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JMU professor prepares to sue Alex Jones and InfoWars for defamation

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Upcoming Events

Friday

❖ Sing Out! An A Cappella Celebration at Forbes Center for the Performing Arts — Concert Hall 8 p.m.
❖ Music in March: Bob Zickefoose at Bluestone Vineyard 6 p.m.

Saturday

❖ Free Planetarium Show at John C. Wells Planetarium, 3:30 p.m.
❖ Rejuvenating Saturday: March Madness, Grillizza and Randy Black at Brothers Craft Brewing 11 a.m.

Sunday

❖ Irish Tea at Heritage Bakery & Cafe, Noon to 3 p.m.
By KATELYN WALTEMeyer
The Breeze

On Aug. 12, JMU political protest adjunct professor Brennan Gilmore captured a video of a 2010 Dodge Challenger barreling down a street into a crowd of people—killing 32-year-old Heather Heyer at the Charlottesville, Virginia, protest. Brennan, a counter-protestor at the Unite the Right rally, has received ongoing backlash for posting the video.

Brennan filed a lawsuit on March 13 against Alex Jones, a podcast host for the conspiracy theorist website InfoWars. He did so in response to the alleged defamation Jones has made toward Brennan’s reputation.

After Jones targeted Brennan on InfoWars, several white supremacists and conspiracy theorists have been harassing Brennan over the Charlottesville rally. Jones didn’t respond to multiple requests from The Breeze for an interview.

“Just a couple weeks ago, I received a message saying that my body would be found at the bottom of the river that’s near my house,” Brennan said. “There’s a lot of people out there that are still threatening and harassing me and everything that was written about me on the internet is still up and will probably be up forever.”

According to Brennan, the conspiracy theorists and right-wing supremacists insist that he’s a CIA agent who’s been creating violence. They believe that Brennan was, according to the filed complaint, “the organizer and orchestrator of Fields’ attack and a traitor to the United States.”

Because of this, he’s received death threats, harassment and defamation over the internet.

Brennan decided to organize the lawsuit later in August. He and attorney Andrew Mendrala, a supervising attorney of Georgetown Law’s Civil Rights Clinic, have demanded a jury trial. According to Brennan, a settlement isn’t an option.

“By not taking a settlement, we’ll hopefully create good law that helps protect people like Brennan,” Mendrala said. “At the end of the day, a jury trial is something Brennan has a right to and I think if this case goes to trial, we hope that a jury of Brennan’s peers would find in his favor.”

According to Brennan, the past seven months have left him constantly looking over his shoulder, worried about the conspiracists’ next move and if it’ll involve his family. At one point, the white supremacists posted his parents’ address online and sent an unknown white powdery substance to their house, according to Anne Gilmore, Brennan’s mother. The substance was tested for illegal substances and came out benign.

Despite the negative attention Brennan has received since Aug. 12, he’s remained grounded in his beliefs. Anne wrote in an email that, “Brennan remains firm in his faith.”

Brennan has been collaborating with his lawyers for about six months at Georgetown Law to finalize the complaint. According to Brennan, throughout the process, he’s had to mentally prepare himself for the attention the case would receive.

“When you go after people who are willing to make up lies to attack people, you can be assured that they’re going to react in a similar way,” Brennan said. “I knew that I was going to be targeted again.”

The complaint is compiled of eight accounts of evidence against Jones. According to Mendrala, they’ve run through the logistics of the complaint several times and made sure it had a firm foundation.

“We think Brennan’s case is strong,” Mendrala said. “It’s a clear case of defamation and we’re excited for this to play out in court and for people like InfoWars to be held accountable for their actions.”

Brennan’s parents have seen firsthand the emotional toll the incident has caused their son.

According to Anne, Brennan has been under an immense amount of stress since posting the video.

“He is a superman to me in his courage and belief that truth and justice are the American way,” Anne said. “As a mother, I just wish it were somebody else. Superman was a comic book character. He didn’t die.”

CONTACT Katelyn Waltemeyer at waltemkb@dukes.jmu.edu.

For more coverage of JMU and Harrisonburg news, follow the news desk on Twitter @BreezeNewsJMU.
Student by day, chess player by knight

By EMMA KORYNTA
The Breeze

As the fourth and final round ends, competitive chess players across the room count their winnings. Of the four rounds, only two people received a score of 3.5 — three wins and a draw. Just one JMU student, representing his college alone, won all four rounds. Checkmate.

Alexander McAllister, a sophomore double major, has played chess since he was a senior in high school. On March 8, McAllister decided to register for the collegiate state championship for chess. He drove to Roanoke, Virginia, for the competition the very next day. He won.

“The money kind of just takes the back seat,” McAllister said. “It’s just nicer to get the state title. Virginia State College Chess Champion. I mean that’s something that’s never going to go away. $400, no, that will go.”

U Va. won the competition two years ago and was expected to do so again this year. McAllister played three of its students and beat all three.

McAllister was the only representative from JMU, as there isn’t a chess club at the university. Instead, McAllister participates in a local club. William Leigh (’89) was one of the founding members of Harrisonburg’s club, which started in the mid-’80s.

“It was an amazing upset for one person to go and play against U Va.,” Leigh said. “He went for like a David and Goliath kind of thing. He pulled out an amazing victory and JMU should be proud.”

According to McAllister, the chess team at U Va. is better funded and well-publicized. McAllister hopes to create something like that at JMU. He plans to bring a team with him when he returns from the competition.

“Already he’s looking forward, and he’ll be better,” Figliola said. “He’s just getting stronger … He’s got a ‘take-no-prisoners’ attitude.”

McAllister describes chess as a “boxing match” that exists all in your head. He feels the challenging nature of it makes it exciting for players, and helps others feel the same would be interested in an organized place on campus to meet and play one another.

“Chess is a really, really intensive game,” McAllister said. “There’s like a reason that there’s this stigma that it’s very mentally intensive. It’s also extremely physical. You have to sit there for two, three hours and pretty much everybody’s concentrating on the board … It’s just you and the other person and a mental battle.”

McAllister and the other members of the Harrisonburg chess club strongly believe a chess club at JMU would be valuable. He feels students would benefit from meeting up to play chess in person instead of solely online.

Leigh has been passionate about the game for decades. While he believes chess is “actually a young person’s game,” he feels that it has great value.

“There’s a famous Russian quote that I’ve always really liked about chess,” Leigh said. “Chess is art described as a game.”

McAllister is currently looking for a professor to serve as a club adviser. He knows people on campus who are currently interested in a chess community, but is hoping to reach others as well.

“It’s a community-driven activity,” McAllister said. “Although you play one person at a time, what’s really fun about it is being right across from someone and having people around you playing. That’s kind of what drew me into the game and made it so entertaining for so long.”

CONTACT Emma Korynta at breezenews@gmail.com. For more coverage of JMU and Harrisonburg news, follow the news desk on Twitter @BreezeNewsJMU,

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McAllister was recently named the Virginia State College Chess Champion. He hopes to start a chess club at JMU.

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GO DUKEs!
Students aid abroad

By MCKENNA WALSH
contributing writer

The JMU nursing students arrived at their guest house in Tanzania in the summer of 2017 late at night. The home had broken toilets, no running water, unreliable electricity and no covering on the windows. Andrea Knopp, the JMU nurse practitioner program coordinator and an associate professor, decided to stay with them through the night.

“Our philosophy is that we want to give back to the community,” Knopp said. “We don’t want to just go there and say, ‘Let our students be here and we’ll see you later.’”

JMU study abroad programs have been going to East Africa since 2013. The program in Tanzania is a three-week summer project available to all JMU nursing students.

This past summer, a total of 19 students from the nursing program helped conduct a project with the two hospitals in Tanzania. The students had the main focus of working on the hemoglobin A1c test using the HbA1c machine that looks at the sugar level around a red blood cell to determine the risk of diabetes in patients.

According to Knopp, there was only one HbA1c machine in Tanzania. Last year, JMU brought two machines by request to the two hospitals the students served.

The students received a grant to buy the two machines from the Siemens company, a producer of energy-efficient technology. Each machine costs $2,968. One of the machines went to a Shirati hospital, a remote center in the Roreya District, while the other went to Machame Lutheran Hospital in Moshi.

While studying abroad, the partisitiedents used what they learned in JMU classes to help patients at hospitals and healthcare centers. According to Knopp, the hours are long and strenuous, but the ability to adapt to cultural barriers continuously evolves.

In order to overcome language barriers, an interpreter from the hospital accompanied students when they went out into the communities to help patients.

“Everybody’s in one big room and there may be two patients sharing a bed and the patient’s family will be there because the families are responsible for feeding them, not the hospital,” Knopp said.

Julie Sanford, director of the School of Nursing, knows Knopp personally. She thinks highly of Knopp, and only had kind words to share.

“The Tanzanian program is transforming for our students to be able to see a country that has tremendous healthcare challenges,” Sanford said.
JMU alumna Emma Richer ('17) attended the trip to Tanzania in the summer of 2017. She felt she was impacted by Knopp and the trip experience.

“I want to be like her. She’s my idol,” Richer said. "She’s open-minded, compassionate, smart, idealistic.”

Richer started her new job as a nurse in Washington, D.C., on Feb. 25 and continues to reflect on her experiences in Tanzania.

“The patients that we had were so thankful in everything we were doing,” Richer said.

While working in the hospitals in Tanzania, Richer said the conditions and the number of patients varied. One day while working in the HIV clinic, she had around 15 patients in four hours. She estimated about half of them were diagnosed with HIV.

“I learned more about myself on this trip than I have probably in my entire life combined,” Richer said. “It changed me for the better and really brought me down to earth. It totally opened up my eyes to the privileges that we have here, and it made me more resourceful and more compassionate toward other people because you never really know what is going on.”

Knopp has been a nurse practitioner for over 25 years and extensively lived and worked overseas, but her outlook changes with each country she encounters.

“Every year I go, it changes me,” Knopp said. "I think I see more clearly through the students’ eyes. It creates a drive in me to try to do the things that are going to be the most helpful to the Tanzanians rather than what I think they need. The most important aspect of the trip is learning to think outside yourself.”

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By THOMAS ROBERTSON
The Breeze

The completion of the renovation to Duke Hall in January 2014 showed JMU’s investment in its arts program. Since then, Laura Katzman, professor in the School of Art, Design and Art History at JMU, has been at the forefront of bringing more attention to the university’s arts program.

Since the renovation, Katzman used the space to host “Drawing on the Left,” an exhibition that showcased the work of American artist Ben Shahn. It included works from the Smithsonian Institution that attracted thousands of visitors. She’s currently working on a book about American photography in Puerto Rico in the late 1940s, and will be going on sabbatical leave during the 2018-19 academic year to teach at the Free University of Berlin.

“I’m really excited to try to understand their understanding of America,” Katzman said. “I think it’ll help me get more insight to my fields of interest.”

Much of Katzman’s work in Berlin will revolve around holding an international research conference at the John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies, one of the largest centers for the study of North America in Europe. She will present work relating to how art has depicted the relationship between North America and its territories, including Puerto Rico. Katzman will also be teaching and advising German graduate students.

Along with bringing exhibitions to JMU and representing the university overseas, Katzman played an integral role in adding the museum studies concentration to the school’s art history curriculum. The program gives students the opportunity to have internships at the Duke Gallery and the Madison Art Collection.

“She was instrumental in bringing the vision for that program to the school,” Katherine Schwartz, director of the School of Art, Design and Art History, said. “We’re so excited about the program. We’re about to move art history and museum studies into a central location in our building so more people will have access to it.”

Katzman grew up in Queens, New York, went to college in Manhattan at New York University and received two master’s degrees and a Ph.D. at Yale University. She said she’s always felt lucky to have had access to extraordinary museums and resources during her education, and hopes to do the same for JMU students by starting the museum studies concentration and bringing exhibits to the school. The program has gained popularity since starting up at JMU in 2011.

“It’s really taking hold now,” Schwartz said. “It takes a while for a new program to take hold, and now that we have found the space for it, we expect this one to be one of the fastest-growing programs in the school.”

JMU alumna (’17) and former museum studies concentrator Meagan Stuck served as the curatorial assistant for last year’s Shahn exhibition. Stuck attended meetings, worked with the head of the Duke Gallery and witnessed the artwork selection process firsthand when she visited an art collector’s house with Katzman.

Stuck also worked in setting up the exhibition in the gallery. She learned how to properly frame drawings and display books and worked hands on with the exhibition’s artwork during her time working with Katzman. According to Stuck, it’s her love for art that she benefitted from most.

“Her enthusiasm shines through in everything that she does,” Stuck said.

Whether Katzman is teaching or putting together an exhibit, she tries to insert opportunities for experiential learning as often as possible. In her classes, she takes her students on field trips to look at other exhibitions or visit museums, and when she’s organized her own exhibits, she’s tried to make sure her students are as involved as possible.

Stuck currently attends the University of Westminster in London, where she’s in the master’s program for museums, galleries and contemporary culture. She believes her experience working with Katzman on the Shahn gallery has given her an advantage over other students.

“I applied to lots of master’s programs and something I heard back from every single program that I was accepted to was that they were really impressed with the hands-on experience and the practical experience that I’ve had,” Stuck said.

Katzman said she’d love to curate another exhibition in Duke Hall on her current research regarding American photography in Puerto Rico.

“I don’t make art,” Katzman said. “I am not an artist per se, I’m a historian. So I think that putting exhibits together, for me, is like a form of art. It’s like creating something … You actually use the object, the art objects, to kind of tell the story, and putting that together is kind of like creating a work of art.”

CONTACT Thomas Robertson at robert3tl@dukes.jmu.edu. For more coverage of JMU and Harrisonburg news, follow the news desk on Twitter @BreezeNewsJMU.

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Marielle Franco: #SayHerName

HANNAH ROBINSON  medicine for the soul

I’m sure you’ve heard the words “well-behaved women seldom make history” — I bet you can’t name who said it though. I’ll give you a hint: it wasn’t Kim Kardashian.

In a 1976 article, Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Laurel Thatcher Ulrich wrote the words that would become a staple saying for women around the world, finding their way onto shirts, coffee mugs and Instagram captions — yet quite ironically, her name has fallen between the cracks of everyone’s memories.

Although Ulrich’s statement has proven to be true, it’s unfinished. Society should want to know what happens after courageous women make history. After they push corrupt legislation and “misbehave,” well it can tell you what happened to Marielle Franco — she was murdered.

Sorry, I know it isn’t the fairytale ending you were hoping for.

On March 14, Marielle Franco — a Brazilian gay politician, feminist and human rights activist — was leaving an event targeting the empowerment of black women when she was shot and killed; it was just 18 months after she was elected a city councilor of the Municipal Chamber of Rio De Janeiro. With only 38 short years on earth, Franco dedicated her life to fighting for a better world for her people — a world now riddled with corruption and inequality. Well-behaved women may seldom make history but angry women are killed for fighting for equality and no one talks about it. We aren’t plastering that painful truth onto bumper stickers, but maybe we should be. The violent hate crimes inflicted onto women who stand up for change are offhandedly, if ever, reported. People rarely know their names. They’re forgotten. Women who’ve paved the way to where we’re today are often overlooked by history — in life and in death.

Amid the grief and anger of Franco supporters, a fire has been lit beneath Brazilian protesters, seeking a reconstruction of their government. Franco’s death has proven to come at a crucial time for Brazil and may work to bring about needed change in the future of democracy in the largest country in South America. Thousands have taken to the streets in response to Franco’s murder, coordinating protests across Brazil and creating a revolution from her legacy. In more than 30 languages, thousands more have refused to forget her and the legacy she’ll leave. However, in the midst of an uproar, her name is still lost to many outside Brazil.

Although popular news outlets have reported on the tragedy, there lies a deeper problem in the American psyche. While reports surrounding Franco’s death may not have lacked, in-depth conversation about violence against women and the lack of media coverage on that violence is.

Ask anyone on campus about this season of The Bachelor and the majority could probably rant for hours about Arie whatever his name is. Ask about Marielle Franco and the transformative work she did in the lives of thousands of black women and members of the Brazilian LGBTQ community? Crickets.

The blame can’t solely be placed on the public though. How are we supposed to know about things the news isn’t reporting? The media has a responsibility to bring these stories to the light, magnify them and shout the names of those wronged to the sky.

Unfortunately, the act of dismissing anything that happens outside the U.S. is habitual for American news organizations. As Americans, we must recognize that the world’s problems are our problems and that by standing in solidarity with those globally oppressed, we may find a little more freedom in our lives as well. Women who label themselves feminists in certain parts of the world, like Brazil, are forced to check their safety at the door — reluctantly relinquishing their right to be respected and heard in communities that wish to silence them. Angry women are deemed unlovable by society — the same society that chooses not to ask them just what it is they’re angry about before painting a bright red target on their heads.

In her book “The Dance of Anger,” Harriet Lerner writes, “Women who openly express anger are especially suspect. Even when society is sympathetic to our goals of equality, we all know that ‘those angry women’ turn everybody off. Unlike our male heroes, who fight and even die for what they believe in, women may be condemned for waging a bloodless and humane revolution for their own rights.” Marielle Franco was an angry woman — and rightly so. She watched as the system meant to protect her and her family rotted under greed and malevolence. However, she took that anger and turned it into inspiration, speaking out, and malevolence. However, she took that anger and turned it into inspiration, speaking out, and it wasn’t Kim Kardashian.

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Letters and guest columns should be submitted in print or via e-mail and must include name, phone number (may be published if author is a current student or year of graduation), professional title (if applicable) and place of residence (if author is not a JMU student).

Internships are an instrument of inequality

LUKE BORMAN  contributing columnist

Internships have become the most valuable commodity a career-seeking college student can possess. When graduating, we all know employers are going to give a lot more weight to our experience than our GPAs. The necessity of an internship has become unquestionable, despite the fact that free labor is manifestly unjust. For some of us, working what’s usually an unpaid job to get a paid one later is just a fact of life to complain about but comply with. For others, working without pay is simply not possible. They’re called “volunteer” internships, a word that used to mean something along the lines of “to offer to do willingly,” but has now come to mean “to do unwillingly and without pay.” Nobody wants to offer their labor without repayment, but many who do don’t realize that others can’t afford to.

The uncomfortable truth is that the internship system leaves behind people who don’t have the privilege of being able to work without pay. Those putting themselves through college, paying their own rent at home or living paycheck to paycheck aren’t able to sacrifice three to four months of income. Even those who don’t have to worry about expenses like housing or even school, still may not be able to afford an unpaid internship. Many people in this category rely on working full time or overtime all summer to survive a school year of studying in a major too intensive to balance a job. Others may have to work nights and weekends in a part-time paid job just to afford simple expenses such as eating or getting to and from the internship.

Plenty of people are well-off enough to be able to shrug off the significant opportunity cost of a summer without income, and it’s these people who benefit from internships. Those who suffer are those who aren’t well-off enough to begin with. Thus, internships help those who already have money and hurt those who don’t.

The Breeze welcomes and encourages readers to voice their opinions through letters and guest columns. Letters must be no longer than 250 words. Guest columns must be no more than 650 words.

Letters and guest columns should be submitted in print or via e-mail and must include name, phone number (may be published if author is a current student or year of graduation), professional title (if applicable) and place of residence (if author is not a JMU student).
Complaints halt positive productivity

Columnist claims negativity has a bad effect on work

JAZMINE OTEY | call for change

Too many times I’ve found myself putting more energy into complaining about my homework rather than getting it done. Time and time again, I’ve unenthusiastically made my way to a library table with nothing but bad energy reflecting off me. With each complaint, my negative vibes spread from person to person, and time we could’ve spent studying has slipped through our fingers.

While it’s much easier to sit and complain about that six-page essay that’s due in a few weeks or that unnecessary lab report your teacher randomly assigned, it doesn’t help. In fact, the more time a person wastes dreading something rather than actively working to get it done, the further they push themselves from completing the seemingly arduous task.

According to a Stanford study, complaining can damage the brain by shrinking the hippocampus, an area of the brain critical for problem-solving and intellect. Furthermore, once a person gets into the habit of complaining, it’s easy to fall into the trap of complaining more and more.

“Every time you complain, your irritability — like a virus — is neurologically picked up by every person who hears your voice or sees your face,” Mark Waldman, a leading expert on communication, said. “So by all means, train your brain to be optimistic and positive.”

A few JMU students gave their outlook on how complaining can easily become a habit that causes students to waste time. They claimed that a lot of the time, they don’t even realize they’re doing it and that when they force themselves to do their work rather than complaining about it, a lot more can be accomplished.

“Even, like, right now I have a huge project coming up at the end of the semester,” Haley Conner, a junior interdisciplinary liberal studies major, said. “Instead of just doing work on it, I usually go around and complain about it with other people that are in my major and stuff, but I’m not actually getting anything done.”

I’m sure many college students can relate to feeling reluctant when it comes to getting their assignments done. It’s easier said than done to push your worries to the side and focus on the goal at hand.

Furthermore, complaining can negatively alter a person’s mood and turn them into a pessimistic person. Based on a concept referred to as the self-fulfilling prophecy, a person can cause something to be true by simply believing it to be so. So, if a person is constantly complaining about a test while telling everyone they’re going to fail, there’s a possibility that those words will be brought to life.

It’s easy to fall into the trap of complaining and oftentimes, it’s much easier to be negative about something than being positive. However, when a person constantly has a bad outlook on things, life can become draining and toxic to not only the individual, but also to those around them. No one likes a Debbie downer and it feels a lot more uplifting to be around someone who has a happy aura and finds the positive in any situation despite it being hard to do so at times. In the end, life is what one makes of it and a person can choose whether they want to be happy or not with the sorts of thoughts and attitudes they choose.

Jazmine Otey is a sophomore writing, rhetoric and technical communication major. Contact Jazmine at oteyjl@dukes.jmu.edu.

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Financial obstacles require some students to turn down opportunities

Not satisfied enough with the implications that come with making college students work without pay, the internship system enforces inequality in other ways — for example, the inflated importance of networking. There’s long been a debate over whether “who you know” or “what you know” is more important, and “who you know” is winning. According to a study featured in Forbes, 93 percent of students believe connections are more important than grades in landing an internship. Clearly, who you know is far more important than it should be.

A useful concept for understanding the importance of networking is social capital. According to JMU anthropology professor Clare Terni, social capital is “relationships between people that can improve the material quality of your life.”

A type of social capital is nepotism, which is treating people, usually relatives, preferentially. According to a Pew Research survey, more Americans believe that the rich are rich because “they know the right people or were born into wealthy families” than any other reason. We’re told that in America you can get anything if you work hard enough, yet employers frequently ignore the hardest or most qualified workers in favor of those who were born well-connected. A student with two majors and a 3.9 GPA could lose the job to someone whose mom is best friends with the hiring manager.

Possibly the hardest-to-stomach part of internships’ unfairness is that JMU enforces it even more. According to personal experience and the Career and Academic Planning website, to get academic credit for an internship, which is required for some majors, you still have to pay for the credit hours. So instead of getting paid to do work, you actually have to pay to work. CAP does offer scholarships and financial aid to some people to pay for their credit hours, but not to everyone. JMU should help support less well-off students by abolishing the fees required for academic credit for internships.

The world of internships is bizarre and will be looked back on one day as unjust and confusing. Inequality is a conspicuous issue in America and the modern unpaid internship system is one of many inconspicuous causes of it. Luckily, there’s something we can do about it here at JMU. We can’t fix all of American professional culture right now, but we can make a more level playing field for our fellow Dukes.

Luke Borman is a junior international affairs major. Contact Luke at bormanln@dukes.jmu.edu.
Live from Taylor Down Under

JMU organization creates comical atmosphere through skits

By ANDREA BRUSIG
The Breeze

Those who’ve seen “Saturday Night Live” will appreciate the parallels with Maddy Night Live, one of JMU’s comedy sketch groups. The group performs multiple shows throughout the year, all structured loosely around the popular TV show.

MNL is made up of 13 tight-knit students who meet multiple times a week to rehearse and write sketches. All of the shows they perform are free and held in Grafton-Stovall Theater or Taylor Down Under.

On Sunday, the group held their annual Best Of/Senior Show. This was a time for each senior in the group to pick a favorite sketch they’ve performed throughout their time with MNL and highlight some of the best sketches from the 2017-18 year.

Alex Jacobs, a senior communication studies major and president of MNL, says the group’s primary goal is to make other people laugh while having fun in the process.

“You learn that the best comedy is just what makes you laugh,” Jacobs said. “There are so many things that feel like the end of the world in the moment, but MNL has really taught me to be able to take a step back and enjoy myself.”

Upon joining the group, some members said they were overwhelmed with feelings of nervousness and inadequacy. When Jacobs joined as a freshman, he felt pressure to be funny all the time and says this made him feel like he wasn’t fitting in with the group. However, he looks back now and recognizes he had nothing to worry about.

“You don’t realize that you got on the team because they already thought you were funny,” Jacobs said. “You don’t have anything left to prove — you just have to be yourself.”

“Maddy Night Dead” was one of the group’s favorite shows from this year. The show revolved around a murder mystery. The storyline includes the cast trying to figure out who was killing everyone in the group.

One of the writers of “Maddy Night Dead,” Ethan Schulze, a sophomore media arts and design major and videographer for the group, wrote the show with his roommate Quinton. “It was the most work we’ve ever done for any show,” Schulze said. “But we’re very proud of that.”

In the end, it was revealed that Gabby Katz, the stage manager of the group, was the murderer. Katz says this show was one of her favorites because the storyline challenged her ability to think outside the box.

“Everyone is so talented and good at what they do,” Katz, a sophomore media arts and design and international affairs double major, said. “It’s motivational to see people doing so well because it makes you want to do better.”

MNL isn’t just a club designed for everyone so much. Why he’s enjoyed performing with the group throughout their time with MNL and highlight some of the best sketches from the 2017-18 year.

The group has also inspired Jacobs to run for president this past year. In the end, it was revealed that Gabby Katz, the stage manager of the group, was the murderer. Katz says this show was one of her favorites because the storyline challenged her ability to think outside the box.

“Everyone is so talented and good at what they do,” Katz, a sophomore media arts and design and international affairs double major, said. “It’s motivational to see people doing so well because it makes you want to do better.”

CONTACT Andrea Brusig at brusigap@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.

Superpowers behind words

Cancer survivor aims to connect with others with her mission of fighting back

By TRACI RASDORF
The Breeze

Cancer: A word that everybody knows but nobody wants to hear. It was Non-Hodgkin lymphoma, something that JMU alumna Valerie David ‘90 hadn’t expected.

When she was diagnosed on New Year’s Eve in 1998, David began receiving treatments in the coming months. She not only survived once, but twice after a diagnosis of breast cancer in 2014.

Feeling a desire to share her experience as an inspiration to others, David — now a successful Manhattan-based actor and playwright — wrote an award-winning, one-woman show titled “The Pink Hulk: One Woman’s Journey to Find the Superhero Within.”

“The writer was always in me and it was born at JMU, and the second time with cancer, it was almost like I just had to write this,” David said. “It’s this drive and passion to do this because having cancer a second time gave me such a different perspective on life and I felt like I really had a story to tell.”

After her second diagnosis, she was sparked by a flood of emotions, as she knew what was to come. She discussed the idea of a play with those who’d been on the journey with her and was encouraged to begin the writing process.

“I was angry to have cancer a second time, and anger is way more powerful than fear,” David said. “I thought, ‘Oh, check, we’re done. That’s off my list of things that happened.’ So I felt that I wanted to empower people and myself by writing the story influencing others. We all face malignancies in life, not just cancer. It’s loss of a loved one, divorce, loss of a job and how all different things happen. The show is not about cancer, it’s about fighting back.”

Though David was passionate about telling her story, it proved to be difficult at first because she had to relive her hardships. She knew she wanted to tell the truth about cancer without sugarcoating the details.

However, David’s use of humor turns audiences’ tears into laughter. In the show, she describes the rollercoaster of experiences she has with different guys before coming to terms with the reality of a possible mastectomy. She openly expresses her emotional perspective on sexuality and womanhood.

“I just felt this compelling drive to write this show because of the two different perspectives,” David said. “The thing with lymphoma is it’s less discretionary, so I felt with both cancers, I cover men and women. I think it’s got a universal message of hope and empowerment.”

see PLAY, page 16
Cold blood, warm hearts

JMU student rescues, breeds and collects wide array of reptiles

By NATALIE LAVERY
The Breeze

The sign on the door reads “Reptile Room. Do not touch animals, open cages, or in any way interact with my pets.” A small apartment building 10 minutes from campus is home to a wide array of reptiles, including snapping turtles, anacondas and countless other creatures. However, for one JMU student, these animals are his friends.

Christopher Watson, a senior biology major, has always had a growing interest in cold-blooded critters, but his passion was further ignited his sophomore year at JMU. His newly found freedom combined with his own living space led to a daring online purchase that he says “greatly changed my life.”

One afternoon, Watson was searching the web and came across an exotic reptile called a roughneck monitor lizard. Not knowing what he was getting himself into, he purchased it with the click of a mouse.

When it arrived, he opened the bag and was taken aback by how high and fast such a small creature could jump. The roughneck monitor immediately sprang out like a jumping bean and Watson had to juggle him for minutes to urge him into the cage.

“Oh my God, I have just ordered a small lizard — it crawls hesitantly up his arm. “I should’ve taken this jacket off, I don’t want him to rip it,” Watson said under his breath.

He delicately places the vibrant creature back in its cage and removes the multi-colored sweatshirt, revealing an even more colorful T-shirt. The countless number of scratches up his arms match the vibrancy of his wardrobe.

Christopher Watson rescued these two iguanas as well as the turtle. He also owns roughneck monitor lizards, anacondas and bearded dragons.

Watson and his friend Mark Etre, also a JMU senior biology major and owner of another senior biology major and owner of another...

PHOTOS BY BROOKE IMPERIAL / THE BREEZE

Contact Natalie Lavery at thebreezeculture@gmail.com. For more on the culture, arts and lifestyle of the JMU and Harrisonburg communities, follow the culture desk on Twitter @Breeze_Culture.

The Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders Announcement

SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY AND AUDIOLOGY:

Accreditation Site Visit. The programs in speech-language pathology and audiology at James Madison University will be hosting an accreditation site visit on Thursday and Friday, April 5-6, 2018. Individuals who wish to provide input about these programs seeking reaccreditation may do so in two ways:

a) by providing comments to the site visit team during the program’s scheduled site visit. The public meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 5, 2018 at 4:30 PM in room 1042 of the Health and Behavioral Studies (HBS) building located on the JMU campus. Both written and oral comments will be considered at this meeting.

b) by submitting written comments at least 15 days prior to the first day of the accreditation site visit in accordance with the established procedures found at https://caa.asha.org/programs/call-for-public-comments/

A copy of the Standards for Accreditation and/or the CAA’s policy on public comments may be obtained by contacting the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (CAA) Office at the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2200 Research Boulevard, #310, Rockville, MD 20850; calling ASHA’s Action Center at 800-498-2071; emailing accreditation@asha.org; or accessing the documents online.
David has a lifelong background in theater and writing and gained experience during her time at JMU. She took acting classes and performed in one-act plays through the theater program, wrote for The Breeze, began a newsletter and was the secretary of Student Ambassadors. David also participated in the London study abroad program as an English major and the international internships program with TIME magazine, which greatly influenced her passion for writing.

“We know generally that any study abroad experience is automatically a life-changing one,” Judy Cohen, the director of communications and external relations for the Center for Global Engagement, said. “Being able to live in a different place for a whole semester gives you all the greater opportunity to have that experience and ongoing lasting impact on your life.

Although everyone has different experiences with cancer, its stigma involves negativity and tragedy. While this is a reality for those who’ve gone through or had loved ones with cancer, David has turned her story into one with a positive and hopeful message.

Through her shows, she raises money to donate to domestic and international cancer organizations. She typically tries to donate to smaller organizations that receive less funding, then will partner with local organizations to arrange talkbacks and Q&As with audiences after each show.

“What sticks out about the show is her energy,” Padraic Lillis, director of “The Pink Hulk,” said. “She is literally probably the most positive force that I’ve worked with and I’ve done over 20 solo shows. The thing that really struck me is there is something about the joy that Valerie brings to the work that’s amazing because she’s also very close to it emotionally.”

David explains that the idea for the title “The Pink Hulk” came from the ribbon colors — green for Non-Hodgkin lymphoma and pink for breast cancer. She also named it after her high school friend, Mark Ruffalo, who first played the Hulk in the 2012 Marvel superhero movie, “The Avengers,” and was a major support system throughout her second bout of cancer.

Feeling personally connected to the idea of “Hulking out,” David hopes to be the pink superhero who uses her anger in a positive way to inspire, empower and make those who’ve experienced cancer and other life challenges laugh.

David will be performing “The Pink Hulk” at The Kettle in Staunton, Virginia, on April 8 at 7:15 p.m. and April 9 at 3 p.m. Tickets are $10 and can be purchased at the Shenandoah Fringe Festival.

“I know that not everybody survives cancer, so I feel very grateful,” David said. “This play has become a movement. It’s bigger than the play. It’s about talking to people and seeing that we all have a superhero inside of us and we all can fight back knowing that we can find the strength from within.”

CONTACT Traci Rasdorfsrasdorff@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.

David uses the wig she wore during part of her battle with cancer in her show to symbolize empowerment. During her treatment, she realized the wig wasn’t what defined her beauty.
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**LUNCH SPECIALS**  MONDAY-FRIDAY  11AM-2PM
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- Spaghetti Caprichiosa
- Spaghetti Carbonara
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**ALL PRICES EXCLUDE TAX**
JMU football’s spring practice can be described in one word: intense.

“I’m a firm believer in competition and if you’re a competitor and you got intensity and emotion and you got fundamentals and ability, you’re going to be pretty successful,” head coach Mike Houston said.

The competition was on full display, and at the end of practice, Houston lined the team up with offense on one side and defense on the other to run a three-on-three Oklahoma-style drill.

Three defenders lined up across from three offensive players. The quarterback snapped the ball, handed it to the running back and tried to get yards in three plays in a confined area.

Players who weren’t in the drill were still watching carefully. When a certain side would score or make a stop, they’d erupt in celebration.

“It is really three one-on-one matchups,” Houston said of the drill. “It’s about as ‘mano a mano’ as it gets. People wonder how they play like that on game days — it’s because you practiced just like that.”

After the Dukes’ tough national championship loss at the hands of North Dakota State in Frisco, Texas, they graduated a solid number of great players like quarterback Bryan Schor, CAA Defensive Player of the Year defensive lineman Andrew Ankrah, offensive lineman Aaron Stinnie and a plethora of others.

Now that JMU’s winningest senior class has left, the younger players are now trying to get their bodies ready for the season, but also their mental aspect in finding their spot leadership-wise.

“Me being one of those guys that kind of has to teach now, it is a little weird,” redshirt junior offensive lineman Jahree Jackson said. “I definitely have some big shoes to step into to try and, you know, big up that position from Stinnie last year.”

Even though there are major personalities coming off the roster going into 2018, along with great skill, the Dukes are poised to fill those roles. The current roster has learned the basics after being around the seniors who’ve graduated. Now they have to take what they know, expand on it and put it into effect.

“The personalities is different ‘cause it’s different people,” redshirt junior defensive lineman Ron dell Carter said. “However, when you have your Stinnie’s and your Andrew Ankrah’s and your Simeyon’s [Robinson] and your Cornell’s [Urquhart] and you know everybody that left behind, you have the guys, the young guys, that followed those people, so I mean we obviously have to find our identity, but we didn’t really lose much because the guys prepared every day.”

Houston has also brought in two solid recruiting classes that are filled with talent. That increase in young talent puts added pressure and competition on the starting roles on the team. This early part of the offseason gives fans a glimpse of what the roster will look like come fall.

“Through our spring, we want to establish our depth chart,” Houston said. “We want to continue to evolve our schemes and we want to find out what different guys can do in different roles.”
spring practice sessions wearing full pads for the first time. Being in full pads brought an extra level of excitement to both the players and coaches, as they were able to start to see what the team will be like.

"It is a little bit faster," Carter said. "When you have shorts and stuff, you can’t really engage like you really would. It is hands and feet pretty much, keep your feet driving and make sure your hands inside and make sure you get on the point of contact. When you get pads on, now everything is a little faster, now you gotta think a little more … Some guys [have] a little more mental errors on the first day of full pads."

Spring practice is a time for the coaching staff and players to find just what they’ll be. In college football, where there’s so much turnover from year to year, a team has to be prepared to change its identity to have a better chance of winning with the players it has.

"We obviously [got to] establish the identity of the team," Carter said. "That’s the biggest thing right now, establishing our identity. Who are we going to be? That’s what Coach Houston preaches. Right here in spring practice is the time you identify your team so we know what we have going into fall camp."

As spring practice becomes summer workouts and the season opener draws closer, players are looking to work out some kinks so they’ll be fully prepared come Sept. 1, when the Dukes travel to Raleigh, North Carolina, to take on NC State.

CONTACT Jack Fitzpatrick at fitzpajg@dukes.jmu.edu. For more football coverage, follow the sports desk on Twitter @TheBreezeSports.

Senior Marcus Marshall is one of three notable returning running backs. Along with Marshall, redshirt senior Cardon Johnson and senior Trai Sharp combined for 1,956 yards and 18 touchdowns on the ground in 2017.

THE MADISON PROJECT: JMU’S PREMIER ALL MALE A CAPPELLA GROUP PRESENTS

THE DORM TOUR

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**Senior Kimmy Herrock and the women’s tennis team have excelled on the court this year, posting a 14-1 record.**

**By MICHAEL TURNER
The Breeze**

JMU women’s tennis is having a historic start to its spring season. Overall, the team’s record rests at 14-1, with its sole loss coming in its 12th match against North Florida. This year, the Dukes have simply been steamrolling the competition.

The Dukes are undefeated against fellow CAA opponents — having beaten both Towson and Delaware — and are emerging as a serious contender in the CAA championship tournament this year. The win over Delaware is especially important as a seasonal milestone, as it’s the team’s second conference win.

Additionally, Towson is a formidable opponent; it has a large advantage in experience — having five seniors on their team in comparison to JMU’s two — and is growing quickly as a program.

“Towson is having a very good year,” head coach James Bryce said. “They beat Charleston last year for the first time ever, they beat Georgetown this year for the first time ever, so they’re a program that’s on the rise. Overall, I’m very happy with a solid team performance.”

Freshman Liz Norman, a two-time CAA Player of the Week this spring season who’s undefeated in her singles matches, said the victory over Towson is "definitely a confidence booster for the CAA (tournament). I just feel really proud to be with this team and compete with everybody.”

Senior Kimmy Herrock echoed Norman’s statements.

“I thought it was a really good start to our conference matches,” Herrock said. “We have William & Mary coming up, which will be a really tough one, but I’m sure we’ll handle it well.”

William & Mary has dominated CAA tennis for the last 30 years. The Tribe boasts 22 CAA championships, three consecutively since 2015, and 11 of the last 17.

“William & Mary clearly [has] been the team to beat for the last 30 years in this conference,” Bryce said.

The desire to beat William & Mary is certainly present within the team. Unseating the reigning champs would be a massive accomplishment.

William & Mary is the one team we haven’t beaten in the past,” senior Dylan Owens said. “They’re our biggest rivalry. They win the conference every year.”

Despite this, the conference is getting better and increasingly competitive, as demonstrated by JMU’s own rise and the historic accomplishments of other CAA teams.

Even though some of those teams we haven’t lost to in a while, those are teams that now have more scholarships, they’re getting better players, their coaches are recruiting more and more, some of these coaches now have full-time assistants,” Bryce said. “The conference is really improving.”

Conference-wide improvement has led to a more chaotic dynamic than in past years. Seemingly everyone in the CAA now has a chance at the conference title.

“I would say this year is going to be the closest battle for who’s going to take [the title],” Bryce said. “I don’t think there’s any clear-cut favorite.”

Fortunately for the Dukes, that means they’re definitely in the mix when it comes to who’ll reign over the CAA at the end of the season.

“I think we’re a team that if we play our best tennis, we could be playing on Sunday [April 22] for that championship,” Bryce said. “But also, if we decide not to show up, there’s a chance we could be home on Friday. It is cutthroat. It’s a very competitive conference. We’re going to have to fight and be ready to grind out every match.”

The team’s next conference opponents are the College of Charleston and UNCW on March 30-31. These matches should be even more revealing about where the Dukes stand in the CAA.

**CONTACT** Michael Turner at turnemb@dukes.jmu.edu. For more tennis coverage, follow the sports desk on Twitter @TheBreezeSports. @TheBreezeSports.
Team depth propels Dukes into CAA play

How JMU baseball is taking shape before entering conference matchups

By JAMES FARIS
The Breeze

On Friday, JMU baseball will begin its quest for its first CAA title since 2011. Over the last nine seasons, eight different teams have won the conference championship, and no clear frontrunner has emerged so far this year.

“Our expectations are high every year,” senior outfielder Adam Sisk said. “We’ve got a championship-caliber team, and everyone believes in us. The fact that everyone comes to practice with their heads on straight, working hard every day will propel us throughout the rest of the year.”

As of now, Charleston leads the CAA with a 16-6 record, closely followed by UNCW and Hofstra at 14-6 and 9-4, respectively. JMU is currently in fifth place in the standings at a respectable .532-.550, which isn’t far behind the top teams in the conference.

Based on Pythagorean Expectation, a metric that estimates how many wins a team should have based on run differential, JMU is poised to surge up the CAA standings. The Dukes have scored 118 runs and allowed just 93, a run differential that would be a significant improvement from last season if JMU can keep its pace. Still, this team knows it’s a long season and has a mindset of focusing on one series at a time.

“We’re going to be in a dogfight every week so we’ve just got to stay locked in,” redshirt freshman pitcher Nick Robertson said. Last season, the Dukes outscored opponents by a slim margin: .339 to .326. This translates to an expected winning percentage of only .52 percent; JMU appears early on to be stronger than a year ago.

The Dukes have the fifth-best scoring offense in the CAA and are scoring 5.9 runs per game. However, the difference between JMU and the three teams directly ahead of it in runs per game isn’t statistically significant, as those other three teams are averaging between 6.0 and 6.1 runs per outing.

The pitching staff ranks in the middle of the conference, as the 4.7 runs surrendered per game and ERA of 3.61 puts JMU sixth of nine teams in the CAA. Still, the coaches are pleased with the progress the pitchers have made after last year’s staff placed seventh in the conference in ERA.

“Our depth in our pitching staff has been amazing,” Ikenberry said. “Our pitching staff doesn’t give up a lot of runs, and if we tighten up our defense, I think we’re going to be a tough team to score runs on.”

JMU is getting sufficient run support but needs to improve its fielding to truly contend in the conference. The Dukes have the second-most errors in the conference with 34 and the second-lowest fielding percentage at .956 percent.

“We’re playing some guys in different positions,” Ikenberry said. “We moved around our defense a little bit in the past two weeks. We have some young guys playing in key positions. The biggest thing is protecting the baseball and not giving up free bases.”

The Dukes are a young and growing team comprised of promising underclassmen in starting roles. Four of the team’s five best batting averages belong to freshmen or sophomores, meaning this team could find sustained success starting this season.

“We haven’t played a lot of baseball,” Ikenberry said. “We’ve only played 22 games and we’ve still got hopefully 60 or 70 games in the season, so we’ll just get better as time goes on.”

On Friday night, JMU will face 11-10 Elon in a three-game weekend series.

“We’re very excited. We like opening up CAA play at home,” Sisk said. “We’re ready to get going on Friday night.”

CONTACT James Faris at farisja@dukes.jmu.edu. For more baseball coverage, follow the sports desk on Twitter @TheBreezeSports.
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