new friends.

Nguyen is a new student from Vietnam. So far the transfer hasn’t been too difficult, but he enjoys school because he has met many different friends since he has started here. School has not been too difficult because he has been studying English since he was in kindergarten. His parents planned on him getting him a better education. They sent him to NCS.

When Nguyen is not at school, he likes to wander around downtown in different shops and goes to the gym (all dorm residents get to use



Nguyen’s Hokas. Photo by Anna Ciccozzi

“We’ve lost games,” said Alejandro, “but I still like it.”

Sports was one of the factors for Alejandro wanting to come to the U.S. in the first place, but it also had to do with his brother.

“My brother went to the U.S.,” said Alejandro, “and he told me about it and I wanted to go.”

Over break, Alejandro enjoyed spending time with his cousin in Canada. Along with spending time with family, Alejandro loves hanging with his friends.

“I just love to be with my friends and talk with them whenever I can,” said Alejandro.

“He’s cool,” said Charlie Zhao ‘26, “Alejandro is one of my best friends in the dorm and we play and hangout downstairs.”

Overall, he likes his experience and environment, but if he could change one aspect about the dorm it would be the curfew time and food. As for school, Alejandro says maintaining grades can be difficult at times, but he is still doing well and continuing to work hard. The change from Spain to Roanoke was very different for Alejandro, but he admires things about both of them.

One thing Alejandro admired about his move to the US is having the opportunity to try a new skill

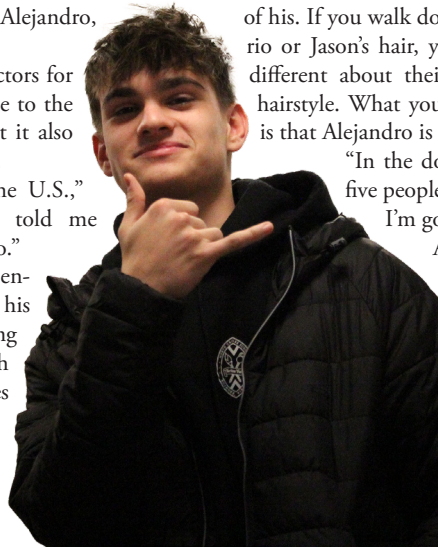


Photo by Anna Ciccozzi

of his. If you walk down the hall and look at Mario or Jason’s hair, you might notice something different about their appearance or fresh new hairstyle. What you might not know, however, is that Alejandro is the man behind the cut.

“In the dorm, I have cut like four or five people’s hair,” said Alejandro, “but I’m going to cut more.”

Alejandro had even tried cutting his own hair once, but he says he wants to stick to just cutting other people’s hair. The beginning of the school year marks the first time Alejandro got into cutting hair. There was no particular reason behind wanting to cut hair, and it was more of a random decision to

try it. Since then, he has really enjoyed the process of cutting hair and wants to continue improving his skills.

“In my opinion, I think the best haircut I’ve given was to either my brother or cousin,” said Alejandro.

So far, Alejandro says his “clients” are satisfied with their new looks.

“The haircut I got from Alejandro was good, I would rate it an eight out of ten,” said Mario Mitzkewitz ‘25. “He’s just starting, but he’s not bad.”

“In the dorm, I have cut like four or five people’s hair,” said Alejandro, “but I’m going to cut more.”

the YMCA downtown).

I asked him about the cultural difference between Vietnam and America and he said, “Thanksgiving and Christmas are two big things that we do not have in Vietnam.”

His favorite thing to do at the dorms is to hang out with friends and to play Fifa, but sometimes he plays pool.

Nguyen sometimes also plays ping pong. Nguyen’s favorite sports are soccer, basketball, football, lacrosse, and table tennis or ping pong. I asked him who his favorite soccer player is and he said “Allison,” the great goalkeeper from Brazil.

I asked him about the dorms and he said, “I don’t like the dorms as much as home, but it is fine because my roommates are Haoyi [Lyu ‘26] and Jiale [Qin ‘26].”



Jason Phan ‘25, Bob Almenas ‘25 and Nguyen play pool during the holiday party. Photo by Brett Odom

Nerea Cruz misses Madrid but makes the most of her time at NCS

By Anna Ciccozzi

Nerea Cruz '24 makes her way to class wearing a slick-back bun, gold jewelry, and carrying her signature Longchamp bag.

Whenever I'm walking down the hall, I can always spot Nerea from her fashionable outfit or welcoming smile. Born in Madrid, Spain, Nerea joined the North Cross community this year. Although this is her first school experience in the United States, last summer, she had previously visited Florida. Nerea discovered NCS through an agency back home that helped bring her to Roanoke. So far, Nerea is enjoying her experience as she navigates the new environment around her.

"It's sooo different," said Nerea, "I like it here, but I still miss Spain."

Like all our other international students, Nerea lives in the dorm. Nerea often spends her time around the other students from Spain, like her roommate and close friend, Paola Gorris '24.

"I like the dorms," said Nerea, "but I don't like so much the food."

Unsurprisingly, Nerea is not the only one who feels this way and many other dorm students have expressed their strong opinions about the dorm meals.

Along with dorm life, Nerea was surprised by the importance and emphasis of sports in the United States. This year, Nerea joined the varsity volleyball team and plans on possibly joining soccer.

"This was my first time playing," said Nerea, "but I'm happy I tried it and got to be a part of the team".

Although never having played

volleyball, Nerea used to be involved in a unique sport activity of her own. Aerial Silks, otherwise known as aerial contortion involves a person performing skills and acrobatics using a piece of fabric. The skill involves lots of different aspects including strength, technique, flexibility, and training. Nerea used these skills for the past five years of her life while participating in the art.

"When I do silks, it feels like you're flying," said Nerea.

In a typical practice day for Nerea, she begins with training on the floor until moving up to the silks and practicing in the air.

"I've fallen sometimes, but I have not got too hurt, and it's still really fun," said Nerea.

Sometimes Nerea misses doing aerial silks, but it does not bother her too much that she has not done it since she left.

While reminiscing over old memories, Nerea has made and is continuing to make more in America. One of her favorite memorable moments was Thanksgiving week. "I went to Miami so it was perfect!" said Nerea.

The meat was her favorite food at Thanksgiving, and she got to spend her time swimming in the ocean and going on boat rides.

Nerea explained that her biggest challenge has been the language barrier and making new friends. Regardless, Nerea is working through this as she continues to practice her English and meet and interact with new people.

"She is very smart and friendly and pretty," said Sara Otaegui '26, one of her close friends.

Nerea's mother had also come to the U.S. to study, so Nerea is following the same path. When asked about her future goal, Nerea just wants to finish her career. Although school in the U.S has been a great opportunity for Nerea, she ultimately wants to go back home to Spain for college.

"I love spending time with my family, and I can't wait to be back home spending time with them," said Nerea.



Hang On Tight: Suspended in air, the flexible Nerea Cruz gracefully poses as she performs aerial silks. She practices new skills each day learning to perfect her technique and perform with grace and confidence. With a sport like aerial silks, where falling is bound to happen, Nerea gets back up and never gives up.

"I love spending time with my family, and I can't wait to be back home spending time with them."

Cesar enjoys Thanksgiving at my grandmother's house

By Jacob Johnson

New Spanish international student, Cesar Suarez Cuenca '25, went to my grandmother's house for Thanksgiving and ate Thanksgiving dinner for the first time.

Cesar came to my house after the last day of school for Thanksgiving break ready to experience something new, relax, and play video games. Little did he know just because NCS stopped doesn't mean my house stops, we kept going like a runaway train at full force.

Eating Thanksgiving dinner for the first time, Cesar indulged in turkey, stuffing, dressing, sweet potato casserole, green bean casserole, mashed potatoes with gravy, and a multitude of other things.

"The food at Thanksgiving was really good", Cesar said. "The

idea of the whole family and no problems of who's there and not having enough food, because there's so much."

Cesar went from overindulging in amazing food to being dragged down to Norfolk to visit someone he didn't even know. My mom, dad, aunt, uncle, cousin, grandfather, Cesar and I traveled four hours to Norfolk in two cars to see my uncle. It was obvious when on the way to our destination his favorite part was the sights he saw.

"I loved it. It was amazing because it was my first time out of Roanoke," Suarez said. Seeing his reaction to driving over where the boats pass out of the naval base stationed in that part of Norfolk was a great experience in its own because it amazed him and for someone who's grown around that, I kind of took it



for granted.

To finish the eventful trip My dad, uncle, Cesar, and I were packing up to go to the notorious wing restaurant, Hooters, but due to the pay-per-view fight, we couldn't get in due to the up-charge they wanted. Although we left the hotel with intentions to go to the adult

restaurant, we ended up in Buffalo Wild Wings.

"I was excited but it was not that deep so no problem," Cesar said when asked how he felt about the ending of that night. "But I would have liked to go to leave with the experience,"

Photo by my father

Haoyi Lyu explores American culture from China

By Mia Starr

Two Thanksgiving meals might be better than one, especially if the second one is Chinese.

Haoyi Lyu '26 is a student from China. He came here for the opportunities it could give him in the future along with fun sports to play.

This year he celebrated Thanksgiving, which is a

big part of the United States and celebrated here every year with our families. Haoyi also spent this Thanksgiving with his host family. This is his first time ever celebrating this American tradition.

"I was a little nervous," he said, "although my main concern was what we were eating."

He also spent this Thanksgiving with his older brother in his brother's house. Haoyi and his brother decided they were going to go eat Chinese food to have a little tradition of their own to keep going. They liked this food much more than the typical Thanksgiving meal with turkey, gravy, and stuffing. It's safe to say they made this holiday one of their favorites together and enjoyed it very much.

Haoyi also likes to play basketball.

"Basketball is just a fun sport I play," he said.

He is not new to this sport, although he is new to playing in the style of the United States. Haoyi used to play back in his hometown of Huzou, China with his friends, which he enjoyed. Playing basketball for him is something that is stress relieving.



GETTING ORIENTED Haoyi gets his nametag at new student orientation in August. Photo by Sarah Sledd

Mercedes makes NCS home court while missing home

By Caroline Welfare

Feeling alone in a new country, but armed with the ability to speak in four languages (Spanish, English, French and she's learning German), Mercedes Herrera Aria '27 seems to brighten everyone's day, on and off the court.

"Social, sporty, intelligent, friendly," is how she described herself in an email interview.

Mercedes played tennis in fall, basketball now and Mercedes says, "I'll play soccer later."

Hailing from Santander, a

coastal city in Spain, Mercedes adjusted at lightning speed to life in the United States, doing it without direct help from people back home.

"But I can call or text them all the time," she said, "so that doesn't really matter."

Mercedes came to North Cross for both the academic and the athletic opportunities. She had several schools in multiple different countries to choose from, some in Europe, but also some here in the States, including one in Texas, and one in Georgia; but North Cross triumphed over the other schools. Mercedes says that North Cross was worth the trip, and she will be coming back next year.

"Back home, we don't have cold weather in the winter," Mercedes said. "And it's not hot in the summer, even when you really want to go to the beach," said Mercedes about life in a temperate climate compared to the one in Roanoke, where there are drastic changes in each season.

*"I thought people (here) would be really egocentric and that wasn't true at all."
- Mercedes*

She also notes a big difference from the "really good" food from back home, her favorites including soup and fish, to the processed food here. It was (hopefully) reassuring to learn that we do in fact have home-made, relatively good food in the U.S. too.

"I stayed with Mr. Lamas, and they gave me a Thanksgiving dinner," Mercedes said. "In Europe we don't really decorate as much for holidays.

Another difference she notices in America is her expectation of what it would be like.

I thought people would be, like, egocentric," she said.

Thankfully, this was not the case. Mercedes has filled her time making many friends in and out of the dorm, as well as keeping on top of her studies. Her easiest class is Geometry because, "I learned it around second, maybe third grade."

Mercedes has ambitious goals in life, and one of her current interests is neurosurgery.

For now, Mercedes is just trying to adjust to her new surroundings.

"In this city, you have to call an Uber if you want to go places, back home, you can walk anywhere," Mercedes said on the differences between Santander and Roanoke. "And despite them saying North Cross is a 'small school', it's huge compared to the ones back home!"

SURVIVAL!

Mercedes prepares for battle with fellow Spanish students in the dodgeball game. She plays basketball in the winter and soccer in the spring. Photo by Sarah Sledd

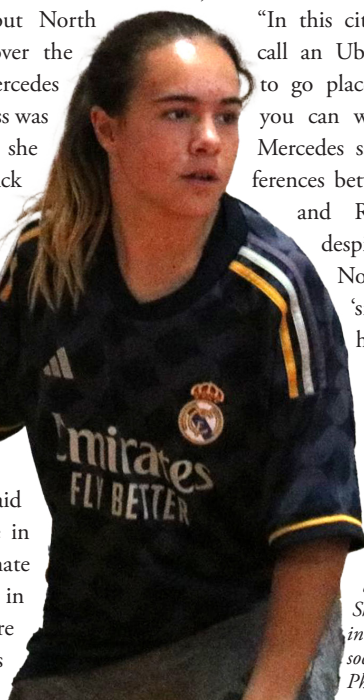


FAST BREAK: Mercedes Herrera '27 looks to pass the ball in transition as teammate Dajah Garrison sprints from the backcourt. Mercedes plans to play soccer in the spring. Photo by Eason Zhou

International students like Brooklyn Chen help track and basketball compete



LEADING SCORER! With Mercedes Herrera and Sara Otaegui looking on, Brooklyn Chen '26 shoots a free throw for the basketball team. As the leading scorer for the Raiders averaging eight points per game, she is having a great experience so far as a new dorm student from China. When asked what she likes most about North Cross she said, "I like this amazing active community. Everyone is kind and enthusiastic. My favorite part probably is all kinds of practices after school. It helps me make a lot of good friends." Brooklyn came to North Cross due to her terrible experience at her school in China last year. Meanwhile, she also joined the indoor track team and already qualified for the state meet with a shot-put distance of 28'2. Caption by Anne Bradley Cullen. Photo by Eason Zhou



Promising Canadian lacrosse player

Smith joins lacrosse program aiming for 4th straight state title.

By Liam Rippe

Carter Smith '25 arrived from Vancouver, Canada in August of 2023 with one thought in his mind, to play at a top tier collegiate program in the United States.

Smith had played lacrosse for as long as he can remember, and fell in love with the game at a young age. Smith is regarded by many as a friendly and academically inclined student. Smith takes multiple AP courses, is dedicated to his studies and consistently earns Academic Honor Roll everywhere he goes. Smith mentions that his parents always push him to be his best, even when he earns an A, Smith says his father will ask him, "Why wasn't it an A+?"

"It is pretty much what I expected it to be," said Smith, when asked about the difference between Canada and the United States. "Culturally we are very similar." Smith has adjusted swiftly considering that he has moved to a new country. However, Smith mentions that the part of Vancouver that he lives in, which is called Maple Ridge, is really not that different from Roanoke, it has a similar population and geographic size, so that part of the transition has been the least of his concerns.

Smith, living so far away from home, decided to stay with a host family over the Thanksgiving break, and when my family offered for him to stay, he gratefully accepted. Carter was well mannered and always very respectful. After he left, my mother mentioned how nice she found Smith to be. Smith got to know my family and spent some time with my siblings as well. Smith also really enjoyed the dinner that my family made. I asked him what were the differences between our Thanksgiving food and he said, "It was honestly the exact same, except for the sweet yams, there were



ME AND MY ROOMMATE: Carter Smith sports his Canadian pride with a Toronto hoodie. Photo by Eason Zhou

marshmallows on the top which was different to anything I'd had before. It was very good, definitely something I'll have to bring back to Canada." Smith was very well liked by my family and they have mentioned they would love to have him again.

Although Smith is very focused on his academic performance, the whole reason he is at North Cross is because he was recruited for lacrosse. Smith hopes to earn All-State and All-Conference this year for lacrosse, and wants to load up the stat sheet to attract attention from high level schools.

Although do not mistake these goals for selfishness, Smith is a team first player, and demonstrated such, as in the winter pre-season tournament that boys lacrosse team attended, Smith tallied up a handful of assists, and although Smith is a threat on the offensive side of the field, do not underestimate him on the defensive side of the field. Smith is naturally gifted and is fast and athletic, allowing him to be proficient on the defensive side of the field. When Smith was asked about how he wanted this lacrosse season he said he wanted to "Light it up." Ad-

ditionally he talked about his hope for the team's success, saying "team wise I'm looking to be a leader and guy my teammates can depend on." These words are not taken lately as by Smith's demeanor you can just tell he intends to fulfill these statements, and not just leave them as empty words. Smith is incredibly excited to get this season underway, as I am certain his teammates are looking forward to seeing his impact as well.

I really enjoyed having my new friends stay with me over Thanksgiving break. Besides Carter, Mario Mitzkewitz '25 also stayed with me and gave me someone to hangout with over break. I enjoyed having them meet my family and experience American culture in a family setting. Both of them thanked me numerous times for letting them stay, and both and talked of having me come visit them in their home countries of Spain and Canada and offered to host me. Both of these places sound like they would be super fun to visit, and I'm hoping that one of these plans materializes, as I would love to visit another country.

My experience as an American in the dorm

By Liam Rippe

In the spring of last year, my family introduced the idea of moving somewhere over the summer. This was far from ideal for me, as I was getting ready to wrap up high school and start my senior year. There were talks of moving to Ohio or Lynchburg, but my family decided on Blacksburg. This brought up the topic of whether I stay at North Cross.

Fortunately, I ended up staying. My parents and I decided that it was unrealistic to drive two hours a day for school, so we opted into the dorms, and I can tell you it has undoubtedly been an experience.

I am one of a select few Americans who have lived in the dorm. However, I can guarantee that I am the first dorm student from Roanoke.

This year has been a learning experience like a watered down college experience a year early, having to self regulate and manage my time. I think that has been a great challenge for me so far.

I have truly enjoyed living in the dorms this year. Last year I was very secluded in the way I related to and spoke to people at our school. But this year I have a whole new group of people to hang out with and it has benefited me tremendously. Our school is very small, so you find friends wherever you can, whether they are in different grades, different schools, different sports teams. I have many great friends but having all of these people in the dorms to become friends with has really enhanced my social life. For example, my junior year, I rarely spent time with Didi Dibetle '24 or Moritz Schmoranzer '24, and over the course of this year both of them have become two of my closest friends. I had the opportunity to room with Schmoranzer until January when he left for Pittsburgh to begin workouts for football. He was a great guy and a great roommate. Didi and I played soccer together my junior year but never really had the opportunity to click as friends. Moving into the dorms allowed for us to become close.

I thought moving away from Roanoke and living in the dorm was going to be such a hassle, but I am grateful that I did. It allowed me to grow up a little more, prepare for college, and become closer with some incredible people.

The European Super League is a threat to football

By Liam Rippl

The Super League was a league that would be established by all of the richest football clubs across Europe. These would include clubs like Arsenal, Chelsea, Liverpool, Tottenham, Manchester United and Manchester City. These were all of the English clubs that announced their support and said they would join the Super League. Additionally, international powerhouses such as Real Madrid and Barcelona, as well as a fellow club from Madrid, Atletico, all said they would join the Super League. Both clubs from Milan in Italy promised their participation in the League, as well as one of the most well-known clubs in the world, located in Turin, being Juventus.

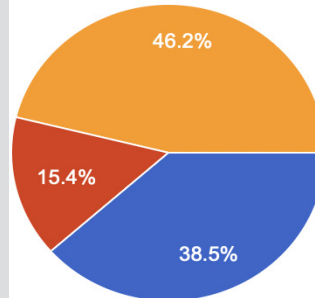
First off, this would completely change the way all European football operates, as most top flight leagues would fall apart after losing their top teams in the country. Additionally this would end the Champions League, as all the teams that would join the Super League, are normally all the teams that would have Champions League places.

This idea originated in 1987, Real Madrid and Milan, as well as a smaller club in Scotland known as the Glasgow Rangers, who is one of the two most famous Scottish clubs, but is much less notable in comparison to Madrid and Milan, introduced the idea of a league competition with single-round league play, similar to that of other top flight leagues across Europe. This was trademarked by European mass media as the "Super League." It was planned that this league would run in paral-

There should be a soccer Super League of the best European clubs.

91 responses

*"Not only would David never face Goliath, but David would cease to exist."
-- Jeremy Swift, Ted Lasso*



● Yes
● No
● Maybe

The graph shows a poll conducted among the Upper School student body in November. Most of the 91 responses show that students do not feel strongly either way (or don't know what it is). However, more students support the idea of a Super League in Europe.

lel to the three European Football Competitions at the time, however they decided to abandon the idea in 1991. Around this time, the idea of this league was replaced, and the Champions League was created satisfying the need of all football fans who wanted to see the highest level of competition between Europe's top clubs on the world stage.

Overall, it is better for the footballing world as a whole, especially in Europe, that the European Super League was not created a few years ago, as it would make money the only truly important thing in football. Well, even more so than money is now, as all other European leagues would fall apart as the players go where the money is, which would be the Super League. Additionally no teams can ever get relegated or be promoted into the league, keeping all the rich clubs, giving us little to no variety in football. It would destroy all tradition in football,

there would be no Merseyside Derby (Liverpool vs Everton), where there is a deep rivalry between a smaller club like Everton and an international powerhouse like Liverpool. It would also destroy the culture of traveling supporters, there would be few fans that would make a trip from London to Turin, or some other similar length of travel every other weekend. It would also just completely disband some aspects of culture in some countries, as football is so deeply rooted in everyday life in many European countries. It would destroy European football, and would more than likely cause the smaller clubs in Europe to just fall apart, as best said by Jeremy Smith, or Leslie Higgins as he is portrayed in popular football show Ted Lasso, "Not only would David never face Goliath, the Davids would cease to exist."

Catalonian Kimmy plays American football

By Gracie Munro

As the bright lights of Spartan field shine down, middle linebacker Joaquim "Kimmy" Vilahur-Tamayo, '27, steps out onto the playing field at Salem High for his first "home" game in America. Loud cheering and enthusiastic shouts came from the crowd of Raiders, fueling the rush of the mid-game adrenaline.

Originally from Catalonia, Spain, Kimmy came to the United States for football opportunities at North Cross. He started playing football last year in his home country, and his coach told him about the exchange program and set him up at North Cross to study abroad and play for the team.

For him, the hardest part of coming to America was having to learn a new language.

"It was very different because I came here and everyone was speaking in English," says Kimmy. "I was the only one speaking Spanish."

For college, he is planning to stay in the United States and hopefully play football as well. Kimmy had 23 tackles this year with an average of almost three per game, which is just a little bit higher than the national average.

He says his favorite thing about the exchange program so far is that he gets to live in a dorm with other students, which he says is a lot of fun, because he gets to be around other people from school. He also likes the freedom of the dorm, and he spends



Joaquim "Kimmy" Vilahur-Tamayo '27 (right) and his brother (left) pose for a picture after the VISAA Division II state championship game at North Cross. The Raiders won with a score of 35-7. Photo by Compass staff

most of his freetime downtown or at the gym to stay in shape for sports.

The thing he misses most about Catalonia is the food. He says he

likes it a lot better than the dorm food, and he likes to eat it when he goes home over breaks to visit family.

‘Gabo’ adds midseason expertise to soccer

By Jacob Johnson

Arriving in October as a new attacking midfielder from Puerto Rico, Gabriel “Gabo” Ramirez-Lugo ‘25, had a total of three points: one assist and one goal this season.

“Even though joining a new team mid-season and not really knowing anyone and even speaking a different language, I feel I had a great overall season,” Gabo said.

Even though he came in the middle of the season it was obvious that the connection with the team on and off the field was instant.

“I had a great debut, like my first game, I had 17 clips [highlights of the game] in 30 minutes and even an assist,” Ramirez said. Gabo’s first game with the Raiders was Oct. 5. In that same game North Cross took the victory over Virginia Episcopal School 3-2. In his first game the only other people to get an assist were Maddox Haskins ‘24 and Hunter Basile ‘25.

Gabo came to NCS late due to the fact former NCS student, Mika Droste ‘25, left for his home in Germany to begin working. Gabo took the opportunity to join the school through the help of the agency for the international students.



BALL CONTROL: *New student, Gabriel “Gabo” Ramirez-Lugo ‘25, controls the ball with his chest and knee to advance up the field. Photo by Compass staff*

Even though the season ended in an unfavorable manner with a loss in the state semifinal, the team still had an amazing run this season.

“Well, the result of course wasn’t expected,” he said. “We hoped to put up a fight with a positive mindset after the quarters, but the other team outperformed us and took advantage of their many opportunities.”

“I definitely felt like we should’ve done more,” Gabo said, “but at the end of the day, there was nothing left but to wish the best for the other team in the final.”

“Losing happens,” he said, “it’s what makes the sport so beautiful, just have to move on and focus on what the future may bring.”

As they walked off the field, there were very strong emotions headed back and a lot of disbelief. “Just seeing the environment even though we lost I mean there were a lot of sad faces and I can’t blame them cause I was one of them,” Ramirez said. “There was a lot of ‘What happened?’ and ‘What needed to happen?’ from our guys.”

“There are a lot of seniors now, but it was still really good and fun,” he said. “And in the end, there’s always next year. We’ll come back stronger.”

Frogner takes talents to track after football

By Jacob Johnson

Throwing a PR of 37.3 ft in shotput and running 7.3 in the 55 meter dash marked Sander Frogner’s debut for the indoor track team after leading the state champion Raider football team defense in tackles and earning first team all-state honors.

Frogner ‘25 came from Norway this year to expand his chances for playing in college and maybe one day professionally.

Wanting to expand his already undeniably great talent, he asked football and track coach Shannon Taylor how he could improve.

“I needed to be faster with the sprinters and stronger with the throwers and ST told me,” Frogner said.

He walked in with a good feeling of confidence on track Jan. 11 at Roanoke College. For his first track meet the champion middle linebacker planned on throwing and running the 55-meter dash with the guidance of Coach Taylor.

“I don’t really feel nervous, but I feel like I want to beat Eason at throwing,” Frogner said with humor, showing his competitive drive with his fel-



LBs: *Sander Frogner poses with NCS football coach Shannon “ST” Taylor, a former professional linebacker, after the big championship victory. Photo by Compass staff*

low outside linebacker.

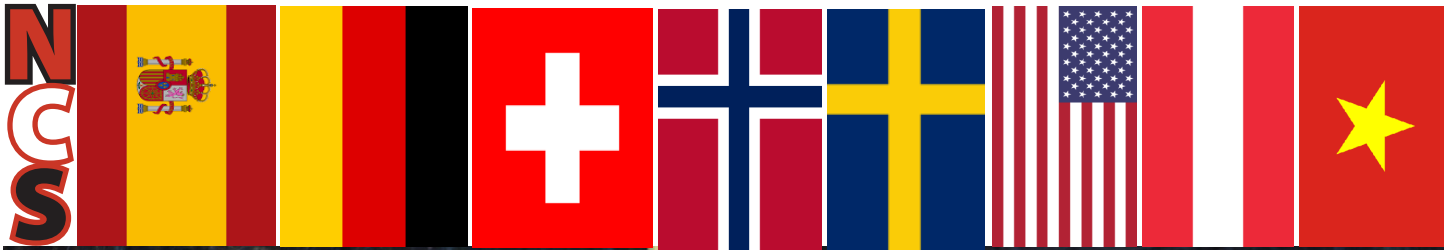
Even though this was his first time trying track, Frogner set on the big prize, qualifying for states.

“Eason throws 38 at meets and I throw a little shorter, so probably 30-35,” Frogner said, “My goal before the end of track is to qualify for states in at least one thing.”

The qualifying mark for shotput is 34.7. So he already achieved his goal of qualifying for states by practicing with throwing coach Brett Jones.

At the Bulldog Invitational meet in Lynchburg on Jan. 27, Frogner ran 7.17 in the 55 meter dash. so now he is set to compete in two events at the state meet at St. Christopher’s on Feb. 18.

International players help Raiders go back-to-back



GLOBAL GROUP: From left to right: Kimmy Vilahur '25 from Spain, Moritz Schmoranzer '24 from Germany, Jeroen Van der Elst '25 from Switzerland, Sander Frogner '25 from Norway, Daniel Skoog '25 from Sweden, Brock Miles '25 from the U.S., Moritz Mittendorfer '24 from Austria, Danny Phung '24 from Vietnam and Eason Zhou '24 from China in front. Photo by Compass

International players make significant contributions to team championship.

International players . . .

- scored 75 points including 48 point-after kicks, one field goal, and four touchdowns;
- Moritz Schmoranzer: University of Pittsburgh Commit, First-team All-State Offense, First-team All-Timesland Defense;
- Eason Zhou: Coaches Award, First-team All-State Defense, and First Team All Timesland, set school record with 14 sacks, one scoop and score;
- Moritz Mittendorfer: Two TDs despite limited playing time;
- Danny Phung: Nine tackles;
- Sander Frogner: First-team All-State Defense; led defense with 135 tackles, eight tfl, two sacks, two caused fumbles;
- Daniel Skoog: Second-team All-Conference Defense: 62 total tackles, nine tfl, three sacks, and one scoop and score; kicked 48 PATs, one field goal and caught one TD in state game;
- Jeroen Van der Elst: Second-team All-Conference Offense;
- Kimmy Vilahur: 23 tackles, 1 tfl.



Boaz Atia '25 helps James Stewart '34 celebrate the state championship. Atia could not play because of a back injury. Photo by Compass staff

