Local drag queens seek to spread self-love, confidence in community
Alexa Fitzpatrick
CULTURE 14

FOOD FLEET
The Starship delivery robots won't thrive on JMU's campus

OPINION 12

CHECK OUT OUR SPECIAL EDITION INSIDE

YOUTHFUL CONTRIBUTION
First-year lacrosse player makes a difference in early season

SPORTS 19
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THEHILLSJMU
POST-GRAD PLANS
JMU senior begins campaign for spot on city council

NEWS
5

RESTROOMS FOR ALL
JMU needs more gender-neutral bathrooms on campus

OPINION
10

CONTINUED SUCCESS
JMU women’s basketball alumna helps Puerto Rico qualify for Olympics

SPORTS
18

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According to the 2019 National Veteran Suicide Prevention annual report, male veterans ages 18-34 have the highest rate of suicide.

By MITCHELL SASSER
The Breeze

On Dec. 27, Gov. Northam (D) announced the Virginia Identify, Screen and Refer Pilot to “help prevent suicide and close gaps in access to care for service members, veterans and their families.” Virginia was selected as one of seven states to participate in the Governor’s Challenge to Prevent Suicide. The VISR Pilot will run through September 2020.

For Brandi Jancaitis, the military and veterans affairs manager at the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, the VISR Pilot is “personal.” Due to her background as an army wife and active military, she said she thinks every citizen should be able to see themselves in the suicide prevention mission.

“It’s important to talk about military and veteran suicide because we know that that group can be at higher risk but remembering that suicide is a concern for every citizen,” Jancaitis said. “It’s not just a military and veteran conversation; it’s a Virginian conversation.”

Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the U.S. for all ages, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The 2019 National Veteran Suicide Prevention annual report found that male veterans ages 18-34 have the highest rate of suicide, while male veterans ages 55-74 have the highest count of suicides.

Jancaitis said that every community agency can act as a touchpoint and a lifesaving resource for active military or veterans who are dealing with anxiety, depression, behavioral health or suicidal thoughts. Jancaitis said that consistent screening for suicide risk is one of the things that the VISR Pilot is asking community services boards to continue.

Matt Leslie is the assistance director of the Virginia Veteran and Family Support Program. His job is to increase touchpoints and to make sure that people are educated on how to get veterans connected to services.

A majority of Leslie’s staff are veterans or family members of veterans. Leslie said that peer supports are crucial to help veterans feel comfortable with receiving services and to destigmatize talking about suicide.

“My hope is that we further expand the pilot into other providers so everything we are learning up until September and the data that we collect, that we can get other community agencies to be a part of this effort,” Leslie said. “The more touch points we have out there, I think it is this public health model of getting the word out, getting outreach out there so people have a range of tools at their disposal when they’re in crisis.”

Tonia Taylor is the outpatient services manager at the Valley Community Services Board. VCSB is one of the 13 CSBs participating in the pilot. Taylor is responsible for overseeing its adult outpatient services.

Taylor said that while this is a pilot from Gov. Northam, “it’s really not a new initiative as far as our value system of making our services available to the community.” In 2019, the VSCB served 94 military-type individuals, and Taylor said she was convinced they are seeing a fairly significant population.

“I’m encouraged because I’m aware it’s challenging for military individuals to seek help,” Taylor said. “It’s challenging for them to be able to accept that point of vulnerability within themselves to bring themselves to the agency to seek assistance.”

Shortly after Operation Enduring Freedom, Taylor said she met with a couple of discharged service members who saw combat while abroad. One of their concerns was that during the process of treatment, they might be re-traumatized and unable to cope with their emotions. Another individual was hesitant to engage in treatment, as they didn’t want to be portrayed as mentally ill.

Taylor said she became concerned that this was going to be a common factor in her role as a clinician with both veterans and active-duty military.

“I think that this initiative is valuable, and I’m encouraged that the more we are able to globally talk about the de-stigmatization of suicidal risk, I think the more embracing we are of helping one another and helping individuals get connected to the resources that they need and the supports that they need from a very nonjudgmental stance,” Taylor said.

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JMU senior launches campaign to become city council member

By ELEANOR WEBER  
contributing writer

Ever since his first year as a JMU student, Luciano Benjamin said he knew he wanted to be involved in local government. Benjamin, a senior political science major, is in the process of preparing to run for a position on Harrisonburg City Council after his graduation this May.

Benjamin explained that after being a JMU student for four years, Harrisonburg has become a home to him, and he said he wants to make it a better city for students and Harrisonburg locals.

"I'm frustrated with how little we get done in this world," Benjamin said. "There's a lot of people who are content with the status quo, and we need to be willing to change things up."

Benjamin said he wants to see Harrisonburg become a city where students want to stay after they graduate. He said he's hopeful that with the right improvements, this dream can become a reality for JMU students.

Reilly Flynn, a sophomore English major, is involved in helping Luciano with his campaign and said he's passionate about the policies on the table.

"The thing I keep coming back to with this campaign is [that] something needs to change," Flynn said. "He's so young, and I think it's a great idea to get new people in there who can prove themselves to be effective voices for communities."

Driven by a desire to improve the city for generations to come, Luciano is shaping his campaign for the May 2 election by tackling three main issues: the climate crisis at a local level, Harrisonburg's cultural diversity and affordable housing for all.

"I firmly believe that housing is a human right, and no human should have to go to sleep at night without a roof over their head," Benjamin said.

Luke Forbes, a senior philosophy major, has been involved in multiple campaigns in the Harrisonburg area throughout his time at JMU, and he said he's especially passionate about Benjamin and his plans.

"What got me hooked to working with him is he's the first one who's really taken a focus on rent control and affordable housing and how it affects students specifically," Forbes said. "It's important because how it affects students is ultimately how it affects everybody in Harrisonburg."

Benjamin said his goal is to work with the existing housing system to lower prices for housing across the city to make housing a reality for all. He further explained that he wants to confront the issue of affordable student housing, as he said prices have skyrocketed. Benjamin said he has hope that if certain actions are taken, this crisis can be resolved.

"No one should have to choose between putting food on the table for their kids and having a roof over their head," Benjamin said.

When it comes to addressing the climate crisis at a local level, Benjamin said he hopes his passion for the issue will shine through.

This past fall, Benjamin helped organize the JMU climate strike. He said he wants to address the climate issues at a local level to provide a "better life" for the generations to come.

"So often, when we think of the climate crisis, we think it's a national or international issue, and there's nothing that we can do about it here locally in Harrisonburg, but there's so much that we can do," Benjamin said.

Benjamin said he's looking to provide an improved affordable public transport system that uses green power with electrical buses for the entire city. He said he wants to get more cars off the road and have a better transportation system people can rely on. Benjamin further explained that he's hopeful for a "50 by 25" goal, in which 50% of the city is run on renewable energy by the year 2025.

As a son of an immigrant, Benjamin said, he's especially passionate about including all groups in the city and wants to ensure minority groups are involved in political discussions and have a place in city decisions.

"We are a friendly city, but so often, we exclude certain people, and we need to bring them to the table and make sure they feel like they are part of our community," Benjamin said.

Forbes also went on to discuss Benjamin’s goals of bringing together all the communities of Harrisonburg and how he thinks this will create a positive change.

"I think it’s important in helping bridge a lot of the animosities that exist between students and Harrisonburg locals," Forbes said. "He's really been energizing a lot of people who are really passionate about him, which is great. The fact that he's been able to inspire people is really encouraging to see."

Benjamin said he hopes to involve more people not only in the campaign but also in the general political processes of the city. He said he wants to utilize town hall meetings to give everyone a voice.

"We’re going to make sure they are at the heart of our city and a part of what our city is," Benjamin said. "A big focus of our campaign is to involve more people in the political process."

Benjamin said he doesn’t have any fears going into this election and that he’s more optimistic about his campaign than anything, and he said he plans to continue to use his energy to help Harrisonburg in any way he can.

"I am optimistic, and that's what our world needs right now," Benjamin said. "We need some hope. We need representation and leadership from our generation to actually confront these things. We need to take our future by the reins."

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By ISABELA GLADSTON
The Breeze

Handshake, which is an online career services platform, now has a feature that allows JMU students to look for internships and jobs according to their major.

Laura Fornash, who serves as sr. vice president for McGuireWoods Consulting, which helped form the GrowthvVA campaign, said that GrowthvVA, a higher education campaign, has supported this new feature on Handshake and partnered with JMU to put a press conference together in Richmond to announce the new feature Jan. 28. It’s been available to students and prospective students since early December.

Andy Perrine, associate vice president for communications and marketing at JMU, said JMU and Handshake decided to put live job and internship opportunities on the academic overview pages to motivate students to start thinking about career opportunities associated with their majors sooner.

Perrine said that President Jonathan Alger had an op-ed in the Richmond Times-Dispatch in late January where he described a national trend of 80% of all college students saying that the main reason they’re going to college is to improve their career prospects, but only about 20% of college students visit their school’s office of career planning while they’re still a student.

“An analysis of that disconnect is that you need to get career planning resources to students where they already live rather than encouraging them to go to a career planning office,” Perrine said.

He said that for this reason and the fact that prospective students tend to look at academic major overview pages first when choosing a college, JMU and Handshake decided to implement this new feature.

Christine Cruzvergara, vice president of higher education of student success for Handshake, said that the service now has s over 900 universities and colleges, over 425,000 employers and 17 million students and alumni.

“This makes the new feature another opportunity to connect with other students not only at JMU, but at other colleges as well,” Cruzvergara said.

“Many schools use Handshake, and this is a creative way to show prospective students what they can do with their majors,” Fornash said.

JMU created different RSS feeds in partnership with Handshake and mapped them to all of the different undergraduate academic majors across the entire institution, meaning that these feeds are embedded in the academic websites for every major, Cruzvergara said.

Laura Fornash, who serves as senior vice president for McGuireWoods Consulting, said that GrowthvVA has supported this new addition to the website.

“Many schools use Handshake, and this is a creative way to show prospective students what they can do with their majors,” Fornash said.

CONTACT Isabela Gladston at gladstia@dukes.jmu.edu. For more coverage of JMU and Harrisonburg news, follow the news desk on Twitter @BreezeNewsJMU.
Hidden Common Ground

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Protect by increasing regulations
Protect by minimizing government involvement
Protect by warding off threats
The first family to pilot the Council’s translation services mounted the podium Tuesday night to plead their grievances with their landlord.

Igrid Rodriguez sat with her sister and parents near the front of the chamber, waiting for their opportunity to be heard. The family — originally from Puerto Rico — wore simultaneous translation headsets that translated meeting dialogue in real-time.

When the time for public comments rolled around, a city-appointed translator joined Rodriguez on the stand to provide consecutive interpretation for the constituent as she spoke in her native language about her family’s rental dilemmas.

The Rodriguez family parks their mobile homes on a few Virginia Avenue lots they rent from Park Homes, LLC. Rodriguez said her landlord charges the family and their neighbors radically differing rates arbitrarily. She also said the owner doesn’t allow the family’s children to play outside and restricts the family from hosting any guests — even their own grandchildren.

“She wants to be the owner from outside and inside our houses,” Rodriguez said through the translator. “The land belongs to her, yes, but the homes are ours.”

Rodriguez’s father said the road leading to his mobile home isn’t well-maintained or well-lit. He said he dreads his car breaking down.

“We are living with a lot of [fear],” Rodriguez’s father said through the translator.

The majority of the other residents in the neighborhood are also Spanish-speaking.

One resident convened with a lawyer the day of the council meeting to explore filing a complaint.

Rodriguez entrusted Mayor Deeea Reed with a petition full of signatures from residents of the mobile neighborhood and copies of evidence against the owner, begging Council to investigate.

Vice Mayor Sal Romero said the family’s testimony was disturbing, but he’s proud of the translation services’ success, which he spearheaded as a city initiative last year.

According to Romero, Harrisonburg is the second council in the state to offer the resource. The interpreter service has been available since last June.

“It really allows residents to bring their concerns before us,” Romero said. “Hopefully, this will be the start of a more engaged community that won’t see language as a barrier.”
2. Activists combat homelessness epidemic from council chambers

Several community members advocated for the growing local homeless population.

Michael Snell-Feikema praised Reed’s involvement with the cause, particularly her aid in drawing up the Open Doors’ — a nonprofit emergency homeless shelter — new proposal to remain open year-round rather than only during the coldest months of the year.

Snell-Feikema said the city should prioritize the location of adequate comprehensive case management for people who are homeless.

“It can be just a labyrinth — a maze — that’s overwhelming to try and get through all the different things that a homeless person has to do [to] be housed again,” Snell-Feikema said. “A shelter can turn into a warehouse if it isn’t made into a first step toward getting housed.”

The expanded Open Doors programs will cost the organization an estimated $140,000.

Bucky Berry, Harrisonburg resident and event organizer for the Brent Berry Food Drive stood in front of Council to announce the 12th annual Brent Berry Food Drive, which collects food, toys and hygiene products to deliver to those in need in the Harrisonburg community. The event organizer said he hopes to stuff a Harrisonburg transit bus to the brim with donations.

Berry said Councilman George Hirschmann has committed to support the drive next month.

Berry said he dreams of opening his own soup kitchen to serve community members without homes and link those people with counselors to get them back on their feet.

3. City schools channeled grants totaling over half a million dollars

City schools will receive more than $568,000 in extra funding thanks to local, state and federal grants. Council unanimously approved the supplemental finances.

The fattest slice of the haul, nearly $486,000, will be devoted to instruction in the district. The remaining balance will be divided between operations and maintenance, technology and transportation.

Federal sources contributed $355,000 to the lump sum. State grants chipped in $186,000. The remaining $27,000 was coughed up from sources marked “other” on city documents.

The U.S. Department of Education provided $181,000 with the purpose of providing financial assistance to schools with high numbers of children from low-income families.

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Path to inclusivity

Gender-neutral bathrooms would make JMU a happier, safer place for many students

LIZ RICCIO | contributing columnist

Renowned psychologist Abraham Maslow created what is now referred to as Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. This theory is laid out as a pyramid with five tiers that, starting at its base and working one’s way up, must be satisfied in order to reach self-actualization. One can’t reach a higher tier unless all aspects of lower ones have been fulfilled.

Beyond basic needs such as food, water and shelter, the next level up comprises safety and comfort in one’s environment. Unfortunately for some, this tier can’t be fulfilled at JMU because the university doesn’t offer the safe environment needed in order for some to truly feel like themselves. In order to give all students the opportunity to fully express themselves, the university should seriously consider building one gender-neutral bathroom for each male and female bathroom that’s already present.

As campus is set up today, there are only male, female and the occasional family restrooms built in most dorms and academic buildings, yet there are shockingly few gender-neutral bathrooms across campus. Without intending to, JMU has ostracized an entire community of students who may feel uncomfortable using restrooms that force them to conform to an identity which they don’t actually associate with. These bathrooms are especially important in dorms, as students must shower and go to the bathroom in the same space as others on top of already being forced to share rooms with people of the same birth sex.

New restrooms would alleviate some of the discomfort that these students face on a daily basis. Although it’s possible to construct a new gender-neutral bathroom per floor of each building, this would be both a time-consuming and expensive leap to make immediately. The best temporary option seems to be investment in the erection of gender-neutral bathrooms in buildings currently undergoing construction such as the new dining hall, the College of Business, the new stadium and the soon-to-be-renovated Village dorms.

This investment would make JMU’s campus a safer and happier place for many students who, at the moment, most likely feel underrepresented and unheard. According to ggwash.com, almost 70% of transgender survey respondents had at some point been harassed while trying to use a public restroom. These new bathrooms wouldn’t only see heavy use, but they would create an environment of support for gender non-conforming students.

This would also be a huge step that would see JMU recognized as one of a few southern universities that prioritizes the inclusion of gender-neutral restrooms. In cities such as D.C. and, in the near future, the Arlington and Alexandria school districts, the law protects non-binary and transgender citizens by allowing them to use whatever bathroom they identify with. Since this law isn’t in place in Southern Virginia, the construction of gender-neutral bathrooms would be a great starting point for expanding the slim lodging and restroom options that are available to students today.

Gender-neutral restrooms are an important addition to JMU’s campus, as they provide safe spaces for students who don’t identify as male or female. Prioritizing this within the construction of all the new buildings on campus is pivotal to the mental, physical and emotional health of the student population.

Liz Riccio is a freshman media arts and design major. Contact Liz at riccioem@dukes.jmu.edu.
George Washington deserves less praise and more scrutiny than he receives

Filip De Mott | contributing columnist

George Washington, the first president of the United States, was born 288 years ago, now commemorated as President’s Day. In 2013, in an event much less acclaimed but arguably as ground-breaking, video-game company Ubisoft released “Assassin’s Creed: The Tyranny of King Washington,” an addition to the previous installment of the action-fueled game series; one which explores historic periods reimagined, through the eyes of ideologically moral killers.

As can be deduced by the title, the video game’s extension delved into a reality in which Washington, instead of humbly accepting his elected post, turns the new born nation into a dictatorship, over which he ruthlessly presides.

Nevertheless, in the words of game-critic IGN, this extraordinary adventure proved “overpriced” and “thematically shallow,” and, with time, generally forgotten by the gaming community. Yet, it has been the only recently distinct effort to bathe George Washington in a darker light — and although this example may have been excessive, perhaps it was a necessary example.

Ever since his presidency, Washington has — for the most part — been unconditionally glorified. Speaking in nearly fairy-tale terms, for instance, Woodrow Wilson wrote, “All the land knew him and loved him for gallantry and brave capacity; he carried himself like a prince,” as quoted in a New Yorker article.

Consequently, in a twist of irony, an argument can be made that between overstated tales of his honesty and a strange emphasis on his dentures, the coverage of George Washington is also thematically shallow. Whether or not this is done consciously, the physical and moral stiffness that’s granted to the nation’s first president evades true comprehension of U.S. history as a whole.

In 1840, Horatio Greenough sculpted a bare-breasted and Zeus-like Washington, akin to the marble statues of Rome. As displayed on the National Museum of American History’s webpage dissecting the art piece, there’s a subtly sinister photo of black schoolchildren looking up at the sculpture.

It would have been deflating for them to know that part of his famous dentures were made from the teeth of African Americans. University of Virginia scholar Kathryn Gehred told Live Science, “George Washington probably gave his inaugural speech with teeth that were from people who were enslaved... It’s grim.”

Generally, Washington’s treatment of non-white races seems to be brushed aside. Perhaps his use of bound labor is historically excusable, but, when living in Pennsylvania as president, he went as far as ignoring the state’s slavery-limiting laws, according to U.S. History.

During the Revolutionary War, General Washington also launched what is now known as Sullivan’s Campaign, an army march that charred the towns and fields of indigenous Americans, leaving thousands to starve in a historically cold winter. Arguably, this helped secure the frontier for the young nation, but it nearly vanquished the Six Nations of the Iroquois, according to History Net.

His bitter relationship with the tribes didn’t end there. As president, in an effort to expand the States, Washington offered to buy native land or “extirpate” them if they refused, as discussed by author Colin Calloway.

Despite the patriotic stature provided to him, it’s valid to question his selflessness. Though he gradually became a resounding voice of anti-taxation sentiment, this may be due to the fact that there existed “private as well as public advantages” to opposition, since the taxation went against his personal businesses, quoted by the Journal of the American Revolution.

More extensively, further criticisms range from him manipulating his way for greater pay as a general to him simply being dimwitted. As mentioned by All That’s Interesting, the fighting between him and the French that sparked the Seven Years’ War has been theorized to have begun with his signing of a French surrender agreement he didn’t understand.

By all means, there’s much to celebrate in the first president and his achievements. In refusing a lifelong term, he set the precedent of — to the probable disappointment of Ubisoft — not being king-like. He gave the new nation its own hero in war and defined the executive branch is meant to be led.

Notwithstanding, the importance of symbols and icons in national legend is vital. It helps formulate societal unity and helps demonstrate the country’s values. However, there’s a danger to painting such a figure as impenetrably perfect. A slave-holder and an enemy to the natives, Washington’s god-like imagery can be alienating to a good majority of the modern population.

An inability to criticize is fuel for unwarranted nationalism; in a time of red MAGA caps, this may be dangerous.

Filip De Mott is a sophomore media arts and design and international affairs major. Contact Filip at demottfs@dukes.jmu.edu.
According to Upserve.com, 60% of U.S. consumers order delivery once a week, and 31% of those consumers say they use a third-party delivery service at least twice a week. With new developments on the horizon, these numbers are only expected to rise in the years to come.

In August 2014, a new advancement soon took the food delivery industry by storm: the Starship delivery robot. It’s a compact six-wheeled robot that delivers groceries and made-to-order food from nearby restaurants. The first prototype of the Starship robot had just been created, and by the next November, the robot was released into the public. It wasn’t until 2019 that the company introduced the Starship robot onto George Mason University’s campus, making a name for the company that many people would soon recognize.

There’s been recent speculation about the testing and hopeful arrival of the Starship delivery robots on JMU’s campus. There’s much excitement about a new and more efficient way of receiving food without having to leave the comfort of a dorm room. However, with existing apps like Uber Eats and DoorDash, it’s important to consider the logistics of bringing the Starship robots onto campus. Given the factors of JMU’s campus layout and the possible destruction of the robots, it’s best that they remain off-campus.

Food delivery robots could put delivery people at DoorDash and Uber Eats out of work.

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KAYLEE COX | contributing columnist

According to Upserve.com, 60% of U.S. consumers order delivery once a week, and 31% of those consumers say they use a third-party delivery service at least twice a week. With new developments on the horizon, these numbers are only expected to rise in the years to come.

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Food delivery robots could put delivery people at DoorDash and Uber Eats out of work.
While Starship Robots might be successful at GMU, they’ll struggle here at JMU

With the launch of the robots on campus, it’s important to realize that the current drivers of various food delivery companies could be heavily affected. With access to robots that can deliver on-campus meals, the number of students who order food from delivery apps will likely decline. Drivers will be replaced by the Starship robots — which move at pedestrian speeds, deliver within a four-mile radius and can cross streets — and many drivers could lose their jobs.

There’s also the concern that these self-driving robots may have difficulty navigating campus on their own. In order to solve this problem, there would have to be an assigned person to overlook each individual robot, according to the now-open position on JMU’s student employment page, which can be quite demanding.

According to a local article by news station WHSV-3, many Bird scooters have been recklessly driven and destroyed by students on JMU’s campus. If the Starship robots successfully make their way onto campus, these expensive developments are also likely to be subject to destruction by students, and money will have gone to waste.

The layout of JMU’s campus isn’t conducive to these pre-programmed bots. Much of JMU’s campus is made up of steep hills, stairs and rough terrain. There’s a significant chance that these robots won’t be able to manage the conditions of JMU’s campus. The robots also rely on using sidewalks for transportation, which means that students could be forced to step off sidewalks and into the road when robots are passing.

Additionally, many JMU students would agree that the weather in the Shenandoah Valley can be quite unpredictable. The robots are able to navigate through rain and snow; however, extreme wind conditions may pose a serious problem. Moving at only 4 mph and weighing just under 100 pounds, these robots are likely to be affected by heavy wind.

With new advancements like the Starship robot being created, it’s important to understand that sometimes these expensive improvements may not be worth as much trouble as they may bring.

Kaylee Cox is a junior media arts and design major. Contact Kaylee at coxkm@dukes.jmu.edu.

Phi Beta Kappa has sent out Invites!

Be sure to check your emails as of February 27th

www.jmu.edu/pbk/
Cheers erupted in Habana Cafe as stage curtains flew open, revealing a woman dressed in emerald green smiling in the spotlight. She began lip-synching to an upbeat pop song as she sashayed around the bar, pausing to pluck dollar bills from audience members’ hands.

The drag show had officially begun.

Female impersonator Max Dean said drag culture became prominent in Harrisonburg in 1996. The local movement began after the creation of Miss Gay Harrisonburg, a pageant recognizing drag queens’ talents. A flourishing drag community arose and continues to thrive over 20 years later.

“I thought for a long time that I should have been a woman,” Dean said. “My whole life, I’ve been very feminine and, growing up, that was kind of hard.”

Dean debuted as a drag performer in 1989. Through female impersonation, he said he learned to love himself by embracing his femininity.

“You know, I’m still that little girl that I always wanted to be,” Dean said. “But I’m also falling in love with who I am.”

Dean said that his drag persona, Maximus Everything, is a part of his personality. His stage name was Max when he first started drag. He changed it to Maximus Everything after the Miss Everything Pageant was created.

Dean said that performing drag is a necessity for him, as it’s a part of his “light.”

“I have to do this to survive as a human being because she’s in there, and she has to come out, and that’s when I’m my happiest,” Dean said.

At the show, the crowd chanted as Jayda Knight danced into the audience. She bounced in her hot pink mini dress and voluminous blonde wig. Her dramatic eye makeup sparkled as she twirled in her high heels. She controlled the room with confidence.

“Before I started doing drag, I could not talk in front of people,” Chad Sager, who has been performing drag as Jayda Knight for over 15 years, said. “Doing drag over the years has helped me with self-confidence.”

In 2010, he started Rhinestone Productions, a company that organizes drag events in Harrisonburg. Sager said that Rhinestone Productions has become a staple of the downtown community and has brought more awareness, understanding and love for the art form.

“It’s important for the community to know that we have such a rich history of female impersonation here in Harrisonburg,” Sager said. “The drag culture here is just amazing.”

Another woman takes Habana’s stage. With only two-and-a-half years of drag experience, she performs her routine with the enchantment of a female impersonator who has been entertaining for decades. She spins around the room, stopping to interact with audience members as she makes her way to the back of the bar.

“I am captivated when I went to my first drag show. Six months later, he began performing as Genesis Knight. “She’s fun, she’s young, she doesn’t play by the rules,” Major said. “She does whatever she feels like in the moment.”

Sager became Major’s “drag-mother” when Major first entered the drag scene. Under her guidance, Major said he was able to grow as a performer.

“It’s really a family,” Major said.

“One thing that this community needs to learn very deeply is that we are a close-knit family,” Dean said. “We always have been.”

Dean said the Harrisonburg drag community is known for being drama-free. Its motive is to spread love and acceptance to everyone.

“Rhinestone Productions teaches that everyone needs to be themselves, everyone needs to respect themselves, and by doing that, our community will survive longer,” Dean said. “In our own little community that we have here, we just want to spread love and acceptance to everyone.”

CONTACT Alexa Fitzpatrick at breezevideo1@gmail.com. For more on the culture, arts and lifestyle of the JMU and Harrisonburg communities, follow the culture desk on Twitter @Breeze_Culture.
First time for everything

Students debut play, ‘Study Group,’ to run at the studio theatre

By CAMRYN FINN
The Breeze

It all started with an assignment for an advanced playwriting class.

Maddie Kovach, a senior theatre major, was sitting in class trying to find inspiration for the play she’d be working on all semester. She decided to find her vision in some of the topics she was most familiar with.

“I had all these stories from going to Catholic school for 15 years and from the way I view politics and, of course, being a teenager and falling in love,” Kovach said. “I, kind of, had all these characters in my head come out of that, and I realized I had a play.”

What began as a class project turned into a year-long process filled with staged readings and workshops, ending with a premier in the studio theatre. The play, titled “Study Group,” will show at the Forbes Center for the Performing Arts from Feb. 26 to March 2.

The play follows five Catholic school students as they study for their AP Government end-of-year exam and how each character changes throughout the year. Four of the students — Mary, Pauline, Jack and Victor — have been friends for a while, but their world is shaken up when Clark, one of the coolest guys in school, joins the study group.

Their conversation quickly shifts from school to politics and, of course, being a teenager and falling in love. “I write characters who I love, so I think about people, and also the things I love about people and their relationships, which playwriting is all about,” she said.

It’s all about creating believable human beings and shaping stories around them,” Kovach said. “I’m just so certain about the way that people act around each other and all the things that I observe about people, and also the things I love about people. I write characters who I love, so I think that’s what I learned about myself.”

Above all, those involved with the production said they hope that audiences are able to connect with the characters, believing them to be real.

“Seeing it evolve from people at music stands reading from a script at chairs to staging it in a fully realized space and seeing these characters being fully breathed, active and connected to each other and just fully realized,” Shaw said. “It’s quite special to see these things that you’ve worked with on a page for hours come to life.”

One of the largest differences between the previous showings and the fully staged production is the transfer of all the movements and interaction off the page and into a full world with sets, costumes and movement. It adds another layer to what’s already been explored.

Julia Bussey is a junior theatre major and the dramaturge for the production. A dramaturge fulfills a jack-of-all-trades role, but they’re majorly responsible for researching the significance of all the details involved in the production and communicating that to the ensemble. It’s her first time being a dramaturge, and she said she mostly communicated that to the ensemble. It’s her first time being a dramaturge, and she said she mostly researched the specifics behind the traditions of the Catholic church. She also said that one of the most special things about this production has been seeing it evolve and giving multiple company members the opportunity to learn.

“For Kovach, she said this learning experience has been valuable, as she hopes to continue with playwriting in the future. She’s learned about people and their relationships, which playwriting is all about,” she said.

“It’s all about creating believable human beings and shaping stories around them,” Kovach said. “I’m just so certain about the way that people act around each other and all the things that I observe about people, and also the things I love about people. I write characters who I love, so I think that’s what I learned about myself.”

Above all, those involved with the production said they hope that audiences are able to connect with the characters, believing them to be real people. The play is a slice into their lives and shows all the happiness, sadness, awkwardness and everything in between.

“I hope that people come to it with open hearts and open minds, too,” Bussey said. “It’s a hard play, but there’s also a lot of beauty in it and a lot of things to learn.”

CONTACT Camryn Finn at finnce@dukes.jmu.edu For more on the culture, arts and lifestyle of the JMU and Harrisonburg communities, follow the culture desk on Twitter @Breeze_Culture.
Pour & Connect bar off Port Republic Road sets up social atmosphere with self-serve drink stations

By SARAH CONNOR
The Breeze

As a customer enters Harrisonburg’s newest bar, Pour & Connect, they might be confused when they see no actual bar or bartender. Instead, they’re met with a self-serve beer station and a food order screen behind large, high-top tables placed around the space. This set up offers an uncommon experience to the community with no wait time, plenty of drink options and a social atmosphere.

It’s one of the only bars located on Port Republic Road, right in the middle of multiple student housing areas like 865 Apartments, The Harrison and Southview. Despite being the new kid on the block, it’s rapidly gained fans and is proving itself to be a frontrunner in Harrisonburg’s bar scene.

The small, yet crowded bar has become popular because of its variety of options and self-serve concept. Owner Phatik Patel said his current vision for the location is to be a hangout spot. “People can come and hang out as if they were hanging out at their friends’ place,” Patel said.

Senior international affairs major Matt Britman said the “communal setting” fosters a friendly environment where customers share tables with strangers and can meet new people. Like most bars, Pour & Connect keeps a cap on the number of individuals let in so it never gets too crowded.

Customers are given a card attached to their credit card that they can swipe to pour themselves a variety of drinks and order food. There are various drink options from local breweries, like “The Ghost” pale ale from Three Notch’d Brewery, ‘Hopwork Orange’ IPA from Blue Mountain Brewery and classics, like Bud Light. Its non-beer options include Bold Rock grapefruit hard seltzer and Better Wine Co’s rose spritzer nitro.

“The drinks are great. They have something for everyone,” Alex Biegel, a Harrisonburg resident said. “They had a bunch of different options to try some new beers, more options than any other bar here.”

Patel said he wants the bar to be a place for people to come together and be themselves. Both students and locals may enjoy Pour & Connect because it’s a mix between the casual brewery vibe and the chaotic bar scene.

“I think for locals, it’s a really cool weekend night spot,” Rachel Hoffman, Harrisonburg resident and JMU alumna said. “That’s the time you come to see other locals to meet. On weekends, there are more college kids.”

This aspect may make Pour & Connect especially attractive to newly legal students who are interested in trying multiple drinks. Customers pay by the ounce, making it easy to sample.

“It was good for taste-testing,” Hoffman said. “If I wanted to just taste a beer, I could do it right there, super quick.”

Customers can also expect typical bar food that comes out fast, like waffle fries, nachos, wings, tater tots and other cheesy options. These kinds of foods may fit the atmosphere Patel is going for.

“One of our main items is a cheesesteak,” Patel said. “I grew up in South Jersey near Philly, and Philly is big on cheesesteaks everywhere and anywhere you go. That is one of the items that came with me. I wanted things with quick preparation. It’s a fast, casual concept.”

Expensive prices may be a deterrent for some customers, however, the pay-by-the-ounce factor can give Pour & Connect a leg up. Patel hopes to expand in the future to allow more guests to experience his bar.

“I’ve been in the food business for almost 10 years, and [opening a] restaurant bar was one of my dreams,” Patel said. “I came across this concept of self-pouring beer, and I was fascinated because when I went to bars, the wait time would be so long. It was an incentive for me to get this working.”

CONTACT Sarah Connor at connorse@dukes.jmu.edu. For more on the culture, arts and lifestyle of the JMU and Harrisonburg communities, follow the culture desk on Twitter @Breeze_Culture.
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O’NEILL’S Grill
By COURTNEY RYDER
The Breeze

Jazmon Gwathmey, a 2016 JMU graduate, was one of the best players to come through JMU’s women’s basketball program and recently helped the Puerto Rican Women’s National team qualify for its first Olympic games.

"It still hasn't really hit me that I’m going to the Olympics," Gwathmey said. "My dream was just to play [in the] WNBA. That was the biggest stage I wanted to put myself on."

Puerto Rico lost two of its three qualifying games, beating only Brazil. However, the team was guaranteed a spot in the Olympics when Brazil lost to Australia. Gwathmey scored 51 points during the three qualifying games, 30 of which were scored against Australia on Feb. 8.

Gwathmey’s 30 points against Australia — a game her team ultimately lost, 100-74 — were more than twice as many points scored by her teammates and almost half of the team’s total points for the game. FIBA named her the top performer for Puerto Rico during the game.

JMU head coach Sean O’Regan, who was the associate head coach when Gwathmey was on the team, said he’s extremely proud of Gwathmey’s success. He said Gwathmey was always willing to work hard and had the drive and openness to get better.

"There’s no better, more deserving player to have this happen," O’Regan said. "It’s just a really cool thing for her to be a big part of [Puerto Rico qualifying for the first time.]"

Gwathmey was one of the top-ranked players on the Puerto Rican national team in terms of her performance during qualifiers. She ranked No. 1 in points per game, rebounds per game and assists per game. The International Basketball Association also rated Gwathmey as the top performer in efficiency per game at +26.

"I think [this Olympics experience] is gonna do wonders for her," Virginia Tech head coach Kenny Brooks, who coached Gwathmey at JMU, said.

Brooks said he frequently worked with Gwathmey one-on-one during her freshman year to help her hone in on her skills and become the most talented player on the team.

"That year, I don’t think I've seen a more dominant year than [Gwathmey] had her senior year," Brooks said.

Brooks said he knew Gwathmey had a bright future ahead of her and would go far in her career. Precious Hall tore her ACL during her senior season, Brooks said Gwathmey stepped up to fill Hall’s shoes and lead the team.

"That year, I don’t think I’ve seen a more dominant year than [Gwathmey] had her senior year," Brooks said.

"I wish I was still playing for him," Gwathmey said. "I wish he was traveling with me, and I could just take him with me and take him to every team I play with."

Brooks and Gwathmey both expressed similar beliefs that she has yet to reach her full potential.

"I’m at 70% of my potential, I have a lot more room to grow."

Gwathmey will show off her skills on a global stage when she and the Puerto Rican National Team travel to Tokyo for the Summer 2020 Olympics.
By MADISON HRICIK
The Breeze

Peterson scored a career-high six goals off six shots on goal against High Point on Sunday.

Immediate impact, bright future
JMU lacrosse freshman continues to thrive early in college career

After JMU lacrosse defeated in-state rival Virginia Tech last Wednesday, a new player has started to cement her importance for the Dukes. Freshman attacker Isabella Peterson has made a lasting impression on the team, even with it being early in the season. Peterson scored four goals against the Hokies, helping the Dukes continue their undefeated record against Virginia Tech, which is now 18-0 all time.

Standing at 6 feet tall, Peterson grew up in an athletic family. Both her parents went to CAA-rival Towson as student-athletes with her father on the football team and her mother involved in soccer and track. Peterson has played lacrosse for many years and helped bring two state titles to her high school.

“I loved how her lacrosse IQ was there,” head coach Shelley Klaes-Bawcombe said. “She has a great skill set — providing potential on the draw — and the fact that she’s a left-handed player led me to believe she would be a great player for our offense.”

Since the team’s first game against No. 2 UNC, Peterson has scored 12 goals off 21 shots, giving her nearly 57% accuracy and 76% accuracy for shots on goal. Peterson received her first start and goal against the Tar Heels, adjusting to collegiate play quickly and confidently.

“It’s almost like night and day,” sophomore midfielder Lizzy Fox said. “It seems like she’s had not a single issue fitting in. She plays with confidence, and I think that’s something that our offense needs this season.”

Like any collegiate sport, it’s not always easy to adjust to joining the community of NCAA athletes. However, Peterson said she’s been able to adapt to the team’s comradery and playing style during off-season practice. Other players on the team have helped guide her in adjusting to college play, allowing her to improve and work for a starting spot.

“The team’s energy is great all the time, especially in practice,” Peterson said. “It was great in the fall as well; it’s making the transition a lot easier. Everyone’s very welcoming, and our energy is always high, whether it’s in lift, games and practice.”

Peterson was named the CAA Rookie of the Week on both Feb. 18 and Feb. 25 and also earned a spot on the CAA Commissioner’s Academic Honor Roll during her first semester at JMU.

“The team’s energy is great all the time, especially in practice,” Peterson said. “It’s helped boost the team’s confidence as well. Especially the Virginia Tech game, it really helped my confidence, which I think has really contributed to our wins and chemistry.”

The Dukes are currently in first in the CAA with a 3-1 record and are nationally ranked at No. 15 with 30 points, only three points behind Duke. JMU was ranked as No. 21 prior to the 13-8 dominant win over High Point. JMU’s in-state rival University of Virginia, who is sitting in the top 10, is the Dukes’ next nationally ranked opponent, following the game against Penn State.

With the juniors and seniors as the only remaining members of the Dukes’ national championship season in 2018, JMU has been searching for offensive players to replicate the success of players like attacker Kristen Gaudian, who graduated following the national championship. Peterson has shown promise and looks to be a key factor in the offense for the Dukes.

“Playing’s definitely boosted my confidence,” Peterson said. “It’s helping boost the team’s confidence as well. Especially the Virginia Tech game, I think that’s something that our offense needs this season.”

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“She’s really smart and has been making great decisions on the field,” Fox said. “I have the same expectations for her as I do for myself and everyone on the team. I think that there’s always room to grow and put in extra work, and Isabella does that. I think it will only be up from here and her growth on this team.”

CONTACT Madison Hricik at hricikmnt@dukes.jmu.edu. For more lacrosse coverage, follow the sports desk on Twitter @TheBreezeSports.
Sensational start

JMU baseball freshman Chase DeLauter posted statement performances in the Dukes’ home-opening series

By MADISON HRICIK
The Breeze

In JMU baseball’s sweep of Quinnipiac in its first home series of the season, freshman left fielder and pitcher Chase DeLauter gave teammates and fans a glimpse of what the young athlete’s career can flourish into.

DeLauter came into the series with a .500 batting average after three hits and three RBIs against Richmond. Although the first game against Quinnipiac was low scoring — with the Dukes only winning 1-0 via a 10th inning walk-off — DeLauter demonstrated his batting abilities from the first inning.

The freshman gave the handoff to sophomore shortstop Nick Zona at the end of the first game by sending a single out to left-centerfield for Zona to score the game-winning run. The game-winner was the second of two hits for that game, the first being a single as well.

“[DeLauter’s] handled playing college baseball really well,” head coach Marlin Ikenberry said. “He’s becoming a really polished baseball player. Every day he sees something and does something new to keep pushing this team.”

PHOTOS COURTESY OF JMU ATHLETICS PHOTOGRAPHY
The next game, DeLauter once again had a strong first at-bat, notching his first home run of the season to give the Dukes an early 1-0 lead in a dominant 7-0 win. DeLauter shot the ball deep into left field—a difficult task while batting left-handed. The home run was followed by an RBI later in the game. JMU had shown its offense in its second game with Quinnipiac, and DeLauter proved himself once again to the team and JMU fans.

“Chase is amazing; He’s an awesome player,” junior pitcher Justin Showalter said. “He’s super humble, and the two of us love to compete in everything we do, whether it’s running sprints or seeing who can throw the fastest, which, in turn, I think really shows on the field.”

In the final contest between the Dukes and Bobcats, Ikenberry chose to start DeLauter as pitcher. DeLauter had his first collegiate pitching start in the season-opening series finale against No. 16 NC State, where the Dukes fell, 4-0. DeLauter let two runs go in the top of the first inning in Quinnipiac. However, he didn’t let anything else go for the remaining four innings he pitched. For the third time, DeLauter got himself on base in his first at-bat, earning a triple. At the top of the fifth inning, freshman pitcher Hunter Entsminger was sent for relief, allowing DeLauter to become the designated hitter for the remainder of the game. He finished with three strikeouts, one walk and four hits.

“I thought he settled into it pretty well,” Ikenberry said. “Being a two-way player this early in the season allowed him to get some innings today. I was really proud of how he maintained his composure and how he competed on the mound.”

Later in the game, Quinnipiac made a comeback to tie it at the top of the ninth, putting the pressure on not only the bullpen but the offense to preserve the potential sweep. At the bottom of the ninth and with Zona on first base, DeLauter sent a double into right-center field for Zona to once again score the game-winning run for the Dukes.

Following the series sweep, DeLauter was named the CAA Rookie of the Week, alongside Showalter who was named CAA Pitcher of the Week.

“It feels great to have the team behind me,” DeLauter said. “They trust me on the field and at bat, so I just try my best to come through and play well for them.”

CONTACT Madison Hricik at hricikmn@dukes.jmu.edu. For more baseball coverage, follow the sports desk on Twitter @TheBreezeSports.
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Los Angeles Times Daily Crossword Puzzle
Edited by Rich Norris and Joyce Lewis

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5 Wildy
9 Peaks
14 At hand
15 Animated explorer
16 Patterned fabric
17 Authentic piece of a holy relic?
19 Comedian lizard
20 Sound investments?
21 Like some deliveries
23 Indy guide
25 She walked into Rick’s gin joint
26 Disaster
29 Comedian Garofalo
31 Folk legend Phil
32 Joe
33 Connects with
36 Area article
37 West Records: Nashvill e label
38 Rosy-fingered goddess who rises in the east
39 Ad rod spot
40 Get back in
42 Product prefix that evokes winter
43 Die down
44 Herbie, in Disney films
46 Outset
47 They don’t last
49 Part of Curacao
51 Rather
52 Apparel brand with a spinnaker logo
57 Mesh
58 Biblical pronouns said by James Earl Jones?
60 Red pencil
61 December 24 and 31
62 Last singer James
63 Georgia team, in sports headlines
64 Take a chance
65 Hoarse laugh

DOWN
1 Tiny colonists
2 Structural engineering piece
30 First words in an alphabet book
31 Folk legend Phil
32 Get back in
33 Connects with
34 Tart taste
35 Mega Stuf cookie
36 One may be civil
37 Great Basin st.
38 One of two in
39 A.P. od spot
40 Get back in
41 Message board
42 Lovesick
43 Local news
45 Settled in for the night, with “down”
46 Surf
47 Fluted on the march
48 Unwelcome leftovers?
49 First words in an alphabet book
50 Momentary error
51 Up and _ _ _
52 Fades to black
53 tallest animal statue named Mac at its tourist info center
54 One of two in
55 Stops shooting
56 “Stat!
57 Large of New York’s Finger Lakes
58 “Peace out”
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Solution to Wednesday’s puzzle

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10:45 am  **Civility and the Problem of Polarization**  
Robert Talisse - Philosophy, Vanderbilt University

1:30 pm  **Civility, Institutional Neutrality, and The First Amendment**  
Jud Campbell - School of Law, University of Richmond

3:00 pm  **Truthfulness and Civility**  
Jonny Thakkar - Political Science, Swarthmore College

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Pia Antolic-Piper and Anne van Leeuwen

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4. Amy Birdsong wins best JMU professor
6. JMU dining halls ranked
8. Top five brunch dishes at The Little Grill Collective
10. Lola’s Delicatessen serves a superior sandwich
13. Best day trips around Harrisonburg
16. O’Neill’s cookie skillet scores big
19. Charleston Townes wins best housing complex

Winners

Best Coffee: Greenberry’s
Best Restaurant Deals: Billy Jack’s
Best Sandwiches: Lola’s Delicatessen
Best Restaurant for a Date: Bella Luna
Best Food Truck: Tacos El Primo
Best Day Trip: Switzer Lake
Best Music Venue: Clementine, Golden Pony (tie)
Best Off-campus Housing: Charleston Townes
Best Clothing Store: Plato’s Closet
Best Brunch Spot: Little Grill Collective
Best Brewery: Pale Fire
Best Winery: Crosskeys Vineyard
Best Nightlife: Backcountry
Best Pizza: Benny Sorrentino’s
Best Dessert: O’Neill’s Cookie Skillet
Best Hair Salon: The Studio
Best Trivia Night: Clementine

Best Place on Campus to Relax: The Quad
Best JMU Professor: Amy Birdsong
Best JMU Staffer: Jenna Polk
Best On-campus Dining: D-Hall, E-Hall (tie)
Best On-campus Dish: Buffalo Mash
Best Outdoors Destination: Arboretum
Best Library: Carrier
Best Thing About JMU: The People
Best Thing About Harrisonburg: The People
Amy Birdsong said she enjoyed being the band director at Hanover High School in Hanover County Public Schools, where she developed its band program over the course of 14 years. However, she said that when she was notified of an opening for a third band director position at JMU, where she completed her undergraduate degree, she decided to apply.

Now, three years in the position, Birdsong has been voted best professor by readers of The Breeze. Birdsong grew up in Richmond, Virginia, and graduated from JMU in 2001 with a Bachelor of Music and a minor in jazz studies. While at HCPS, she earned a master's degree in music education through VCU in the summer. Birdsong currently works as assistant director of bands and director of the JMU Pep Band.

Birdsong described her profession as a combination of her parents' professional lives — her mom was an elementary school teacher, and her dad was a business owner — because her teaching career also includes administrative duties. Her parents were JMU alumni, and she only applied to JMU. Since her childhood homes are gone, she said, she feels a special connection to JMU since attending because it's the only place she can return to that still has memories from the past.

"JMU has this way of becoming home when you're here, and it becomes a place you're homesick for when you leave," Birdsong said. "This is one of those dream positions that I never thought to even attempt to try for."

Birdsong teaches a music education course and concert band and works with the saxophone chamber ensemble. She works closely with Scott Rikkers, assistant director of bands and director of the Marching Royal Dukes, and said she considers him a mentor who has "a great vision" for the university's bands.

Rikkers said he's known Birdsong as a colleague in the field since coming to Virginia in 2001. He said he encouraged her to apply for assistant director of bands at JMU because he was familiar with her experience and her love for teaching. He said her energy inspires him to stay focused and motivated, and he said she deserves the award's recognition because of her ability to connect with students while balancing the responsibilities of a high demand career.

"She is one of the hardest working, most motivated and dedicated people that I've ever met," Rikkers said. "She's a new faculty member who has really hit the ground running. We need more people like her in this world."
Outside of her JMU duties, Birdsong helps run the annual All-VA Jazz Ensemble Event alongside her former high school band director, Steve Turner. She also judges ensembles at the annual District Assessment and guest conducts through the Virginia Band & Orchestra Directors Association.

One of Birdsong’s former students, Fernanda Belby (’19), said Birdsong went “above and beyond” to teach her students. Because Belby’s saxophone professor was unable to teach Belby’s quartet at one point, she reached out to Birdsong for help. She said Birdsong was happy to agree, and now, it’s become an activity she does every semester.

Belby said she met Birdsong for the first time at JMU’s summer band camp when she was in high school, and when Belby was a junior at JMU, Birdsong was appointed as assistant band director. As a student, Belby said she was inspired by Birdsong because she never had a female band director to admire before. Now as a band director at Middlesex High School in Middlesex, Virginia, Belby still reaches out to Birdsong for advice and support.

“In the world of being a high school band director, it’s very male-dominated,” Belby said. “Ever since then, I’ve always been able to look up to her as exactly what I want to be. She truly was the best JMU professor I ever had.”

Birdsong said her favorite part about her job is building relationships with students. Junior music education major Tim DeSimone emphasized her commitment to connecting with each one of her students, even when she’s busy. He said he’s known Birdsong since his freshman year and said it was no surprise to him that she won best professor.

“I think that Professor Birdsong in a lot of ways embodies what we try to do, either as a marching band or as a school of music,” DeSimone said. “She just makes it feel so much more than a class, more than an ensemble.”

Birdsong said her initial reaction to receiving the award was disbelief, and she said she wishes she could pass the award on to other faculty members. She said she’s inspired by her colleagues as well as her past high school and college band directors. She also said she wouldn’t be where she is now without the support of her husband.

Birdsong said she wants to make the world a better place through her students with music education. She said she loves helping students see their growth and figure out who they are and who they want to be.

“I like the idea that I’m helping make the world a better place by helping people find their best parts of themselves,” Birdsong said.

Amy Birdsong
Music professor

Birdsong serves as the assistant director of bands and director of the JMU Pep Band.

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Birdsong as the assistant director of bands and director of the JMU Pep Band.
FOOD FIGHT

On-campus dining facilities ranked

BY LIZ RICCIO
The Breeze

College students may agree; on-campus dining plays a heavy role in one's day-to-day activities. Whether that be stress-eating Steak n’ Shake at 2 a.m. or carb-loading at E-Hall before hitting UREC, quality food is essential for fueling the body in a way that’s beneficial to students and faculty alike.

Luckily for the JMU community, in 2019, the Princeton Review ranked James Madison University as No. 8 in the country for best campus food. But often, students wonder which of the numerous dining halls is actually best. To answer this, each dining hall has been ranked based on taste, variety and environment.

E-Hall is a classic student favorite and the clear winner of this competition. Although it’s most popular for its Sunday morning brunch, E-Hall is also home to a constantly changing menu and restaurant-like ambiance. Upperclassmen may prefer this dining hall, as it’s the most convenient parking-wise. Meanwhile, underclassmen may relish the opportunity to spend time away from the always-bustling main campus. Students can enjoy an array of vegan and gluten-friendly options, as well as a rotation of pasta, various Mexican dishes and even an ice cream station, which are all amenities that other dining halls can’t replicate. Overall, E-Hall easily has the best day-to-day variety of food options and a sprawling variety of food options and a sprawling single-story seating arrangement that’s comparable to a restaurant.

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Main campus’ principal dining establishment, also arguably home to the best assortment of fast food on campus, is located near Madison Union. The lower level of D-Hall, is divided into the buffet-style Market 64 and areas where Qdoba, Chick-Fil-A, Freshens and Steak n’ Shake reside. Most students use downstairs D-Hall as a quick pit-stop on their way to classes, study sessions or the comfort of their own dorms. Although many students enjoy its convenience now, it may see some competition with the currently under-construction dining facility being built just a minute’s walk away.

Although downstairs D-Hall is great for a quick bite, D-Hall’s upper level offers an abundance of choices for a sit-down meal. The allergy-friendly room is available by swipe-in to those with severe or numerous allergies, and the expansive circle of other stations is open to the rest of D-Hall’s guests. Non-students pay $13, which is double what other venues charge for a regular punch, to eat unlimited food. With offerings similar to E-Hall, this dining option is only lower on the list because of its deficiency of variety both upstairs and downstairs as well as a lack of the peaceful vibes that the often-quiet East Campus naturally emanates.

The Student Success Center also has seating inside and outside Bistro — a quality that makes it a prime destination for large groups of students to eat, study and hang out between classes. This dining option is just shy of E-Hall’s parking options, even with its location just outside the Quad, which works well for students, faculty and visitors alike. Bistro is most certainly a hidden treasure among the student body and deserves all the hype it gets.

Perhaps one of the most congested study spaces on campus, the Student Success Center is often packed with students looking for a quick, filling meal. Tastewise, Bistro is superior to most other dining hall offerings due to its food’s almost-homemade charm.

Students who are in the mood for a meal that tastes like they got it off campus but, oftentimes, only costs a punch should look no further than Bistro.

Honorable mentions include D-Hub, which will be torn down in order to accommodate a new parking lot in the coming year, and Madison Grill, which attempts to replicate a basic restaurant menu but is often more expensive than the single swipe that students may walk in expecting to pay. If this list has taught students anything, hopefully, it’s that eating on campus doesn’t have to become redundant after the first semester of school. Bus stops are usually only a short walk away, and there are stops close to each dining hall, so there is always an opportunity to try something new.

CONTACT Liz Riccio at riccioem@dukes.jmu.edu
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The downtown collective features five mouth-watering dishes any community member may love.

**By TAYLOR SARLO**
*The Breeze*

The Little Grill opened its doors to the Harrisonburg community in the 1940s, but 2003 saw the birth of the cozy, worker-owned Little Grill Collective as it stands today. The restaurant focuses on cooking healthy, delicious meals with local ingredients. With inspiration drawn from American, Mexican and Mediterranean cuisine and an emphasis on vegetarian and vegan options, there’s something on the menu for everyone. It’s no wonder why it’s become a favorite brunch spot in Harrisonburg. With its unique and personalizable dishes, the collective has garnered fans from all around Harrisonburg. Those who try these meals will likely become Little Grill fans themselves.

Here’s a list of the five best brunch dishes one can get at the Little Grill Collective.

**CONTACT** Taylor Sarlo at breezeartdirector@gmail.com.

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**Lambert's Platter**

This dish has all the comfort and taste of a traditional breakfast while being completely vegan. The Platter comes with a scramble of perfectly seasoned tofu, peppers and onions accompanied by home fries with vegan “Groovy Gravy” made from local mushrooms and vegan soy-based sausage. The Platter also comes with one side, so vegans can load up on seasonal roasted veggies, while vegetarians can add any style of eggs, if they wish. Meat lovers can add a side of bacon, ham or sausage, making this yet another fully customizable dish served by the Little Grill.

**Huevos Rancheros**

This hearty brunch item is a must-have. It features two eggs covered in a delicious and light vegetable chili and cheese. The cheese is a locally sourced organic colby that tastes like it was made just for this dish. Chipotle black beans, cilantro lime rice and tortillas accompany the plate for a well-rounded and filling meal. It comes in a large portion — enough to split with a friend or to take home leftovers.
The Kicker

Step aside egg sandwiches; there’s a new breakfast sandwich in town. The Kicker features bacon, cream cheese and sun-dried tomato pesto on a bagel as a tasty alternative to traditional bacon, egg and cheese. It’s almost like a breakfast BLT. The customer can choose a plain wheat bagel or an egg everything bagel to spice it up. While the Little Grill still offers a familiar bacon, egg and cheese breakfast sandwich, the Kicker packs a unique punch and is an excellent dish to branch out from ordinary brunch.

Traditional Breakfast

For those who like to stick to the basics at brunch, the Little Grill has that covered, as well. One can order a plate of two local eggs, toast and their choice of bacon, sausage, ham or vegan soy sausage. The eggs can also be served in omelets with a variety of cheese, veggies and real or vegan meat options. Home-fried potatoes, oatmeal and yogurt are all offered as side dishes, perfectly complementing any customized breakfast combination.

Carrot Cake Pancakes

This is the perfect brunch dish for those who like to eat dessert first. The Carrot Cake Pancakes are stuffed with carrots, apples, raisins and walnuts, and they’re served with a delicious cream cheese glaze that has just a hint of lemon. The pancakes are served with local butter, and for a truly decadent dish, one can add authentic maple syrup for a small upcharge. For those who prefer to eat gluten-free, there are gluten-free Buckwheat Pancakes that the Little Grill can top with chocolate chips, blueberries or bananas upon request.
Lola’s Delicatessen — formerly known as Lola Mo’s — is undergoing some transformations in the next month that could make downtown’s best sandwich even better.

“Prior to us, there was no real deli-style restaurant downtown,” Logan Strawderman, one of the owners and founders of Lola’s Delicatessen and namesake for the “Lo” in “Lola’s,” said.

With the help of Midtowne Market owner Lauren Penrod — that’s where the “la” comes in — Strawderman said he’s been dedicating the past two years of his life to the creation of delicious sandwiches and a unique deli experience in downtown Harrisonburg. Similar to its classic menu, Lola’s conception was a typical fairytale story of chance encounters and dreams come true.

Strawderman, who started his restaurant-owning career with the local food truck, Rocktown Slops, said he wanted to create a European-style grocery that made all its meat in-house. Meanwhile, Penrod was in the midst of developing a New York-style delicatessen with “fat sandwiches” and “fast service.” One situation led to another, and the two decided to team up to create a fusion of concepts that resulted in Lola’s deli.

After hearing about a build-to-suit property in the heart of downtown, Strawderman said their team knew they had to jump on it.

“It was 14 days. We put a 46-page business proposal together, pitched it, and we got it,” Strawderman said. “Our three- or four-year plan turned into a one-year plan, and everything worked really well.”

Next came the renovation of a space, which Strawderman said involved everything from an exposed water spring on the ground floor to broken windows upstairs. Strawderman described the process as plenty of decision-making, multi-tasking and unexpected learning.

“I always joked, after we got done, when I open my next restaurant, I’ll know exactly what to do,” Strawderman said.

Keeping with Strawderman’s original desire to make his own meats, the team created a menu of traditional deli sandwiches complete with homemade corned beef, pastrami and sauces.

“That was the fun part,” Strawderman said. “Then there’s 90% of the rest of the stuff you gotta worry about that supports the fun stuff.”

With Penrod taking care of management and retail and Strawderman handling the food prep, Lola’s saw immediate success.

“There was crazy hype, and I think we lived up to the hype,” Strawderman said.

Day-to-day, Lola’s sees a large number of downtown lawyers, brewers coming off their early-morning schedules, townies and the occasional professor, Strawderman said.

“Competition-wise, Harrisonburg is a cool town because no one is in competition with each other,” Strawderman said. “We all have such a different take on everything that we can coexist.”

see LOLA’S, page 12

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FOR THE BRAND

Downtown favorite Lola’s Delicatessen offers a little bit of everything

BY RYANN SHEEHY
The Breeze

Lola’s Delicatessen went from an idea to reality in two weeks.
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LOLA'S  Downtown deli to undergo re-brand

from page 10

Lola’s not only offers a wide selection of sandwiches, but it also sells a variety of wines, imported beers and homemade desserts.

Garrett Herring, one of Lola’s employees and a Harrisonburg resident, said his favorite sandwich on the menu is a Treuben, a twist on the typical Reuben, served hot with turkey, cheddar, Lola’s famous dressing and red slaw on marble rye.

“It’s an instant answer,” said Herring. “I love it.”

Herring isn’t the only one raving about Lola’s selection, though. Kyrin Jones, a senior studio art major at JMU, said one time she frequented Lola’s once a week for three weeks straight.

“I feel like people take advantage of the idea of a sandwich and are like, ‘Oh, I’ll just go to Subway,’” Jones said. “But, Lola Mo’s is a good sandwich. I’m a vegetarian, but they still have options for me.”

Lola’s just introduced a new menu last week, which rotated off some of the cold sandwiches for hot ones and will continue to shift to feature more seasonal recipes. It already uses GiddyUp Courier for local food delivery, but the shop plans on offering online ordering as well.

“It’s unique to watch it grow and expand,” Herring said. “They ask us a lot of questions about how we feel changing, ordering new things, trying new stuff. It’s fun to be a part of.”

Penrod and Strawderman are also officially rebranding the deli from the original Lola Mo’s to simply, Lola’s Delicatessen. The name change is just one more alteration to the business that Strawderman said keeps evolving over time.

“As for the future, we just wanna do what we’re doing now consistently and well and make sure this business is healthy and live the dream for happily ever after,” Strawderman said.

CONTACT Ryann Sheehy at sheehyr@dukes.jmu.edu.
ON THE ROAD

Shenandoah National Park and Switzer Lake voted best day trip destinations

BY CONNOR MURPHY
The Breeze

Harrisonburg residents are fortunate enough to live in an area that’s in close proximity to a range of different places to explore. When one finds themselves with an afternoon to fill, it’s not hard to find an outdoor area to discover with friends, family or on one’s own. Harrisonburg residents have chosen Switzer Lake as their favorite day trip destination, followed closely behind by Shenandoah National Park.

The Switzer Lake area offers a variety of activities for anyone hoping to spend the day enjoying some time outdoors. According to the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, the area is also prone to numerous different animal sightings. Depending on the time of year, one may come across a bald eagle, an osprey or a woodpecker while enjoying the view of the lake. Wild birds such as the ruffed grouse and wild turkeys have also been known to walk the roadsides.

For those wishing to stay the night after their day trip, Switzer Lake offers the opportunity to camp in primitive areas. They also give visitors the chance to hike on surrounding trails. This allows those who enjoy exploring Switzer Lake to experience all the wildlife and scenery it has to offer.

Switzer Lake also allows visitors to go kayaking on its waters, so those who explore the area can experience it from a whole new point of view.

The seclusion and wildlife offered at Switzer Lake have led Harrisonburg residents to determine that it’s one of the best locations to spend the day.

see DAY TRIP, page 14
After making one's way down Skyline Drive and into Shenandoah National Park, it's not difficult to understand why Harrisonburg residents enjoy making the short drive to discover and enjoy what the 311 square mile park has in store. According to the National Park Service, Shenandoah National Park has over 500 miles of hiking trails, 101 of which are along the Appalachian Trail. The park offers a variety of different paths, some of which lead to waterfalls scattered throughout the area.

The park also offers numerous options for those looking to go fishing. According to the NPS, there are over 70 mountain streams for park visitors to explore. In order to maintain the fish population, no brook trout fish under nine inches in length may be kept. Despite some regulations, visitors can keep fish they catch if they meet certain guidelines established by the park. Additionally, those who are over 16 and fishing on the streams must have a valid Virginia state fishing license in possession to enjoy the mountain streams.

Shenandoah National Park also gives park goers the opportunity to observe the night sky in a unique way. According to the NPS, roughly 80% of North Americans can’t see the Milky Way due to the presence of electric lights at night. Shenandoah National Park has areas like the Big Meadows that limit electric light and allow visitors to escape and take in the views of the park. Shenandoah National Park offers the unique opportunity to escape from the surrounding areas and fully experience what the Virginia wilderness has to offer. It’s no wonder Harrisonburg residents voted this national park as one of the Best of the ’Burg.

CONTACT Connor Murphy at breezenews@gmail.com.
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O’Neill’s classic cookie skillet voted ‘Best Dessert in the ‘Burg’

It’s no secret that O’Neill’s Grill has been a staple of the JMU community for years. It’s the home of many university athletic press conferences, and it’s often frequented by students and staff alike. Walking inside, customers will find its walls adorned with JMU memorabilia and TVs turned to the latest sports game. They’ll also find what students voted the best dessert in Harrisonburg: the cookie skillet.

For decades, the O’Neill’s cookie skillet has attracted customers with its gooey chocolate chip cookie base, homemade hot fudge drizzle and two generous scoops of vanilla ice cream topped with whipped cream. Since its creation in 2004, variations to the concept have been made — like its cousin, the S’more Cookie Dough Skillet — but assistant manager Sharmen Back said the original treat is special because of its homemade recipe and long history.

“We have the same prep cook who’s been making it for [around] 20 years,” Back said. “It’s one of the most popular things on the menu.”

The dessert previously won the same title in 2017, and Back said she thinks the cookie skillet has remained so popular in the Harrisonburg community because of its consistency. She said the restaurant’s connection to JMU also has a large influence on its success.

“We try to always make sure it looks good [and] tastes good,” Back said. “And we’ve gotten well-known in here with JMU, so we always try to support them, and I think that they do the same to support us.”

Sharmen Back
O’Neill’s assistant manager

photo by Courtney Ryder / The Breeze

"We've gotten well-known in here with JMU, so we always try to support them, and I think that they do the same to support us."
Chocolate Chip Cookie Skillet Recipe

Not everyone wants to put in the effort to make a dessert completely from scratch. But for the more adventurous cooks, this recipe yields the perfect homemade cookie skillet in about 40 minutes.

**Ingredients:**
- 1 stick softened butter
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 3/4 cup packed light brown sugar
- 1 large egg
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1 3/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 3/4 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 1/4 semi-sweet chocolate chips, divided

**Optional toppings:**
- Vanilla ice cream
- Chocolate syrup
- Whipped cream

**Instructions:**
Preheat the oven to 350 degrees, and grease a 10-inch skillet with cooking spray. Mix the butter and both sugars with a hand mixer in a large bowl until it’s fluffy. Then, beat in the egg and vanilla. Add flour, baking soda and salt until all of the ingredients are combined, then gently fold in one cup of chocolate chips. Spread the dough into the skillet, add the remainder of the chocolate chips on top and bake for 20 to 24 minutes or until the edges are golden brown. Top with ice cream, chocolate syrup or any other additional toppings, such as sprinkles or walnuts.

Cookie Skillet Sundae Recipe

For the less daring cooks who happen to have a roll of cookie dough sitting in the refrigerator, this recipe is a delicious alternative to making tiny individual cookies in a short amount of time.

**Ingredients:**
- 1 roll of refrigerated chocolate chip cookie dough

**Optional toppings:**
- Vanilla ice cream
- Chocolate syrup
- Maraschino cherries

**Instructions:**
Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Press the cookie dough into an ungreased 10-inch skillet. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes, or until the center is firm and the edges are golden brown. Once baked, let it cool for up to 15 minutes, and add any optional toppings.

Here are two make-at-home cookie skillet recipes that are sure to satisfy

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By MATTHEW SASSER
The Breeze

Charleston Townes, located just off Reservoir Street, offers renters amenities like a pool and dog park.

Charleston Townes’ three-level units a hit with renters

With units of 2,200 square feet and four individual bedrooms with their own bathrooms, the three-story townhomes at Charleston Townes recently won the best off-campus housing complex for JMU students.

Rebecca Schanmier, a junior IDLS major, has had a positive experience in her first year of living at Charleston. She moved to Charleston from an apartment that had suffered damage from people living there previously and transitioned to a much newer unit in that still “smelled brand new.”

“It’s a little expensive, but you get what you paid for, so it’s definitely worth it,” Schanmier said.

Schanmier said she enjoys how close the complex is to Target and East Campus. She said she also enjoys how pet-friendly the facility is. On the Charleston Instagram page, it’s always posting images of residents with their dogs, Schanmier said.

“I think that what draws students here the most is that the townhouses are very big.” Alyssa Davis, manager at Charleston, said. “I think that they like that there’s a lot of space, and in comparison to other apartment complexes, they’re still about the same price.”

Davis was also a tenant when she was a student at JMU. Modern appliances, as well as the convenience of the pool and gym, also draw residents in, Davis said.

Charleston Townes has a high partial turnover rate, where residents in a unit stay for another year. Davis said that there may be two individuals in a house who are graduating, but there may be two other roommates who want to sign for another year.

Davis said the complex’s price is $565 for the 2021 term, which is comparable to the nearby Sunchase, but it has more spacious units at 2,200 square feet.

Olivia Klimko, a junior management major, said she lived at the Retreat the year before, but wasn’t that satisfied with her experience. She said she signed a lease for Charleston without doing any research, but she said she’s been satisfied with the house and management and is already signed for next year.

“It’s not the cheapest in JMU off-campus housing, but it’s not the most expensive,” Klimko said. “It’s definitely one of the nicer complexes, so the price combined with what you’re actually paying for is very reasonable.”

For Klimko, she said it’s a luxury experience to live in a three-story townhouse where she can have her own bedroom and bathroom. She also said that having two laundry units is convenient.

Klimko said that she can also see herself using the pool more since she’s staying over the summer. Close proximity to various gas stations and stores is also “super awesome.”

Davis said that it’s common for students to line up for their leasing day each year. While they don’t tell people to come early, it’s first come, first served, and getting there early is now a tradition. Some students even stay overnight to sign a lease.

“It’s crazy to me, but that’s how popular they are,” Davis said. “After living here myself, it’s a great place to live.”

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