

# ODYSSEY

Volume 20  
Issue 3  
March/April 2023  
\$5.00

## *LIVING THE AMERICAN DREAM*

22

*Italian foreign exchange student Clarissa De Santis has been taking CCHS by storm during her senior year, despite it being her first living in the United States.*

## *BRINGING THE BHM PROGRAM BACK*

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*CCHS students and staff joined together in Mell Auditorium on Feb. 28 to celebrate Black History at CCHS through a program compiled with performances from multiple of the CCHS fine arts department programs.*



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Johnnie Lay Burks, the first Black teacher at Chase Street Elementary School, has broken barriers and made change through her career as an educator.

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After coaching in Mississippi for over 40 years, CCHS head varsity baseball coach Jerry Boatner has brought his hard-working personality to Athens.

BY WYATT MEYER

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**Featured:** SISTER SISTER: Senior and Italian foreign exchange student Clarissa De Santis (left) and junior Tyus Dekle (right) share a hug on Dekle's couch on Dec. 7, 2022. Dekle and De Santis grew close over a short period of time after De Santis moved in. "I don't think she knows, but it is just it has been such a great experience that I did not know was going to be a thing," Dekle said. It's been so nice that we just bonded so fast. It was really, really great." Photo by Aza Khan



# 30

**Featured:** PASSION FOR FASHION: CCHS senior Jay Jay Tanksley stands outside the new gym on Jan. 19. CCHS Oliver Domingo felt that CCHS had a wide variety of fashion styles, which are important to students' self expression. "I think it's best to just be original and be yourself and do what you want to do. I think not everybody will understand it, but as long as you are proud of what you have created, that is what matters the most," Domingo said. Photo by Lucas Donnelly



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**Featured:** GOING FOR GOLD: Clarke Central High School boys varsity track and field athlete Jamir Hall, a freshman, lands in the sand during practice on March 28. Hall believed that getting to learn from others in the program was a beneficial aspect. "It's just the best feeling in the world. You always want to be better than somebody else and just watching people that are probably better than you is hard," Hall said. "But then again, you take it and you work to get better than that person." Photo by Lucas Donnelly

## BLACK HISTORY MONTH AT CCHS: 2023



Journalism I students showcase examples of Black History, joy and excellence in members of the Athens community.

BY JOURNALISM I STUDENTS

## THIS I BELIEVE: MAYA SHRIVASTAV



Webmaster Maya Shrivastav discusses their longtime belief that it's important to have a voice to influence societal change.

BY MAYA SHRIVASTAV

## THE ODYSSEY MEDIA GROUP CELEBRATES 20 YEARS



The ODYSSEY Media Group celebrated its 20th anniversary with alumni, friends and family on March 18.

BY MYKOLAS KUMPIS

## FUNDING FOR PHYSICAL EDUCATION



CCHS has received just less than \$2,000 from the Georgia Department of Education to help fund equipment purchases in physical education classes.

BY WYATT MEYER

# ODYSSEY

The ODYSSEY is a student-produced news publication, published with the intent to inform, entertain and give voice to the Clarke Central High School community, as well as to educate student journalists.

Established in 2003, the ODYSSEY is published four times a year, and each issue is an open public forum for student expression under the guidance of a faculty adviser.

Student journalists are provided with opportunities to investigate, inform, interpret and to evaluate: all traditionally accepted functions of the press in America. Published opinions do not necessarily reflect the views of anyone other than the staff.

The ODYSSEY staff is committed to reflect the mission statement set forth by Clarke Central High School. The goals of the staff are to provide fair, accurate news and commentaries, as well as to serve the interests of the school and Athens' community.

Advertising must conform to the guidelines set forth for editorials. Publication of advertisements does not indicate an endorsement by CCHS or the ODYSSEY staff.

Students pictured in advertisements are not given monetary compensation. All advertising rates are available upon request from any ODYSSEY staff member.

The ODYSSEY is a member of the Quill and Scroll Honor Society, Georgia Scholastic Press Association, Columbia Scholastic Press Association, National Scholastic Press Association and Southern Interscholastic Press Association.

Corrections of errors and omissions will appear in the next issue.

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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## WHO IS DR. ROBBIE P. HOOKER?

Our Dec. 2022/Jan. 2023 issue featured a Q&A with CCSD Superintendent Dr. Robbie P. Hooker and members of CCHS staff about how Hooker has returned to the CCSD with an eye for supporting students and staff.

## >> VIEWPOINTS

HOLIDAY HARDSHIP // Maya Clement

The article "Holiday Hardship" introduced me to a new perspective on winter break. I learned that even though days in school seem to pass slowly and many students can't wait to get home, there are still kids who would rather be in school and stick to their routines. This could be for many reasons, but the one that stuck out to me the most was that many students do not have a reliable and steady food source at home. Although this information was not shocking to hear, the aspects in which it negatively impacts students' home lives were. This article has taught me to always look at the other side of things and be grateful for what I do have.

-- Mary Robinson,  
CCHS sophomore

## Corrections/Omissions Dec. 2022/Jan. 2023

Page 3, in the Table of Contents, in the first caption, the second reference of "Don't Say Gay" should be in single quotations  
Page 3, in the Table of Contents, in the second caption, the exact location of Sips should be listed  
Page 3, in the Table of Contents, in the second caption, the first sentence should include the date the photo was taken  
Page 3, in the Table of Contents, in the second caption, "staffer" should be "Staffler"  
Page 11, in Student in sales, in the caption, "had" should be "has"  
Page 12, in A brighter tomorrow, in the caption, "which" should be omitted  
Page 12, in A brighter tomorrow, in the caption, "How could we fix it?" should be "How could we fix it?"  
Page 14, in Who is Dr. Robbie P. Hooker, in Hooker's title, "Dr. Robbie Hooker" should be "Dr. Robbie P. Hooker"  
Page 15, in Who is Dr. Robbie P. Hooker, in Scott's title, "girls varsity volleyball head coach" should be "head girls varsity volleyball coach"  
Page 16, in Who is Dr. Robbie P. Hooker, in Aiken's title, "head" should be inserted before "boys"  
Page 17, in Who is Dr. Robbie P. Hooker, in the pull quote, "girls varsity volleyball head coach" should be "head girls varsity volleyball coach"  
Page 21, in Nowhere to go, in the second caption, both references of "believed" should be "believe"  
Page 24, in Winter holiday traditions, in the photo attribution, "Isabella Westrich" should be omitted  
Page 25, in Winter holiday tradition, in the Christmas box, in the first quote, the second "At" should be "at"  
Page 27, in Cultural buzz, in the first blurb, there should be a space between "Warfare II," and "released"  
Page 28, in Quest for Athens' best: hot chocolate clash, in the first caption, the comma after "Chocolates" should be omitted  
Page 29, in Quest for Athens' best: hot chocolate clash, the concluding paragraph should be replaced with the accurate conclusion  
Page 29, in Quest for Athens' best: hot chocolate clash, in the second caption, "Right" should be "Left"  
Page 29, in Quest for Athens' best: hot chocolate clash, in the second caption, a source attribution should be included for the quote  
Page 31, in Tell me, why, in the caption, the double space between "depicts" and "several" should be omitted  
Page 32, in Worth her shot, in the caption, the first "the" should be omitted  
Page 33, in Worth her shot, in the pull quote attribution, "varsity" should be "varsity"  
Page 34, in Star players, in the box for Matthew Collins, "Deirdre" should be "Deirdre"  
Page 35, in 5 things to know about the CCHS boys varsity swim team, in the caption, the space between the starting quotation marks and "I" should be omitted



**I appreciated Molly's vulnerability and I enjoyed getting to see the impact of dance through her own eyes. The only thing that I would have liked to see is more elaboration on the way that dance impacted her journalistic career.**

-- CCHS freshman Lila Sloan on "Letter From the Editor" by Editor-in-Chief Molly Harwell

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**Online:** Message us on Instagram at @odysseynewsmag.

## >> SPORTS

WORTH HER SHOT // Kendarius Butts and Wyatt Meyer

In the last ODYSSEY issue, I thoroughly enjoyed the piece "Worth Her Shot." I appreciate how the author describes Sheppard's role on the Clarke Central basketball team as a leader and a mother figure. In the world of sports it is easy to automatically assume that taller people are better at their craft, especially when it comes to basketball. With this being the stereotype, it is so important to acknowledge the hard work of all athletes including taller ones, and to acknowledge the struggles all athletes face. Confidence is a major struggle for many athletes, including Sheppard, but she has worked hard to better herself and her teammates. I especially like the piece because it inspires all athletes to work hard during practice, not give up on themselves, and to always love their team.

-- Caroline Orbock,  
CCHS junior

## >> FEATURES

NOWHERE TO GO // Riley Ramsey and Nico Willman

I like how the article talks about the problems of the school's bathrooms because I think it needs to be addressed to the students on how they are treating the bathrooms in our school. The school bathroom is honestly an embarrassment, when I walk inside the bathroom it's usually foggy and someone is generally vaping or there is typically a group of friends in one big stall vaping in the bathroom. There have been times when people couldn't use the bathroom or had to go to another bathroom just to use the restroom. I think that the writing on the wall is unacceptable, I think as Clarke Central students we should do a better job of taking care of our bathrooms.

-- Asia Barnett,  
CCHS senior

# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Editor-in-Chief Molly Harwell writes an open letter to the women in her life to commemorate the ways they have impacted her.



BY MOLLY HARWELL  
Editor-in-Chief

**T**o the women in my life: I have always been inspired by you.

You are the strong pillars of my life, the glue that holds it all together.

You have each played such a significant role and have taught me so much about being a daughter, a granddaughter, a niece and a friend.

Each one of you, the epitome of beauty and strength. I am so incredibly grateful for each all that you have done for me.

To my mom: thank you. You showed me what it means to love fiercely and live fully. I see it in the way you care for others and the way you care for the Athens community.

I see it in the way you laugh too loud and hug too hard. I see it in myself.

There has never been a moment where I haven't felt loved by you, even when I know I don't deserve it.

From you, I learned patience, strength, kindness, and the joy of laughter. Everything I am is because of you.

To my grandmothers: I admire your resilience. You have each walked through so much and never fail to come out on the other side with your heads held high.

Thank you for showing me that memories are more valuable than gold and

that nothing should ever be taken for granted.

It has been the greatest honor to get to learn from you both and take in all of your wisdom, and I truly don't think that I would be who I am without you. Thank you.

To my friends: gosh, I love y'all. You are the only people that I would stay up until 5 a.m. playing "Just Dance" with and the only people who can tell what's going on with me from a single look.

I think British journalist, author and podcaster for The Sunday Times, Dolly Alderton, said it best when she said, "Nearly everything I know about love, I've learnt from my long-term friendships with women."

You showed me the importance of leaning on others and what true friendship looks like.

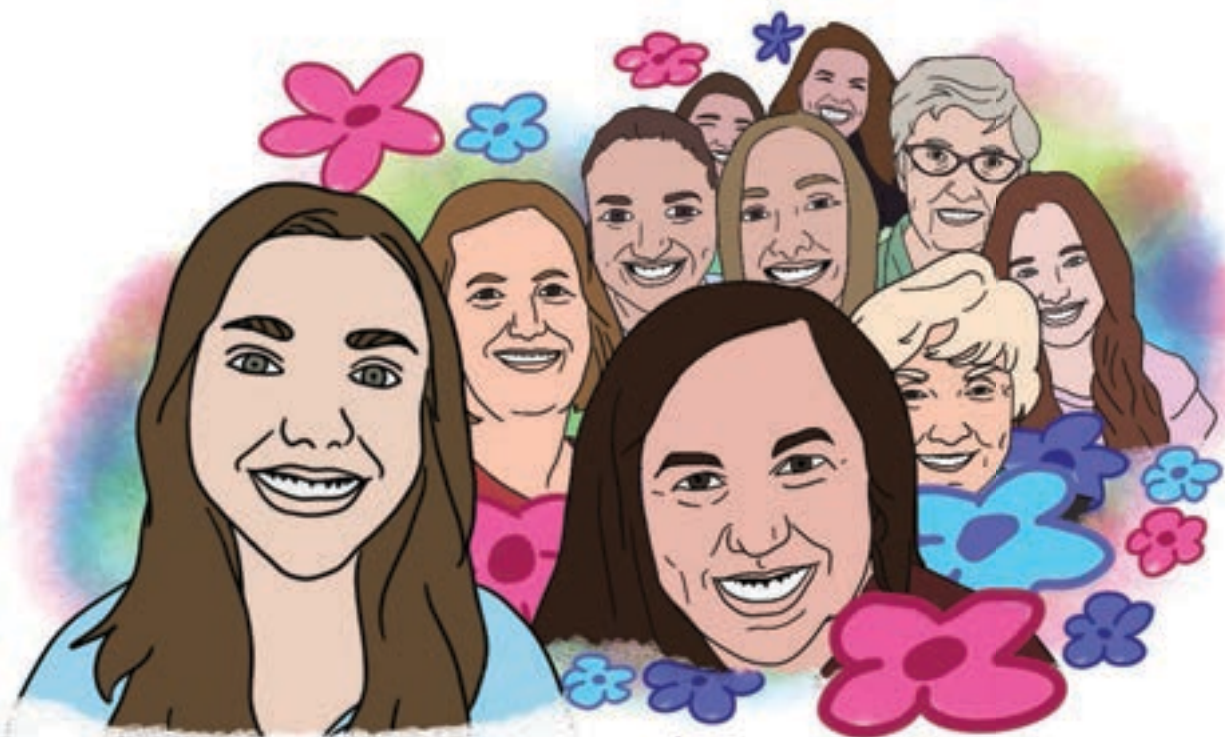
I am forever grateful for all of the times you have made me cry from laughing.

Thank you for showing me that I'm never too much, that I'm never alone.

To the women in my life: thank you. No matter if we are related, the best of friends or even just acquaintances, I can assure you that you have changed my life in significant ways.

Thank you for loving me unconditionally and keeping it real. I love you all.  
Sincerely, Molly

*You have each played such a significant role and have taught me so much about being a daughter, a granddaughter, a niece and a friend.*



**Above:** SURROUNDED BY SUPPORT: An illustration depicts Editor-in-Chief Molly Harwell with other members of her family surrounded by flowers. Throughout her life, Harwell was heavily influenced by the women in her life, and attributed them as the people who made her who she was. "To the women in my life: thank you. No matter if we are related, the best of friends or even just acquaintances, I can assure you that you have changed my life in significant ways," Harwell wrote. Illustration by Antonio Starks

# BOILING POINT

*The pink tax causes unfair disparities towards women simply because of their gender, furthering the divide between men and women.*



BY MAYA CLEMENT  
Managing Editor

Walking into any retail store, it is clear to customers that there are two distinct sections.

One side embodies softness with its romantic, flowery and elegant themes and pastel packaging. The other side is hard-hitting with its masculine, outdoors and fierce themes and dark packaging. One clearly marketed for

women and the other for men.

While these two sections may seem to sell similar products, they are not as alike as one may think. Yes, the items may mimic each other, but the prices and marketing do not.

Advertisements frequently rely on different tactics in order to reach their audience in the “best” way possible. Realistically, all these advertisements do is create a divide between women and men’s products, and set up a society where women and men are pushed into different boxes.

Aside from just looks, the products manufactured for women typically have higher prices than the same products manufactured for men. This anomaly is commonly referred to as the pink tax.

The pink tax obtained its name in the mid-1990s after a 1994 report from California’s Assembly of Consumer Protection, Governmental Efficiency, and Economic Development Committee found that women paid, on-average, \$1,351 more per year than men for goods and services.

After the study, California passed the state-wide Gender Tax Repeal Act of 1995, which prohibited discriminatory prices on services.

However, this didn’t stop price disparities elsewhere.

While the pink tax has only formally existed for nearly 30 years, women have faced unfair taxation for much longer. This tax is just furthering the separation between men and women instead of moving towards the future and closing the gaps that hold onto terrible historic traditions.

*Companies should not make ultra-femininity the norm by portraying products targeted towards women a certain way and marking them up in price.*

According to a November 2022 journal from the University of California, Berkeley, women pay 15% more for gendered products, such as hygienic care, than men.

This means that women can end up spending approximately \$188,000 more in their lifetime on goods, such as cosmetics and clothing, and services, such as dry cleaning and haircuts, than

men, according to a Feb. 18, 2020 California Legislature Senate Committee on Judiciary Informational Hearing.

This tax is putting women under more stress because they have to account for increased prices even more than people buying men’s products do. Especially in Athens, which has a 29.9% poverty rate, according to the Athens-Clarke County website based on 2019 Census statistics, women don’t have the extra money to spend because of discrimination.

The pink tax is just another sexist and unfair attack on women. The products provided to customers are the same, so companies should not make ultra-femininity the norm by portraying products targeted towards women a certain way and marking them up in price.

There currently are no laws prohibiting gender discrimination in pricing in Georgia, so something must be done. If companies won’t take it upon themselves to make the change for equitable pricing, the government needs to.

California has paved the way for fighting against gender discrimination in terms of economy with their Gender Tax Repeal Act of 1995. Even though it isn’t a progressive state, Georgia should still follow California’s lead.

With 52.3% of Georgia’s population being affected by the Pink Tax, according to the 2020 United States Census report, the state needs to take action and place restrictions on disparities between prices in order to end the centuries-long discrimination against women. o



**Above:** PRICE DISPARITY: A female shopper is confused about the price difference between a razor marketed towards men and one marketed towards women, a disparity commonly referred to as the pink tax. The term pink tax was coined after a California study in 1994 determined that women paid approximately \$1,351 more than men on the same goods and services. “This tax is putting women under more stress and they have to account for increased prices even more than people buying men’s products do,” Managing Editor Maya Clement wrote. “Especially in Athens, with a 29.9% poverty rate, according to the Athens-Clarke County website based on the 2019 Census report, women don’t have the extra money to spend because of discrimination.” Illustration by Antonio Starks





## Isabelle Duncan **VEGAN VOYAGE**

*Social Media Staffer Isabelle Duncan looks back on why she became vegan and the importance of transitioning to her new lifestyle.*

**A**s someone who was born and raised as a vegetarian, I never really understood why I had to be different from everyone else. My picky diet always seemed to be a burden to so many decisions in my life.

In elementary school, kids didn't understand why I couldn't just eat meat like everyone else. I faced childish jokes like kids trying to sneak meat in my lunches and deliberately waving chicken fingers and hotdogs in my face.


It wasn't until I reached seventh grade that I started to understand more about why I was vegetarian and how my diet affects the world around me. It was just another weekend night with my dad and I scrolling through Netflix to see what new entertaining movies could catch our eye. Being the documentary geek he is, he chose the film "What the Health."

After as little as 20 minutes into watching, my entire view of what goes on my plate was changed. I was now seeing what happens behind the scenes to getting my gallon of milk or carton of eggs.

The truth is, the commercially bought meat, egg and dairy products are produced more inhumanly than many think. Farm animals are put through treacherous conditions before they are killed in gruesome ways.

Although this may be the norm to most Americans, I believe it is something that we need to reflect on and see how the products we buy in the grocery store are detrimental to our environment and the animals living in it.

I can truthfully say that since I have become vegan I have noticed myself feeling healthier and more active overall. As someone who dances competitively, it is demanded that I have to have the energy that keeps me strong with endurance.

Even if committing to a vegan lifestyle is not an easy process, taking little steps to cut out animal products is doable. Trying out different substitute products and the vegan restaurants options we have in Athens can also help broaden the mindset of those interested in vegetarianism or veganism. 



**Above:** BANANA BOAT: Social Media Staffer Isabelle Duncan is illustrated traveling through a jungle of vegetables which represents her journey as vegan. Duncan decided to change her diet to veganism after watching a documentary with her dad that showed where her food came from. "After as little as 20 minutes into watching, my entire view of what goes on my plate was changed. I was now seeing what happens behind the scenes to getting my gallon of milk or carton of eggs," Duncan wrote. Illustration by Antonio Starks

# QUESTION OF THE MONTH

Who is the most influential woman in your life?



"My mom. She's the only girl I can talk to and connect to. She understands me."

-- JARELI MARTINEZ  
CCHS freshman



"My aunt (Abbey) because she's always been very supportive of everything and is not afraid to tell me 'don't do that' or 'do that.' I love her."

-- ISABEL CHASTAIN,  
CCHS sophomore



"The most influential woman in my life is my mother. She (is) very influential. She pushed me to get good grades, (and) just stand out and not fit in."

-- YAKHI PITTS,  
CCHS junior



"It's gotta be my mother. (She) has been through a lot. She's basically been my mother and my father figure for almost half of my life."

-- NATHAN PAREDS,  
CCHS senior



"My grandmother, aka my nanny, because she has held this family down for as long as she's been alive. She'll be 75 years old this year and she's still going strong and taking care of my grandfather."

-- CLAUDE JOHNSON,  
CCHS School Resource Officer



# ↓ THUMBS ↑

The ODYSSEY staff's opinions on this month's issues.



## A CHANGE AND EXCHANGE

Italian foreign exchange student Clarissa De Santis flourishes in her new American environment.

## FABRIC AESTHETIC

Many CCHS students find passion and creativity in expressing their fashion sense to their peers.

## STEPPING UP TO THE PLATE

Award-winning coach Jerry Boatner comes to coach the CCHS varsity baseball team after a long and impressive career.

## AN ODE TO WOMANHOOD

Editor-in-Chief Molly Harwell writes about the role of the women in her life and how she emulates their example.



## TERRIBLE TOILETS

At CCHS, solutions to student misbehavior in the bathrooms are harder to find than a clean toilet.

## WORK 'TIL YOU DROP

The hustle and bustle atmosphere of school work leaves students unable to take needed breaks without consequences to their academic success.

## MUNCHING THAT LUNCH

CCHS students shouldn't hate on the free school lunch because of its benefits.

## FIDO, WHERE ART THOU?

Irresponsible pet ownership has increased the amount of abandoned pets in animal shelters.



Angel Tejada

## FRESH VOICE

*Journalism I student Angel Tejada describes his love for sports and the game has influenced his personal relationships.*

**S**ports. Since the beginning of civilization and culture, it has been something that brings humans together.

In the present day, fans around the world can gather to watch their favorite athletes compete in high-stake games. It's the adrenaline of a close-cut game, the rush of victory and the drive of defeat that excites people.

No matter if I am on the pitch, in the stands, watching it at home or even just watching highlights, I can feel that rush.

Watching sports doesn't just bring fans and communities together, but family and friends. I have many core memories of friends and family just excited to be together and hang out to watch a simple soccer or football game. Being happy to be together just comes with watching any sports game.

One of my fondest memories was of watching the 2022 Qatar World Cup finals. I was always watching the games leading up to the finale, whether that be in class, in the shower or even when I was supposed to be asleep.

But it all led up to the World Cup final, the Argentina national football team versus the France national football team.

Considering Lionel Messi has been my idol since I learned what soccer was, I was obviously rooting for Argentina. My brother and I placed ourselves on the couches, at the edge of our seats, anxiously waiting to see who would win.

It was the most stressed I had ever been in my life, until that final penalty goal that sealed Argentina's win. We leapt from our seats, arms wrapped around each other, jumping up and down like kids on Christmas.

We felt so connected, so happy together, all for a game where you kick a ball around. For me, sports are a vessel that I can enjoy and express that joy with those around me.

No matter where I am, what sport I'm watching, it's that tether that brings everything together.

It truly is something special. 



**Above:** SPORTS COMMUNITY: An illustration portrays four people sitting on a couch watching a multitude of sports like soccer, basketball and football. Sports have always had the power to bring people together in more ways than one. "For me, sports are a vessel that I can enjoy and express that joy with those around me. No matter where I am, what sport I'm watching, it's that tether that brings everything together," Journalism I student Angel Tejada wrote. Illustration by Antonio Starks

# JUDGE JANIE

*Extreme funding to local, statewide and national police associations is not helping to repair the broken criminal justice system.*



BY JANIE RIPPS  
Viewpoints Editor

In June of 2020, more than 15 million protesters took to the streets across the country following the police killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and countless others.

They asked city governments to cut the police budgets and reallocate the millions, sometimes billions, that could be put towards education, public health and more.

In response, many major cities across the nation such as Minneapolis and Los Angeles pledged to cut the budgets and find more sustainable ways to repair the criminal justice system that vowed to protect yet was taking so many lives.

However, in Georgia, this issue remains as prevalent as ever.

In September of 2021, then Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms approved the establishment of one of the largest police training facilities in the United States, dubbed Cop City.

The complex will include mini nightclubs, houses and apartments as part of a mock city.

This ridiculous 85-acre project will steal almost \$30 million out of the pockets of Atlanta taxpayers.

Extreme funding involved with the police is far from reality for the U.S., yet governments still refuse to address the problem.

“Cop City” is just one example of the ridiculous amount of money spent on police that could be going towards repairing the broken system that is so set on violence. While “Cop City” is certainly a more drastic example, the overspending on police departments stretches to Athens-Clarke County as well.

According to the ACC Unified Government Fiscal Year 2023 Budget in Brief, about \$25 million is budgeted for ACC police departments, the most of any service under its category and an 8.5% increase from the FY22 budget.

“Allocating more money to police is not a helpful situation. It’s not going to solve the issues. It’s another example of treating the symptoms rather than the cause of a problem,” Clarke Central High School English department teacher Grace Crumpton said. “Look around Athens. What would happen if that money went to our unhoused population?”

Why is so much money going towards police forces and not towards community reforms that protesters, even Athens residents, have been begging for?


ACC Police Department Chief of Police Jerry Saulters understands the level of training that the Atlanta government wants for its cops.

“If we want the officers to do better we’ve got to provide that training. I don’t see anything at the level of what Atlanta is dealing with (in Athens), but they want to feel safe and they want a police force that they believe in,” Saulters said.

Although some additional money may be necessary for larger cities such as Athens or Atlanta, the sheer amount spent on “Cop

City” is too much. Legislators are using money like a bandaid. Governments keep throwing it on this wound in hopes of healing it, instead of trying to get to the root of the infection.

To solve America’s criminal justice problem, lawmakers need to hear more community input on the issue while also budgeting more funds to restorative justice practices.

Adding more resources and building a “city” will not solve any issues, but rather add fuel to the fire that activists have worked to put out for decades. 

*Legislators are using money like a bandaid. Governments keep throwing it on this wound in hopes of healing it, instead of trying to get to the root of the infection.*



**Above:** STOPPING THE CYCLE: Police forces all over the nation receive unnecessary amounts of money that could be reallocated towards other public services. “Cop City,” approved by former Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms in 2021, will span over 85 acres and is yet another example of the overfunding provided to police forces. “The amount of resources put into the police force is unnecessary. ‘Cop City’ is just one example of the ridiculous amount of money poured into these facilities that could be going towards repairing the broken system that is so set on violence,” Viewpoints Editor Janie Ripps wrote. Illustration by Antonio Starks



# EAT SCHOOL LUNCH

*There shouldn't be as much hate towards the CCHS lunch by the students because of the needs that the lunch fulfills.*



BY ANTONIO STARKS  
Viewpoints Staffer and Illustrator

The warm crisp of the golden chicken nuggets, the airy waves of heat coming off the steamed broccoli, the sweet and savory pulled pork gleams between two buns.

Every day, Clarke Central High School students are provided with multiple free lunch options, but student discourse surrounding the school lunch devolves into bad-mouthing.

"I stopped eating the school lunch around fourth grade," CCHS freshman A'Mauriya

Barnes said. "I personally think (the) school lunch is nasty and shouldn't be given out to students."

Slandering the lunch, leaving trash on the floor and tables and leaving the cafeteria staff to clean up the mess is no way to act. Especially if there isn't any cost to students if they choose to have lunch.

The people who work to provide the 1833 students, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, with such amenities to the CCHS community deserve more.

With its many options and benefits, the backlash towards lunch is not deserved, and blaming the cafeteria staff is not the answer to getting changes that many may feel need to be made. Such changes may be the inclusion of more delectable seasonings or a more expansive selection of foods.

"I'm sure (the cafeteria staff) would love to give (students) what they really know how to cook and they're proud of, but they work within the guidelines of

*Free lunches take away a heavy load for families regarding feeding their kids.*

the Federal Nutrition Program that was changed during the Obama administration," CCHS Associate Principal Dr. Cindi Lowe said. "People still complained about it, but they're trying to serve you a healthy tray."

The Athens-Clarke County website based on 2019 Census statistics states that the poverty rate of ACC is 29.9%. According to the United States Department of Agriculture, a poverty rate of 20% or more is a high poverty rate.

Free lunches take away a heavy load for families regarding feeding their kids. Even without that fact, raising children itself is expensive and severely impacts people's paycheck and what they are able to provide and buy.

If students are feeling a little spicy, they could suggest a plan that falls in nutritional guidelines, most likely through contact with the Clarke County School District nutritional staff directory.

The school lunch can be for people who don't have access to nutritional food, and it's not fair to just dismiss the lunch due to its important role within the school.

People shouldn't feel forced to eat it, but more students should be aware of the need and overall benefit of the school lunch. *o*



**Above:** NICE SPICE: A student dramatically scoffs at the school lunch while another enjoys their lunch. School lunch has a bad reputation at Clarke Central High School, and while there have been some warranted critiques, sometimes the hate is overdramatic. "The backlash towards lunch is not deserved and blaming the cafeteria staff is not the answer to getting changes that one may feel needs to be made," Viewpoints Staffer and Illustrator Antonio Starks wrote. Illustration by Antonio Starks

# NO TIME TO STOP

*The harsh academic pressure of high school leaves students choosing between prioritizing their grades or their health, creating an unsustainable lifestyle.*



BY ISABELLE GALIS  
Viewpoints Staffer

**B**leep. Beep. Beep. A student's alarm blares in their ear. They hit the snooze button knowing they got no sleep last night as they stayed up coughing from the cold that is going around. However, they still plan on going to school that morning because they can't afford to fall behind in their classes.

When someone is sick, they need to take the time to heal, but this isn't an option for high

school students with tests or new material to learn in class each day.

After an eight-hour school day followed by extracurricular activities, teens often have to choose between caring for their bodies or staying up late to study and finish homework.

A survey conducted by Research.com in January stated that 75% of American high schoolers and 50% of American middle schoolers described themselves as always stressed by schoolwork.

Whether students are sick in bed or staying up late to finish their work, many are driven by this stress to succeed. In a society that promotes "hustle culture," the grind doesn't stop for anyone, especially high school students.

This shouldn't be the case. Students shouldn't have to sacrifice their physical and mental health in order to keep up with their classes and perform well in school. For students at Clarke Central High School, this stress from the rapid-pace hustle is extremely prevalent.

"I've had nights where I've had to stay up really late to get stuff done and it's

to the point where it's just not taking care of myself," CCHS junior Lily Gordon said. "There's a lot of pressure coming from everybody in general where it's like, 'You have to get into a good college and to do that you have to take more rigorous classes.' It gets to me."

In a society that preaches the necessity of having at least a high school diploma to be successful, this intense cycle can and will run students into the ground.

"Students have said that they'll be sitting in class and feeling like (they) just want to cry, like (they) might burst into tears," CCHS counselor Heidi Nibbelink said. "You have to be able to stay home (if you're sick) and that's true for adults.


It's not good for us to just keep going like, 'Oh my God, I can't miss a day or the world's gonna fall apart.'"

How does a school expect students to produce good work when some lack basic self-care because of anxiety and school pressure?

Students shouldn't feel like they're going to fall behind when

they take a day to take care of themselves. Although there isn't a simple solution to this problem, schools should consider incorporating hour-long study hall periods into the day where students can complete homework to make time for self-care after school.

Hustle culture preaches the idea of always moving and always being productive, but it should be normalized to take the time to rest. To take the time to stop.

The way our society molds the way we do things is unhealthy and leaves no room for healing when something is broken. 

*Students shouldn't have to sacrifice their physical and mental health in order to keep up with their classes and perform well in school.*



**Above:** ACADEMIC PRESSURE: An illustration shows a high school student stressed and crying due to school-based pressure. The societal norm of "hustle culture" has negatively impacted students at Clarke Central High School. "After an eight-hour school day followed by extracurriculars or a job, teens often have to choose between staying up late to study and finish homework or getting the amount of sleep they need and taking care of their bodies," Viewpoints Staffer Isabelle Galis wrote. Illustration by Antonio Starks



# OUR TAKE

*With a few tweaks, Women's History Month could focus on making positive changes today, rather than serving as a simple examination of the past.*

**W**omen's History Month has officially been celebrated in the U.S. since 1987 as a time to appreciate women's contributions to society. Marie Curie discovered radiation, Helen Keller changed societal attitudes towards disabilities and Angela Davis inspired a generation of activists to challenge systemic oppression. Get the idea?

However, as society enters the future, women continue to face discrimination, harassment and barriers to full participation in education, the workforce, politics, health care and more.

Women have contributed to American society through every avenue, from radical social change like women's suffrage to innovations in technology like the Hubble Space Telescope, yet women are still not treated as the integral part of society that they are.

Rather than patting women on the back for progress already made, Women's History Month should be branded as a time of reflection and contemporary education—a time to recognize how far society has come and how far it still has to go.

By revising public school history curricula to create a more inclusive and accurate portrayal of women's contributions to society, schools can empower the youth to strive for social change.

This plan for education can apply year-round, but by reserving one month to

commemorate women's accomplishments, there can be special recognition and a momentum for action.

Aside from education, using social media platforms where so many people are already dedicating their attention to advocating for change will provide this special recognition.

For instance, campaigns like #MeToo and #TimesUp have used the digital landscape to bring widespread attention to the issue of sexual harassment and assault in the workplace, created safe spaces for survivors to share their stories and led to concrete policy changes.

For example, in response to the #MeToo movement, the Screen Actors Guild and the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers agreed to a ban on auditions in private hotel rooms and Uber implemented a new policy requiring mandatory sexual harassment training for all employees.

By highlighting ways to work towards social justice, true equality and anti-sexism, people can inspire each other to take action and create positive change.

Social media platforms in conjunction with education reform can help create a more inclusive and equitable society for women.

By taking advantage of the momentum created during Women's History Month and continuing to push for progress throughout the year, we can work towards a future where women are truly valued and respected as integral members of society. **o**

***Rather than patting women on the back for progress already made, Women's History Month should be branded as a time of reflection and contemporary education.***



**Above:** BACK TO IGNORANCE: A student rips off Women's History Month on a calendar to throw it away once it has passed. Women's History Month has been a time where more focus is put on the commercial celebration of the successes rather than a reflection and education of those successes. "By taking advantage of the momentum created during Women's History Month and continuing to push for progress throughout the year, we can work towards a future where women are truly valued and respected as integral members of society." Illustration by Antonio Starks



# NOWHERE TO GO, NUMBER 2

*In Pt. 1, issues and causes were discussed. Pt. 2 finds that while the impacts of bathroom misbehavior are numerous, solutions are harder to find.*

BY NICO WILLMAN  
Editor-at-Large

LAYOUT BY MOLLY HARWELL  
Editor-in-Chief

**A**t Clarke Central High School, students' mistreatment of bathrooms has reached a boiling point. In other words, where there's smoke, there's a toilet.

From vaping to violence to vandalism, the problems concerning student misbehavior in the bathrooms are numerous, as are the impacts they have. However, finding solutions is a challenge.

"(Bathrooms are) one of the last places that young people can go where they are essentially unsupervised," CCHS Associate Principal Dr. Cindi Lowe said. "People need to be able to go to the bathroom, feel safe (and) not feel like they have to manage who else is with them. We don't want to have to follow young people into the bathroom, but as long as these behaviors are happening, it's leading us to be more and more supervisory."

To flush out student misbehavior, the bathrooms were renovated in 2016, equipped with open entrances so that faculty can keep an eye, or nose, on things, along with hall monitors.

Subsequently, the administration offered e-hall passes beginning in the 2019-2020 school year, according to CCHS Associate Principal Dr. Summer Smith. More recently, hall monitors were stationed in the hallways.

"One of the solutions was the hall monitors. They made a huge difference," Smith said. "(The bathrooms) are still not great, so that's the kicker. But, there's a noticeable monitoring. We are able to stay on top of certain student behaviors with their help."

**Left: BATHROOM VANDALISM:** Clarke Central High School custodian Pamela Harris poses in the East Wing second floor bathroom on March 26. Harris expressed frustration over the destruction that some students cause in the school bathrooms. "(Students) took all the soap dispensers off, they broke them off. On my floor, first floor, I know some broke off down there," Harris said. "They're doing it just to have fun. They're not doing it because the bathroom is so bad that they can't go in there, because it's not. We have come a long ways to get 'em up to par, so I'm not understanding why they keep going in there and doing what they do in there." Photo by Aza Khan

**Right: CUSTODIAN'S CLEANING STRUGGLE:** Clarke Central High School custodian Blanca Lynch cleans the cafeteria bathroom mirrors on March 30. In response to the conditions of the CCHS bathrooms, CCHS Associate Principal Dr. Cindi Lowe expressed frustration with the workload of custodians. "Are we aware of it? Yes. Do (we) listen to their complaints? Yes. Are we trying to work on their complaints? Absolutely," Lowe said. "I feel terrible that they're having to do that and we're trying to work on it because it's additional work for them, additional frustration, additional stress." Photo by Lucas Donnelly



# THE IMPACTS

The impact of students' treatment of the bathrooms can be felt around the clock.

For CCHS custodian Blanca Lynch, who works the first shift, the conditions of the bathrooms can be an unsafe environment and add to her workload. While Lynch feels a rapport with the students, she also expresses frustration with the destructive behaviors of students that make her job more difficult.

"I would find (toilet paper) in the bushes, toilet paper everywhere. Like a college party happened," Lynch said. "They would take all of the (soap dispensers) out and pour them on the floor, and that was dangerous."

For CCHS custodian Pamela Harris, who works the second shift, seeing what is left of the bathrooms from a day's worth of mistreatment impacts her optimism.

"It makes me feel like we ain't getting nowhere," Harris said. "(Students) just hang out in the bathrooms, they throwing whole rolls of tissues in there, throwing food in there, and they're being real bad in the bathrooms. (Students) see us every day cleaning those bathrooms. They smell them every day. They knows we clean 'em, it's just, they don't care."

Through requiring hall passes for bathroom use and placing hall monitors near the bathrooms, the administration's increased surveillance of student behavior in bathrooms has had mixed impacts, according to CCHS senior Da'oud De Lane.

"The administration is creating stricter regulations for people who can use the bathroom, and I guess that's a benefit to track down to see who's doing what," De Lane said. "But I think (it's) definitely damaging for students because

they're breaking the trust between students and teachers."

According to CCHS sophomore Se'Kayia Miller, while the administration's surveillance approach may help track down and discourage misbehavior, a hostile environment is still present, causing some students to feel uncomfortable entering crowded bathrooms.

"Most of my friends, when they (need to) go to the restroom, they just hold it because they don't want to go in there," Miller said. "They don't want to be bothered or they don't want anybody to ask them if they have anything to smoke or anything like that."

Miller lays responsibility for improving the state of the bathrooms squarely on students.

"People just need to learn proper hygiene and how to actually keep things clean. Then I feel like bathrooms would be way, way, way better, truthfully, because our bathrooms are disgusting," Miller said. "People don't care because it's school bathrooms, but if you're going to the bathroom and can't use it, you would get irritated."

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**-- PAMELA HARRIS,**  
CCHS custodian

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CCHS bus driver and hall monitor Nakeida Johnson has worked in the Clarke County School District for 16 years, four of which as a hall monitor. Johnson's job requires that she regularly interact with students.

"We will knock on the door, but of course, it's a delayed reaction because they weren't expecting to get caught. That's when they're dispersing and doing whatever they do to make sure it's not found," Johnson said. "(There's) more disrespect to us as hall monitors/bus drivers. Our job is to make sure that they're not in there doing those things or whatever. (Students will be like), 'Oh you're just a bus driver, whatever.' We're also adults, and we also know right and wrong."



# THE SOLUTIONS

According to Lowe, the administration's approach to combating negative behavior in the bathrooms is being vigilant with following hall pass procedures and responding firmly.

"We have to become really proactive in following our own procedures about bathroom passes and how long they're out and how many kids leave a room at the same time," Lowe said. "We also have to be trying to establish a culture and mindset that we're proud of who we are, what we have, what our facilities are, and we want to take care of them."

Regarding the school's handling of misbehavior, Johnson highlights the school's zero-tolerance policy in addressing misbehavior.

"As far as how (the administration) has been handling it, when they do catch them and they do find the evidence to support what we already know was going on, they're making examples out of them— zero tolerance," Johnson said. "I'm with the repercussions of what's going to happen if you're caught. I'm loving it, I'm for it."

However, while Johnson praises the zero-tolerance policy, she also acknowledges its potential harm and the importance of compassion.

"A lot of times I'll go in and I'm just like, 'You know I'm supposed to report you, right?' But I'm just like, 'Just come on out here, just come on and go to class. Whatever it is, put it up.' So it's more times than I can recall where I actually save them versus reporting it," Johnson said. "I know kids need to be at school because I'm a parent first, but some of them you can get to and some of them you can't. You're not going to be able to save everybody."

Due to past student misuse, the West Wing bathrooms have been locked to help limit the number of supervised bathrooms in the school and has proven to be an effective solution.

"I'm pretty upfront with my students when they ask about the (West Wing) bathrooms. It was a drugstore, and we would report it and nothing would happen," CCHS foreign language department teacher Erica Cascio said. "Since the bathrooms have been closed, (the) hall is quieter. We have fewer

students milling, there's less of a scent of marijuana in the air, less traffic in general on the hall. It's better for our students to maintain the learning environment. (Locking the bathrooms is) not a perfect solution, but it's a solution."

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"We also have to be trying to establish a culture and mindset that we're proud of who we are, what we have, what our facilities are, and we want to take care of them."

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**-- DR. CINDI LOWE,**  
CCHS Associate Principal

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**Featured:** STUDENT LEADERSHIP: Clarke Central High School Senior Army Instructor Lieutenant Colonel David McMickle poses in front of the men's bathroom in the JROTC building on March 30. McMickle's approach to maintaining quality facilities has centered around student leaders and responsibility. "I'll have a male and a female in all of our blocks, and at the end of their class period, they have to go through (the bathrooms) and look at it and fix (any) problems before they're allowed to leave the building," McMickle said. "So, if I spill something, the students, the leaders, go in there and get a mop bucket filled up, (we) put sign out says wet floor, but we don't call a custodian over here to clean up after stuff that you did. That's like your parent cleaning up behind you because your room is not clean, and that's part of what we teach here." Photo by Lucas Donnelly







For CCHS Senior Army Instructor Lieutenant Colonel David McMickle, the solution is setting higher expectations for students to take care of school infrastructure.

“We have the catchy acronyms, the GLADS (are GRADS). I think a continued emphasis on that could inspire students,” McMickle said. “That, to me, is part of what I’m teaching my students. We teach anything from respect to the flag, conflict management, drugs, alcohol. But also what we expect when we graduate from high school, what society at large expects from us, I think this is part of what we should be doing as a school, (as a) community.”

One of the obstacles administrators have encountered when searching for solutions is that if misbehavior is eliminated in one area, similar activities are likely to pop up somewhere else in the school. De Lane believes that this explains why, despite some success, no solution has worked completely.

“I feel like the reality side of it is that this is a school, and that we do have stuff that we need to enforce. And I feel like obviously enforcing not smoking in the hallways, they’re gonna smoke in the bathroom or they’re gonna smoke

under the stairs or whatever,” De Lane said. “So I feel like it’s a normal thing to expect when you deal with teenagers and boundaries. You say no to this, they’re going to try to do something else.”

McMickle’s approach to keeping the bathrooms clean places the responsibility on the students, emphasizing their role in being part of the solution.

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“(This is clearly) something that needs to be improved at Clarke Central, so not only do we need to identify a problem, but I think it’s important for students to be part of the solution.”

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**-- LIEUTENANT COLONEL DAVID MCMICKLE,**  
CCHS Senior Army Instructor

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“(This is clearly) something that needs to be improved at Clarke Central, so not only do we need to identify a problem, but I think it’s important for students to be part of the solution,” McMickle said. “If (we) put the onus on the students to make a difference, you guys can do that.”

Similar to McMickle, Lowe feels that a mentality shift is crucial in preventing misuse of the bathrooms.

“We have to make kids feel that being in class is far more important than hanging out in a bathroom and all those things

were things that we’re constantly trying to look at how to improve on,” Lowe said. “It is a very multifaceted, complex problem because as long as we can’t directly supervise what’s happening, it has to be a choice that kids are making to do the right thing and we have work to do in making them want to make that choice.”

**Above:** SHIFTING MINDSETS: Clarke Central High School Associate Principal Dr. Cindi Lowe talks at an ODYSSEY Media Group press conference in Room 231 on March 29. Lowe emphasized the importance of shifting the mindset of students surrounding the bathrooms. “We have to become really proactive in following our own (bathroom) procedures. We also have to try to establish a culture and mindset (where) we’re proud of who we are, what we have and what our facilities are, and we want to take care of them,” Lowe said. “We have to constantly be doing that as well. And we still have to be really on top of monitoring the bathrooms (like) we’re trying to do now. But we also need the help of students and people that are in the bathrooms.” Photo by Isabelle Duncan





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# HONORING ATHENS HISTORY

*With the passing of the motion to rename Alps Road and Chase Street Elementary Schools, questions and concerns remain over the process to rename the two formerly white-only CCSD schools.*

STORY BY MYKOLAS KUMPIŠ  
News Staffer

STORY AND LAYOUT BY CADENCE SCHAPKER  
News Editor

LAYOUT BY MOLLY HARWELL  
Editor-in-Chief

**O**n Feb. 9, the Clarke County School District Board of Education voted 7-2 to rename Alps Elementary School to Bettye Henderson Holston Elementary and Chase Elementary School to Johnnie Lay Burks Elementary.

The renaming is meant to honor the pioneering Black educators who helped desegregate the CCSD in 1966 as a part of an initiative led by then-Superintendent Samuel Wood. Wood assigned teachers Bettye Henderson Holston and Johnnie Lay Burks to the two formerly white-only elementary schools. At the time, this motion was unique amongst school districts in the South, as it integrated schools without

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“It’s (more than) just about the renaming, it’s (about) starting to have conversations about Athens history.”

**-- LAKEISHA GANTT,**

CCSD Board of Education President and District 7 Representative

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litigation, state or federal mandate. District 7 Representative and CCSD Board of Education President Dr. LaKeisha Gantt formally proposed renaming Chase Street and Alps Road on Dec. 15, 2022.

“We wanted to do something for people that impacted the school (district) and were critical during that period (of) integration,” Gantt said. “I knew that (it) was a big ask. We (live) in a community where it’s hard to (imagine) that we had schools that were created for white students and schools that were created for Black students. It’s (more than) just about the renaming, it’s (about) starting to have conversations about Athens history.”

However, while the motion to rename Chase Street to Johnnie Lay Burks and Alps Road to Bettye Henderson Holston passed, concerns regarding insufficient public involvement arose prior to the vote.

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**Left:** FACE OF RENAMING: District 7 Representative and Clarke County School District Board of Education President Dr. LaKeisha Gantt stands in front of Chase Street Elementary School on March 15. Gantt believes that the Board of Education’s decision will help educate future generations. “I knew that (it) was a big ask. We (live) in a community where it’s hard to (imagine) that we had schools that were created for white students and schools that were created for Black students,” Gantt said. “It’s (more than) just about the renaming, it’s (about) starting to have conversations about Athens history.” Photo by Temprince Battle

"I am of heart at this time that we hold off on voting on this," CCSD Superintendent Dr. Robbie P. Hooker said during the Feb. 9 BOE meeting. "I believe that we need more community input before we make this decision, this is my recommendation."

During the same meeting, Chase Street parent Erin Thompson-Podvin echoed Dr. Hooker's concern and noted the disconnect between the BOE and Chase Street community.

"Communication is key to understanding context on any topic and that communication has felt absent," Thompson-Podvin said. "In the numerous conversations I've had with teachers and staff and families associated with Chase Street, not a single person has said that they oppose the name change. What people oppose is the approach that has been taken, the lack

"What people oppose is the approach that has been taken, the lack of stakeholder engagement from the outset and a process that has not felt transparent."

-- ERIN THOMPSON-PODVIN,  
Chase Street parent

of stakeholder engagement from the outset and a process that has not felt transparent."

While in support of honoring prominent historical figures, Clarke Central High School Associate Principal Dr. Cindi Lowe also brought the funding and process for the renamings into question.

"Anything that honors long-term people who contribute to a community is certainly worthwhile, (so) I think (the renaming) is wonderful," Lowe said. "I'm also a realist, and one of the articles I read (said) it's gonna cost a fortune to change the names of those schools. You're going to (have to) change logos, stationary, signage, websites, so many things."

While the logistics of the renaming remain debated, retired CCSD educator Johnnie Lay Burks is proud of the work she did during integration.

"I'm at peace," Burks said. "Job well done, Johnnie, you didn't drop the baton. My slave ancestors are (also) at peace, their work was not in vain. I had no idea what they went through, how they were tortured and treated and so forth. So, (the renaming) brought some peace to me."

For CCHS senior and Alps Road alumnus Da'oud DeLane, the renaming comes as a sad end of an era, but an important reminder of Athens history.

"(The renaming is) kind of bittersweet. Alps Road is the name of the school that I've always known it as, but to know that there's actually history behind it, which I didn't know beforehand, is pretty cool," DeLane said. "It's inspiring to know that there were teachers who were brave enough to take that first step and attend these all-white schools."

# ALUMNI SAY

What are your thoughts on the renaming?



"I think it's really good that these (teachers) are getting recognized for what they did. Now, all the new students are going to be learning about (the history of) their schools."

-- RUBY FRYE  
2019 CHASE STREET ALUMNA



"I think it's a pretty good thing to see (these) teachers being recognized. I think it's always important to show the impact (and) contributions (people have) made in the past. It's inspiring to know that there were teachers who were brave enough to take that first step and attend these all-white schools."

-- DA'OUD DELANE,  
2016 ALPS ROAD ALUMNUS



"Adding history into our school systems is very important. I hope that (the renaming) will teach more about and Black History and open people's eyes (by) introducing a story in the history of our town."

-- MADISON WEAVER,  
2017 CHASE STREET ALUMNA

## 23 SCHOOLS IN THE CCSD



10 SCHOOLS NAMED AFTER STREETS



7 SCHOOLS NAMED AFTER PEOPLE



5 SCHOOLS NAMED AFTER CITIES





**Featured:** NO LONGER CHASE: A picture shows the front of Chase Street Elementary School. Retired Clarke County School District educator Johnnie Lay Burks believed that despite being a relatively new teacher during the time of integration, her calling was to teach at Chase Street. "I was a baby in education. I (was) extremely young in my career, but I (was) tough," Burks said. "Chase was where I needed to be. It was like society was telling us we are less than, but we didn't believe it." Photo by Isabelle Duncan



**Featured:** NEW NAME FOR ALPS: A picture shows the front of Alps Road Elementary School. For District 7 Representative and Clarke County School District Board of Education President Dr. LaKeisha Gantt, many public figures' neutrality on the issue of renaming Alps Road and Chase Street Elementary Schools was disappointing. "With some issues, it can be a very dangerous thing to be neutral," Gantt said. "Neutrality to me is sometimes the enemy of progress and securing justice." Photo by Isabelle Duncan



**Featured:** SUPPORTIVE SISTERS: Clarke Central High School senior and Italian foreign exchange student Clarissa De Santis (left) and CCHS junior Tyus Dekle (right) stand on Dekle's front porch on Dec. 7, 2022. Dekle and her family have hosted Clarissa in their home since her arrival in the United States on Aug. 19, 2022 and the experience hosting Clarissa has helped Dekle in unimaginable ways. "I've dealt with a lot of mental stuff and depression and I didn't think this was going to do anything to it, but (I've) found that I've been doing better with another person," Dekle said. "This is really cheesy, but she has genuinely helped me through some like, deep stuff. So it has been such a great experience." Photo by Aza Khan







# LIVING THE AMERICAN DREAM

*Italian foreign exchange student Clarissa De Santis has been taking CCHS by storm during her senior year, despite it being her first living in the United States.*

BY MILES LAWRENCE  
Variety Staffer

LAYOUT BY MOLLY HARWELL  
Editor-in-Chief

**W**ith sunlight filtering through the windows of her family’s Italian countryside home, Clarke Central High School senior and Italian foreign exchange student Clarissa De Santis stares admiringly at the young girl on her television screen who is walking through the halls of her American

high school. However, Clarissa isn’t admiring the girl, but rather her school.

Clarissa has dreamt of traveling to the United States because of American high school culture ever since she was a child, and in 2022, she was able to fulfill that dream through Cultural Homestay, a foreign exchange program based in San Rafael, California.

“America is seen as a dream in Europe, (and) especially in Italy, (because of) American high school. Football, cheerleading, we don’t have those things, (and) those things made an image of American high school that everybody (in Italy) wants to (experience),” Clarissa said. “This was one of the main (reasons why I wanted to come here).”

Before she moved to Athens on Aug. 19, 2022 to attend CCHS, Clarissa lived

in Frascati, Italy, a small commune in the metropolitan city of Rome. In her free time, Clarissa would travel the 20 minutes to Rome with her friends to enjoy the city’s different environments and immerse herself in new experiences.

“It’s really easy to get into the city, so basically me and my friends, every weekend, we go there (and) we hang out,” Clarissa said. “When (you go), you always (meet) someone new because people like to introduce themselves and

it’s interesting because sometimes people that you see in Rome are from other parts of the city, which can be (fun).”

In Italy, Clarissa attended Liceo Classico M.T Cicerone High School, a high school with a focus on literature. Instead of participating in a K-12 education system

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“Football, cheerleading, we don’t have those things, (and) those things made an image of American high school that everybody (in Italy) wants to (experience).”

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**-- CLARISSA DE SANTIS,**

Italian foreign exchange student and CCHS senior

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like students do in the United States, Italian high schoolers attend specialized five-year high schools that focus on a certain subject. Although Clarissa enjoyed learning more about her desired subject, she believes the system has its flaws.

**Above:** LEARNING LITERATURE: Clarke Central High School senior and Italian foreign exchange student Clarissa De Santis sits and listens to a lesson in Room 231 on Dec. 8, 2022. Despite being from another country, Clarissa was able to jump into some challenging English classes at CCHS, including Advanced Placement English Literature and Composition and AP American Language and Composition. “When she was first introduced to us, I was personally very stressed out (in the class), and I just had a thought to myself like, ‘I could not imagine jumping into this right now,’” former AP Lit./Comp. student Amelia Baer said. “But she very quickly got caught up and I feel like I have a lot to learn from her because she has a very strong work ethic and she is always on top of things.” Photo by Lucas Donnelly



“You have the same classmates for five years because you’re taking the same classes with them, so sometimes, it’s hard because maybe you don’t like someone and you have to spend six hours each day (with them) for five years,” Clarissa said. “I decided to do this experience because I wanted to learn other subjects because I knew that (in the U.S.) you have different types of courses that you can take.”

Once Clarissa decided to make the jump to Athens, she immediately started preparing for her new life. However, in the back of her mind, she had certain anxieties surrounding the move.

“I heard about other exchange students that are not in a good relationship with their host sisters because sometimes they’re jealous, or they just don’t feel them,” Clarissa said. “This was one of my biggest fears because since I (am) only child, I (have) never had the opportunity to interact with other girls or boys of my age in the same house so it was (nerve-racking.)”

Despite her preconceived notions, Clarissa made the trip. Once she finally arrived in Athens after a 14-hour flight to Atlanta, she was greeted by her American host family, including her host sister, CCHS junior Tyus Dekle. Though the two were both nervous to meet each other, they hit it off immediately and were able to form a strong bond.

“We clicked right away. We just vibed together, started talking and (now) we

hang out all the time,” Dekle said. “She enjoys making friends and talking with \ people (so) she’s got confidence, which is an attractive quality to me. She’s just overall really easygoing and fun to hang around.”

As the two have cemented their relationship during the semester, they’ve found common ground.

“We spend a lot of time together. Our favorite activities are probably singing in the car, going Downtown and shopping or simply staying at home and

(watching) movies,” Clarissa said. “We (definitely) see our relationship more as a friendship than simply (a) host sister who’s hosting (an) exchange student. Right now, I can tell that I definitely see her as a (friend), I trust her and we really love each other.”

After taking a three-day period after her flight to settle in and get acclimated with her host family, Clarissa started at CCHS on Aug. 22, 2022. When she entered CCHS, she was immediately in awe of her new school environment, however, she was enrolled in a Literature 9 class, a course far below her skill level.

Quickly though, her academic potential was noticed by her school counselor, which resulted in a transfer to CCHS English department co-chair David Ragsdale’s first period Advanced Placement English Literature and Composition class. CCHS senior Nico Willman was in the class with Clarissa in the fall of the 2022-2023 school year, and saw her growth throughout the semester.

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“She came in with a lot of chemistry knowledge and (she was) one of the most diligent people in my class, if not the most. (She was) always on top of it, so what she’s been able to do is incredible.”

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**-- MATTHEW REGISTER,**  
CCHS science department teacher

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"(At first) it was very difficult for her, but she picked it up really quick in the class, (and) it's really cool to see her now," Willman said. "She's grown (so much) throughout the year. She's participating in (Socratic) Seminars as much, if not more, than everyone else. She's bringing in some good discussion points (and is) leaving everyone wowed."

CCHS senior Amelia Baer was also in AP English Lit./Comp. with Clarissa, and found Clarissa's ability to jump into an English-based class as an exchange student inspiring.

"When she was first introduced to us, I was personally very stressed out (in the class), and I just had a thought to myself like, 'I could not imagine jumping into this right now,'" Baer said.

"But she very quickly got caught up and I feel like I have a lot to learn from her because she has a very strong work ethic and she is always on top of things."

Clarissa's main anxiety when coming to the U.S. was her language barrier, but during her time in Athens, she has been able to confidently rid herself of that worry.

"I was worried (about people) coming to me because I was shy due to my English," Clarissa said. "(However), I've been lucky because people that I (know) try to make me feel more confident and it's probably thanks to my friends and my host family that I'm not nervous about it anymore."

After her first winter break in the U.S., Clarissa re-entered the school year with another AP English class, AP American Language and Composition. According to CCHS English department teacher Ian Altman, just like the previous semester, she took the English class by storm.

"Her English is very good (and) I (find) her to be an excellent writer. (She's) said that she especially appreciates learning about the history of English, which is something that I do early in the AP Language semester, so I (took the class) through true old English, which most people can't even pronounce or

understand even a single word, (but she can)," Altman said. "She comes from a different kind of school in Italy so she has studied Latin and Ancient Greek, and I am familiar with those things, so we have a kind of intellectual connection."

Clarissa's praise-worthy work ethic has also been acknowledged by CCHS science department teacher Matthew Regester, as he found her academic ability in his fall term AP Chemistry class impressive.

"There's always apprehension when someone jumps into AP Chemistry late (because) you don't really know what level of chemistry they have (attained, but she was) amazing," Regester said. "She came in with a lot of chemistry knowledge and (she was) one of the most diligent people in my class, if not the most.

(She was) always on top of it, so what she's been able to do is incredible."

With graduation on the horizon, and her year in the U.S. beginning to come to a close, Clarissa can't help but reflect on her time in Athens and the relationships she's formed.

"It's still hard to imagine my graduation even though it's only (in a couple) months. I (will) be proud of all my achievements and proud of all the good friendships and relationships with people that I made, (and I will) hopefully see myself as a better and

grown person," Clarissa said. "(But) I won't be ready to leave. I would have learned so many things, culturally and (emotionally) speaking, that I could not be happier and prouder of my place in the world."

Clarissa has enjoyed her experience with the American high school education system for both its social and educational benefits, and is hoping to come to the U.S. for her collegiate education after going back to school in Italy for her final year at Liceo Classico M.T Cicerone High School.

"(Originally), I wasn't sure about (staying), but I think that I (quickly) got used to American life," Clarissa said. "I really like the way that people are (here and) that you can just go outside (and) live your life. I think I'm definitely made for this type of (lifestyle)."

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"She enjoys making friends and talking with people (so) she's got confidence, which is an attractive quality to me. She's just overall really easygoing and fun to hang around."

-- TYUS DEKLE,  
CCHS junior

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**Top left: CURIOSITY:** Clarke Central High School senior and Italian foreign exchange student Clarissa De Santis (left) and CCHS junior Tyus Dekle (right) stand in Dekle's family's kitchen on Dec. 7, 2022. While in the United States, Clarissa has been able to immerse herself in the life of an American teenager, which is one of the things that she was curious about when first applying to become a foreign exchange student. "I was super excited to see how teenagers here live their life, outside school, in school, because one thing that I noticed (in Italy) is that probably half of the life of a teenager happened in the school," Clarissa said. Photo by Aza Khan

**Right: LONG FLIGHT:** Clarke Central High School senior and Italian foreign exchange student Clarissa De Santis points to her home country on a globe in Room 231. Clarissa came to Athens on Aug. 19, 2022 after flying on a 14-hour flight. "I stayed in the same seat for around 14 hours so it was a long flight," Clarissa said. "I landed in Atlanta, and then around two hours later, I was (picked) up from the airport (by) my counselor, which is like the person who check you every month from the exchange program and she (took me to Athens)." Photo by Lucas Donnelly



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# WILD WILD WESTRICH

*Alarming numbers of stray and abandoned animals in Athens shows a need for more responsible pet ownership.*



BY ISABELLA WESTRICH  
Variety Editor

**F**rom chihuahuas to basset hounds to great danes, dogs are man's furry, funny and faithful friends.

But are we as people holding up our side of this pawsome partnership?

The hundreds of strays and abandoned animals in Athens might say no—in fact, we've actually been rather bad boys.

"There's a lot of people, especially college kids, that will get dogs and then can't care for them, or a lot of people who will just have too many

pets," Athens Area Humane Society Animal Care Specialist Bella Williamson said.

This irresponsible pet ownership has led to a stray and abandoned animal problem in Athens. In 2022 alone, the Athens Clarke County Animal Shelter took in a total of 1151 dogs and 1104 cats that were either strays or owner surrenders.

Of those, 38 dogs and 31 cats were euthanized, one dog and 11 cats died at the kennel and six dogs and one cat were dead on arrival.

Conditions for these animals, even if they don't die, are far from optimal. Williamson has seen many strays come in harmed physically, mentally or both.

"We had, for example, Larry. He's still here, but when he came in he was covered in fleas and didn't have a lot of hair. We also had a dog named Bravo, and he was almost completely hairless just because of his skin condition," Williamson said. "Then for some of them it's more like mental than it is physical, and so some of them may just be scared of people altogether."

Even beyond the negative effects on the animals themselves, irresponsible pet ownership can have wider negative effects on the community.

Animals that aren't properly cared for can spread diseases, destroy the balance of ecosystems by killing of native species such as birds and cause car accidents, among other things.

***Athens' stray and abandoned animal problem can be resolved — it's just imperative that pet owners act responsibly.***

Community members should work to address this heartbreaking issue.

"If the animals are struggling, we, as a community, should give them some help. Whether it is taking the animals to shelters or just putting some food out for them, all of us should at least do something for them other than leaving them alone," Clarke Central High School freshman and Humane Society Club member Ashley Gresham said.

Athens' stray and abandoned animal problem can be resolved—it's just imperative that pet owners act responsibly.

Spaying and neutering, keeping pets under control and enclosed and providing them with everything they need are all essential. We owe it to our pets to step up; after all, all they do is love us. **O**



**Above:** STRAY STRUGGLES: An illustration shows a dog suffering after being abandoned by its owner. Irresponsible pet ownership has led to a stray and abandoned animal problem in Athens. "Spaying and neutering, keeping pets under control and enclosed and providing them with everything they need are all essential. We owe it to our pets to step up; after all, all they do is love us," Variety Editor Isabella Westrich wrote. Illustration by Antonio Starks



*IN FOCUS*



**Featured:** BELTING IT OUT: Morning Brown, Incorporate founder and operatic soprano singer Angela Brown performs in the Clarke Central High School Mell Auditorium on Feb. 24. CCHS junior and attendee Niko Cope felt that CCHS is lucky to have the opportunity to meet, see and feel the energy of different cultures and Angela Brown's was no different. "From her background and to her upbringing and her hilarious stories, she was a perfect fabrication and example of being yourself to beat the odds of the world," Cope said. "I think we all are a little bit of underdogs here at Clarke Central, but she made it possible to see a way through to fight in achieving bright dreams in a dark world. We all should mimic her mindset and her radiant happy energy." Photo and story by Aza Khan





# FASHION STATEMENTS





Fashion is a powerful form of expression that can create individuality, and those who take interest in it experience a variety of benefits.

STORY BY VICTORIA GARLAND  
Variety Staffer

LAYOUT BY MOLLY HARWELL  
Editor-in-Chief

PHOTOS AND LAYOUT BY LUCAS  
DONNELLY  
Visuals Coordinator

PHOTOS BY AZA KHAN  
Director of Audience Engagement

Walking through the halls of Clarke Central High School, one can see diverse fashion as some students prioritize comfort with sweats and t-shirts while others come in suits.

For CCHS senior Ana Thompson, during the COVID-19 pandemic, she found style as a positive light among all of the chaos.

"I had nothing else to do, so I was like, 'Let me find something to occupy my mind' because COVID was depressing," Thompson said. "I found (that fashion was) something that made me happy and something that could get my mind off of that. I love (fashion). You can dress however you want (and) put anything you want together."

In addition to acting as a source of happiness, fashion can communicate personality and individuality without words. For CCHS junior Oliver Domingo, it has allowed him to gain confidence and find himself.

"I think (fashion) can create a sense of identity, you can feel comfortable in your own skin in some ways," Domingo said. "If you're more (the) ambitious type, you could wear more wild clothes or maybe you want to take an ironic approach to it and you could be totally dull."

Another benefit of fashion is that it can be a mode of expression and creativity. From a young age, CCHS English department teacher Camille Joiner has found ways to put her own twist on clothing.

"I've always been very interested in ways fashion can be a creative medium for people," Joiner said. "I like to think of myself as an artistic person, but I actually can't draw or paint or do anything artistic. So, for me, (fashion) was a medium in which I felt I could express myself."

Along with expression, CCHS science department teacher Valinda Miller bases her fashion on what makes her feel good, and she feels the confidence her clothing brings is reflected in her performance.

"When I was in high school and college, I would dress up to take a test because if I feel good going into the test, I would generally do better," Miller said. "When you are comfortable, you are going to perform your best academically and socially, so just wear what makes you happy."

The variety of fashion styles represented at CCHS is a unique aspect of our community. Scarlett Ehlers, a CCHS sophomore who temporarily transferred from Belgium, saw this when she came to CCHS.

"There was so much different people in different outfits and styles (at CCHS). In Belgium people dress more the same," Ehlers said.

Domingo believes that fashion is beneficial in numerous different ways, and it's important to make sure that students' style is bringing them joy and reflecting themselves.

"I think it's best to just be original and be yourself and do what you want to do. And I think not everybody will understand it. But as long as you are proud of what you have created, that is what matters the most," Domingo said.





“I think it’s best to just be original and be yourself, do what you want to do. I think not everybody will understand it, but as long as you are proud of what you have created, that is what matters the most.”

**-- OLIVER DOMINGO,**  
CCHS junior













“Seeing how many kids just feel comfortable to dress in whatever they want is really refreshing. Certain things that kids wear are very bold choices and it’s awesome to see that no one really cares what anyone else is wearing.”

-- **CAMILLE JOINER**,  
CCHS English department teacher





# IN FOCUS

**Featured:** FUN IN THE SUN! An Oconee County School District volunteer laughs with a Special Olympics participant in Billy Henderson Stadium during the Special Olympics on March 29. As a first-time attendee, Clarke County School District bus driver and parent of Special Olympics participant Sophia Hayes believes the event was a positive experience for Timothy Flood Elementary School second-grader, Jace Scott. "Before today, I always wanted to attend Special Olympics, so I was very excited my son got an opportunity to partake in this event," Hayes said. "I love (Special Olympics) because (Jace) is excited and he likes to run and play energetically, so I'm happy for him." Photo and story by Aza Khan







**Featured:** DRESS FOR SUCCESS: Retired Clarke County School District educator Johnnie Lay Burks sits in the Athens-Clarke County Library on March 9. Burks was the first Black teacher at Chase Street Elementary School in 1966, and the school is now set to be named after her. "That was a hard fight for us to get the barriers broken," Burks said. "(At the time), I (was) extremely young in my career, but I'm tough." Photo by Temprince Battle

# Breaking barriers

*Johnnie Lay Burks, the first Black teacher at Chase Street Elementary School, has broken barriers and made change through her career as an educator.*

BY ISABELLA WESTRICH  
Variety Editor

**J**ohnnie Lay Burks wears a black suit with a red shirt, red scarf and red felt hat that perfectly match her nails.

She calls it "dressing for success," and it's what she's done every day of her teaching career.

She dressed for success on all the days she taught at the all-Black East Athens Elementary School, mimeographing and taping the missing chapters into textbooks to try to make up for lacking materials, resources and opportunities for the students she loved.

She dressed for success when former Clarke County School District Superintendent Samuel Wood selected her because of her exemplary teaching to integrate a school, news she had to keep quiet to avoid attracting negative attention from the community.

She dressed for success on the day she attempted to start her assigned teaching position at Alps Road Elementary, the day the principal stopped her in the school's lobby, saying that Alps Road's all-white faculty was "complete."

And she dressed for success the very next day, the day in 1966 when she started as the first Black teacher at Chase Street Elementary School, soon to be named after her.

Every day that she dressed for success, showed up and pushed for change, society told her that she wasn't good enough because of the color of her skin. She didn't give up, though, because she knew that any progress she made


would be for her family, her friends and her students—and she always gave her all for her students.

"This picture became more than me, Mrs. Johnnie Lay Burks, because I've got a race of people I'm representing. I've got a family. I've got colleges. I've got high schools. I've got all these people. But more to the point, I can hear my slave ancestors (saying) 'You got to keep pushing. We got this far, you got to take it to the next level,'" Burks said. "So (I couldn't) quit because this was not about me."

Throughout the rest of her career in various CCSD positions, Burks built connections with students and families and became a beloved educator in the district. She watched as CCSD became more and more equitable, taking pride in her role in the progression.

"When you go to the Board of Education now, what you see (is) a diversified group of men and women. I love it, and when I look up there then I think, 'I had something to do with that,'" Burks said.

Now, students walk into the same cheerful office and wood-paneled hallway of the currently-named Chase Street that Burks walked into years ago as the only Black teacher in the building.

But after a Feb. 9 BOE vote, that hallway will be the entrance to Johnnie Lay Burks Elementary School, a place where everybody, no matter the color of their skin, is welcome. 

**-- JOHNNIE LAY BURKS**

Retired CCSD educator

*"When you go to the Board of Education now, what you see (is) a diversified group of men and women. I love it, and when I look up there then I think 'I had something to do with that.'"*

# BRINGING THE BHM PROGRAM BACK

*Clarke Central High School students and staff joined together in Mell Auditorium on Feb. 28 to celebrate Black History at CCHS through a spectacular 90-minute program compiled with performances from multiple of the CCHS fine arts department programs. An official BHM program hasn't been held since before the pandemic at CCHS, but this year, the tradition re-emerged and proved to be bigger and better than ever, as an arrangement of dancers, public speakers, singers musicians and actors took to the stage to showcase their talents and highlight Black History.*

PHOTO ESSAY COMPILED BY MILES  
LAWRENCE AND VICTORIA GARLAND  
Variety Staffers

PHOTOS BY TEMPRINCE BATTLE  
AND ISABELLE DUNÇAN  
Photographer and Social Media Staffer

LAYOUT BY MAYA CLEMENT  
Managing Editor









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**Left:** PAYING HOMAGE: Clarke Central High School drama club member Emmanuel Thompson, a junior, performs a tribute to deceased songwriter Michael Jackson at the Black History Month program in E.B. Mell Auditorium on Feb. 28. CCHS Principal's Secretary Latoya Hill was glad that the event made its return at CCHS after years without one. "I thought it was an amazing program. I was blown away by the talent of our kids," Hill said. "It felt really nostalgic to have (the program) back after so many years because when I was here (years ago) it was a staple. We had one every year and (it's) just kind of like a breath of fresh air to hear so many different performances." Photo by Temprince Battle, story by Miles Lawrence

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**Right:** POSITIVE PROGRAM: Clarke Central High School Secretary Linda Glenn sings a gospel song during the Black History Month program in E.B. Mell Auditorium on Feb. 28. For Glenn, the significance of the event was to spread knowledge and show culture while sending the message that everyone is equal. "(Black people) as a race is not recognized enough to me personally. If we do something wrong we're gonna be recognized, we're going to go on the front page of the paper," Glenn said. "But as a whole, even some of our students don't know our history as a Black person, unless they've had parents or grandparents that has been able to teach them that. I want (the students) to realize that we're all equal. We are human beings and just like Ms. Barnett said at the end (of the program), I want the students to realize that nobody is better than the other one." Photo by Temprince Battle, story by Victoria Garland

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"I hope that the students took away with them that we can come together and be unified as a school. That we have a sense of pride about what we do here, that staff is engaged, students are engaged. But, it's just that we're all about the unity that we can all come together as one."

-- TONIA JONES,  
CCHS Graduation Coach





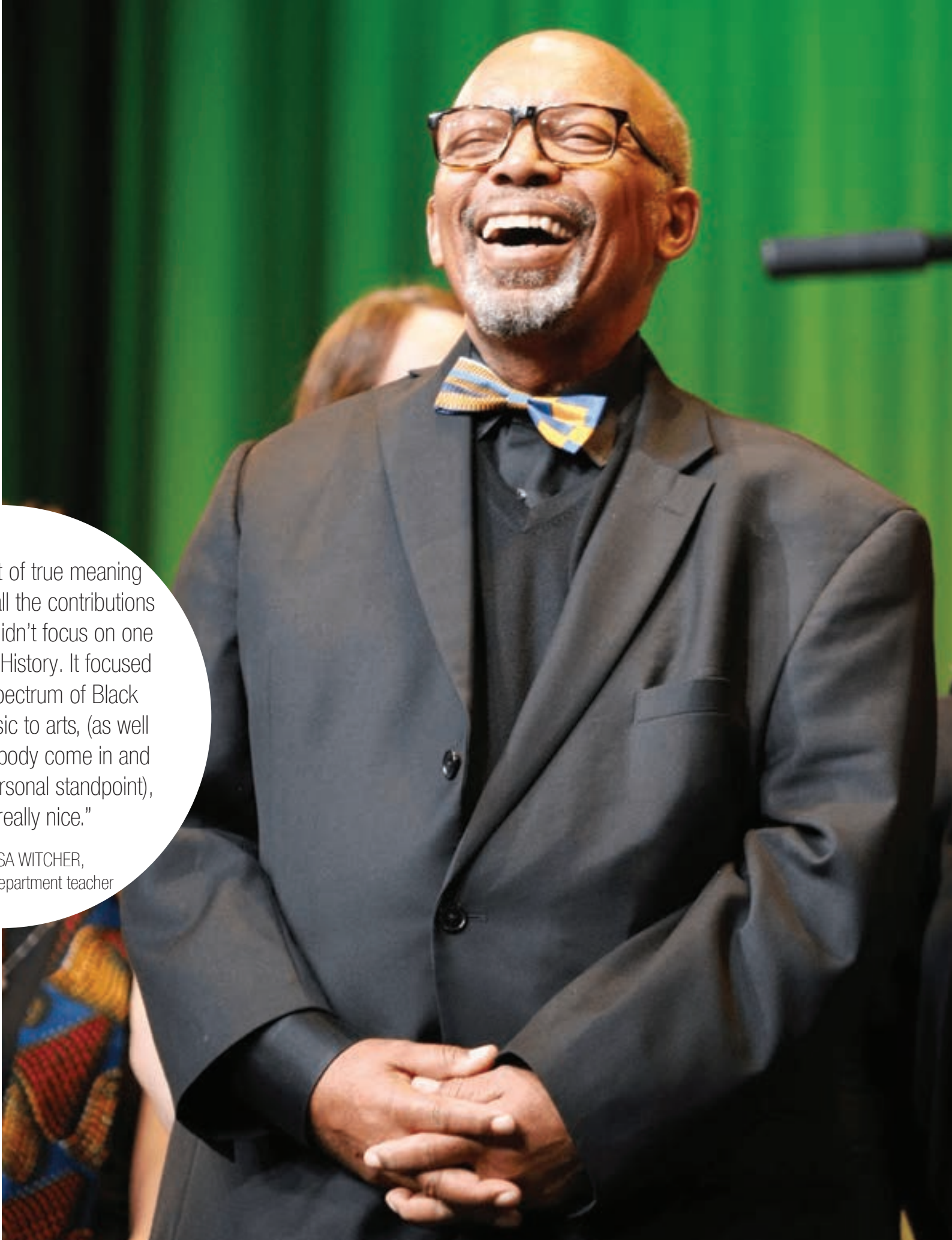


“There was a lot behind it. I liked a (and that) it just d set part of Black on the whole sp History from mus as) having someb speak (from a per so it was n

-- ROENESS  
CCHS science de







t of true meaning  
all the contributions  
didn't focus on one  
History. It focused  
spectrum of Black  
spectrum to arts, (as well  
anybody come in and  
personal standpoint),  
really nice."

SA WITCHER,  
department teacher

# CULTURAL BUZZ



With the perfect blend of R&B and pop, the Columbian-American singer-songwriter Kali Uchis explores different elements in her new album "Red Moon in Venus," released to all streaming platforms on March 3.

The 15 song album goes through the ups and downs of romance within 43 minutes. Throughout each song, it becomes apparent that there was a bittersweet breakup in a past relationship.

Although "Red Moon in Venus" might seem on the generic side for Uchis, listeners will find her lyrics and experiences relatable and will not be disappointed with her smooth and captivating voice.

As each song passes, the lyrics get more reflective on how Uchis deserves love that is less painful and how much happier she is as an independent woman, although a contrast occurs when lyrics of blame turn into thoughts of wanting to restart the relationship in the last two songs, "Moonlight" and "Happy Now."

Although many of the songs in the album resemble the same melody of her previous soundtracks, listeners will undoubtedly be drawn to Uchis' familiar femininity expressed through lyrics and the whimsical feeling throughout "Red Moon in Venus."

-- Isabelle Duncan, Social Media Staffer



Zaxby's new Signature Club Sandwich, launched March 1 to replace the Zaxby's Club, is a flavorful and excellent addition to their menu.

Like the old Zaxby's Club, the sandwich is served as a meal with crinkle fries and a small drink at \$9.29. It consists of a toasted bun, fried chicken, pickles and Zax sauce, but it adds two slices of bacon and American cheese, giving the sandwich a new flavor profile.

Flavor-wise, the pickles and bacon stand out. The pickles add a nice amount of acidity, in great contrast to the meatiness of the bacon.

Aside from the flavor, the quality of the texture varies. The chicken is cooked perfectly, as it is crispy on the outside and juicy on the inside. However, the bun and bacon were over-toasted, as the bottom half of the bun was nearly as crunchy as a crouton.

Despite its flaws, the sandwich as a whole makes for a good meal worth its price as it will satisfy customers' hunger and taste buds.

-- Cooper Jones, Journalism I student



Kimono Cats, available through Apple Arcade, was released on March 3. The game offers a fun and addictive experience, though it is unchallenging to those looking for more puzzle-style games.

The game follows the path of a cat, directed by the player, and their partner as they walk through a Japanese festival. Throughout the journey, players throw darts and play simple minigames to buy their partner gifts.

The game's cute graphics and premise provide a pleasing experience for players, and its controls are relatively simple, with a tutorial that's easy to follow. However, the simple carnival-style activities don't offer a challenge for players and can feel repetitive as one continues progressing through the levels.

Additionally, while the game itself is free, in order to access it, one must have a subscription to Apple Arcade, which costs \$4.99 a month.

Though it's unavailable for Android users and may not be the right option for challenge seekers, Kimono Cats is certainly a choice for players who want a game that offers feline fun in a relaxing and slightly addicting format.

-- Maya Shrivastav, Webmaster

## "65"

BY LUKE SHANNON  
Journalism I student

"65," starring Adam Driver and produced by Scott Beck and Bryan Woods, hit theaters on March 10. While it's a fairly good action movie with a science-fiction setting and thriller moments, it also has its flaws.

Set 65 million years ago, the movie follows Mills (Driver) after his spaceship crashes into a prehistoric Earth. Now, he and the only other survivor Koa (Ariana Greenblatt) must work together to survive the prehistoric dangers, such as dinosaurs and bugs, and escape Earth.

Throughout the movie, Mills becomes a father figure to Koa by looking out for her. This creates an interesting character dynamic that is expounded on by complications like a language barrier between them. The actors, especially Driver, showcase this relationship well through their portrayal of how much the characters truly care about each other, especially in their teamwork during the action-packed scenes.

Throughout the movie, a great execution of cinematography and visual effects brought the film to life and gave it a high quality. This was paramount to the viewing experience due to the movie's heavy reliance on computer-generated imagery (CGI) of dinosaurs and explosions.

However, there are some cliché moments and the movie went on a little too long, especially toward the end where overdone action will leave viewers wondering when it will finally stop. While the movie started with an exciting premise, these cliché moments and pacing issues definitely detracted from the overall experience of the movie.

Despite its flaws, "65" is a fun watch for sci-fi or action enjoyers but nothing groundbreaking, and it likely won't appeal to those who aren't already sci-fi fans.



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY MAYA CLEMENT  
Managing Editor





# CULTURAL BUZZ



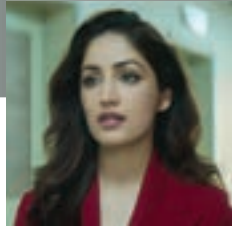
“Red Ruby Da Sleeze” marks the 13th number-one hit for well-known rapstress Nicki Minaj after topping Billboard Charts since its release on March 3, and it's oh-so-deserved.

The song sounds like fast-paced dance music with Minaj's original kick and spin on a classic rap track that's never been done before.

Under powerful and clever lyrics such as “Chinese on my sleeve, these wanna be Chun-Li's,” Minaj references her alter ego perfectly, as well as fitting into her rhyme scheme of smart wordplay and diction to signify a deeper meaning in her songs.

With “Red Ruby Da Sleeze,” Minaj has delivered once again, making the song likely to become a fan favorite and encouraging fans to look out for future songs by Minaj.

-- Peter Atchley, Journalism I student



Chor Nikal Ke Bhaga, a Netflix original action movie made and set in India, was released on March 24. Acted in Hindi, the one hour and 50 minute movie's international touch helps it differentiate itself from typical Hollywood films.

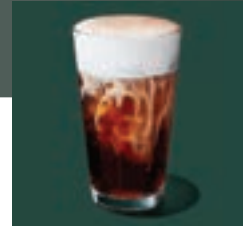
The movie follows flight attendant Neha (Yami Gautam) as she attempts to help her boyfriend pull off a heist mid-flight—until their plane, and plan, get hijacked.

While at first Chor Nikal Ke Bhaga seems headed towards a cliché action movie plot, shocking twists make the storyline more complex and enjoyable, keeping viewers on the edge of their seats.

The movie is made up of flashbacks to multiple different times and places, which furthers the suspense and complexities of the plot, but can also be somewhat confusing. Additionally, the dialogue and acting fail to carry the story as they aren't anything special, and won't emotionally invest viewers.

Overall, this movie is perfect for those seeking an easy yet thrilling watch, but fails to deliver a memorable viewing experience.

-- Isabella Westrich, Variety Editor



The Starbucks Cinnamon Caramel Cream Cold Brew, launched on March 7, provides an addition to their menu that is not-so-cinnamon after all.

The drink features a thick velvety cold foam with cinnamon dolce sprinkles dusted along the top. It is visually stunning with a mix of colors from a white to brown gradient that displays the iconic Starbucks-style drink.

The drink was very sweet and had that classic caramel taste, which was the star of the show as it was a great contrast for the cold, bitter coffee and carried the drink's flavor profile.

Unfortunately, the cinnamon, the intended main attraction, lacked immensely in the drink. The cinnamon flavor was barely present throughout the entire drink, leaving customers wanting way more.

Additionally, the drink starts at a price of \$5.25 for a tall and goes up to \$5.75 for a grande, which can be off-putting for those looking for a cheaper drink option.

This drink was a disappointment as the advertised flavor is unrecognizable, making it a letdown for cinnamon fans.

-- Samaya Ellis, Journalism I student

## "The Last of Us"

BY NICO WILLMAN  
Editor-at-Large

**"T**he Last of Us," released weekly to HBO Max from Jan. 15 to March 12, brings the acclaimed video game of the same name to life in a tense and heart-wrenching series.

Following two survivors of a deadly fungal pandemic, Joel (Pedro Pascal) and Ellie (Bella Ramsey), on a journey through a post-apocalyptic America filled with fierce killers and zombies.

The show manages to hold up exceptionally against the beloved game, providing a breath of fresh air to the narrative. By masterfully integrating contextual details and wholly original scenes alongside sequences from the game, the show fully delves into its world, giving an utterly captivating experience to both first-time viewers and long-time fans.

The series is brilliantly shot and performed, with tension feeling both reliable and natural. Each scene, both original and show-exclusive, is strong in its purpose of furthering the story's themes of love and survival. Ramsey gives the performance of a generation as Ellie, and Pascal's fatherly character mixed with his complex and violent morals make for a captivating protagonist.

"The Last of Us" stands out from other zombie shows with its layered take on the "infected." The fungal infection becomes a highlight of the show, as it takes deliberate time to lean into the lore. The payoff is incredible, the tension unbearable and the anxiety palpable. The infected are sure to keep audiences on the edge of their seats.

Despite its roll, the show stumbles towards the middle, with certain episodes that feel incomplete, strange shifts in tone and rushed moments that should be impactful. With episodes running an hour on average, fatigue may take some viewers out of the experience. However, if viewers can push through, the finale and episodes leading up to it more than make up for the stumbles in pace.

Overall, "The Last of Us" blazed through its first season, leaving a trail of undeniable excellence in its wake.



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY MAYA CLEMENT  
Managing Editor

**Featured:** HOME: Clarke Central High School fine arts department teacher Amanda Price sits at her desk in Room 306 on Feb. 23. Price's decision to teach at CCHS was inspired by a longing to return to Athens. "I was born in Athens (and) we lived in (here) until I was three because my dad, who taught history at Cedar Shoals High School had gotten a job offer at Armstrong Atlantic State University in Savannah, (Georgia) to teach college history, so we moved down there and that's where I went through school," Price said. "I didn't spend, K-12 in Athens, but Athens has always, in a way, been a home. Coming to (the University of Georgia) for college felt very familiar, (and) that's part of why when I was looking to teach high school, I wanted to teach in Athens." Photo by Aza Khan

# PRICE'S PASSION

*Although CCHS fine arts department teacher Amanda Price wasn't originally planning on becoming an art teacher, she has cultivated loving and positive relationships within her classroom and with her students.*



STORY BY MILES LAWRENCE  
Variety Staffer

LAYOUT BY ISABELLA  
WESTRICH  
Variety Editor

LAYOUT BY MAYA CLEMENT  
Managing Editor

**W**alking into Room 306, one may find themselves pleasantly overwhelmed by the amount of paper mache and paint scattered throughout the classroom. Intricate student art pieces

line the walls, and behind a pile of artwork or in the center of a huddle of students is Clarke Central High School fine arts department teacher Amanda Price.

From going to renowned art museums as a kid living in Savannah, Georgia, to flipping through art books for hours, Price has always felt a strong connection to art. However, the idea of being an art major sounded too unrealistic, so after high school, Price forced herself to brush her childhood passion aside and begin thinking about other majors.

This avoidance didn't last long, though, because after dabbling in public relations, Price eagerly changed her major to art. Through an internship at the Jepson Center Art Museum in Savannah and a job at the pottery studio Good Dirt in Athens, Price realized she could pursue this passion by becoming an art teacher in Athens, the city she was born and lived in until



**“For a lot of the students, having a creative space where they can go express themselves and have that creative energy and that vulnerability is really important!”**

**-- AMANDA PRICE,**


CCHS fine arts department teacher

moving to Savannah at three-years-old.

“I wanted the opportunity of teaching high school to really spend time with students who continue (art) throughout high school to help them develop as artists,” Price said. “That was what made me want to come back to Athens for teaching.”

Price has spent her six years at CCHS focusing on promoting creative expression and vulnerability in her classroom, something she was able to find in her own art teacher's classroom in high school.

“That was a space where I knew I could go to and get advice, even though a lot of the time, it was advice I did not want to hear,” Price said. “I knew I could have that space (in my class because) students need somewhere in the school where they feel at home, and so for a lot of the students, having a creative space where they can go express themselves and have that creative energy and that vulnerability is really important.”

From assisting students in their journey as artists to asking students personal questions like “Hey, how’s your boyfriend?” Price has been able to cultivate a supportive, respectful and humorous environment in her classroom, where she can continue her passion for art and inspire others. 



**Top:** A HELPING HAND: Clarke Central High School fine arts department teacher Amanda Price (right) works with CCHS sophomore Noe Marcus (left) in Room 306 during Price's Photography II class on Feb. 27. During high school, Price formed a positive relationship with her art teacher, and that connection inspired her to create a safe space in her own classroom at CCHS. “My art teacher in high school's room was described as a big dysfunctional family, and that was something that I (definitely) needed in high school,” Price said. “That was a space where I knew I could go to her and get advice even though a lot of the time it was advice I did not want to hear. I knew I could have that space (at CCHS because) students need somewhere in the school where they feel at home.” Photo by Aza Khan

**Bottom:** VULNERABILITY: Clarke Central High School junior Jacqueline Hernandez (left) and CCHS fine arts department teacher Amanda Price (right) work together on an art project in Room 306 on Feb. 27. Price felt that vulnerability is one of the most important processes in creating art. “I think making art but also (in) learning you make mistakes (and) your weaknesses are exposed, (so) you have to have some vulnerability in order to get feedback on anything,” Price said. “If you don't have that relationship, then how can you ask students to make work about themselves?” Photo by Aza Khan



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# TELL ME, WHY

Although Apple TV+'s comedy "Ted Lasso" is entirely fictional, the lessons athletes can learn from the show are very real.



BY WYATT MEYER  
Sports Editor

Apple TV+'s hit comedy "Ted Lasso" is many things: funny, heartwarming and sincere, among others.

But for most viewers, "Ted Lasso" isn't really about any of those things. "Ted Lasso" is about the small, yellow sign precariously taped above actor Jason Sudeikis's office, displayed for all the world to see.

That sign says only one word: believe.

That one crooked poster symbolizes everything

Theodore "Ted" Lasso stands for. As an American football coach going to England to coach the fictional professional soccer team A.F.C. Richmond, he's not the most talented coach or the smartest tactician, but he'll be darned if he doesn't have the biggest heart in West London.

In a way, that sign is a tangible part of Lasso, an extra limb that he extends like an olive branch to anyone fortunate enough to meet him.

Although he's "just" a character, when Lasso slaps the sign in a halftime speech to his team midway through the first season, one can almost feel the vibrations through the screen.

Far from just being an on-screen inspiration to his players, Lasso's teachings have real-life applications to every single athlete from Britain to Brazil.

Lasso's little yellow sign represents the simplest wisdom that any coach imparts to their players – to never give up. It's simple, it's cliché, but that doesn't make it any less important.

Lasso shows that soccer is not a game of the body or of the mind, but of the heart. When wayward striker Jamie Tartt refused to acquiesce to Lasso's leadership, Lasso didn't lash out. Instead, he forged a deeper, emotional connection with Tartt that forced the belief right into him, coaxing the negativity out.

In athletics, there's always going to be those like Tartt who are too afraid to put their heart on the line as a part of the game. But as skeptical journalist Trent Crimm wrote in the show's third episode, "If the Lasso way is wrong, it's hard to imagine being right."

*Lasso's little yellow sign represents the simplest wisdom that any coach imparts to their players – to never give up.*

Whether athletes want to admit it or not, everything in sports comes back to belief.

The game-winning free throw? Belief.

The walk-off home run? Belief.

The hail mary touchdown?

Belief, belief, belief.

The season premiere of the third, and possibly final, season

of "Ted Lasso" will come out on March 15, but the relevance of the show will last far longer. With that in mind, let's all take a page out of Lasso's book and remember that regardless of the score, regardless of the odds, regardless of any uncontrollable factor, the most important word in sports is often the simplest.

Believe. **o**



**Above:** LASSO'S LESSONS: The iconic "Believe" sign from Apple TV+'s hit comedy "Ted Lasso" is shown. Despite the show's fictitious plots and characters, the themes and narratives the show features are still relevant to athletes everywhere. "Let's all take a page out of Lasso's book and remember that regardless of the score, regardless of the odds, regardless of any uncontrollable factor, the most important word in sports is often the simplest. Believe," Sports Editor Wyatt Meyer wrote. "It's simple, it's cliché, but that doesn't make it any less important." Illustration by Antonio Starks

# SPRING SPORTS HALFTIME REPORT

*Sports Editor Wyatt Meyer checks in with every CCHS spring sport.*

**Last season's record:** (5-8)

**What's new:** "Obviously, there are people that are pretty new to tennis and those people need to work on core positioning, serving form and everything like that."

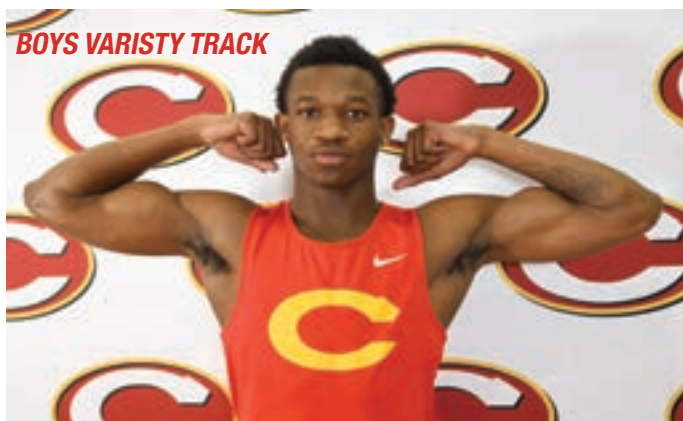
— CCHS boys varsity tennis player Patrick Allen, a junior

**Outlook:** "I think we haven't really solidified lineups yet. I still feel like some people aren't playing the right positions for them and some people still need some more experience, but I think (the season is) good so far."

— CCHS boys varsity tennis player Patrick Allen, a junior



**BOYS VARSITY TENNIS**



**BOYS VARSITY TRACK**

**Last season's record:** N/A

**What's new:** "One of the things we talked about as a staff is that we always want to get more of our student body involved because, to us, track and field is a lifelong sport."

— CCHS head varsity track and field coach Justin Jones

**Outlook:** "We run a lot, so sometimes some people will quit mid-workout and stuff. We definitely need to work on that. I try to push everybody to keep going."

— CCHS boys varsity track athlete Shavique Bascus, a senior

**Last season's record:** (16-4-0)

**What's new:** "A new player to the varsity starting lineup (who has) been very good for us is Auggie Coons, he's a junior. He's started every game so far and been a key piece for us."

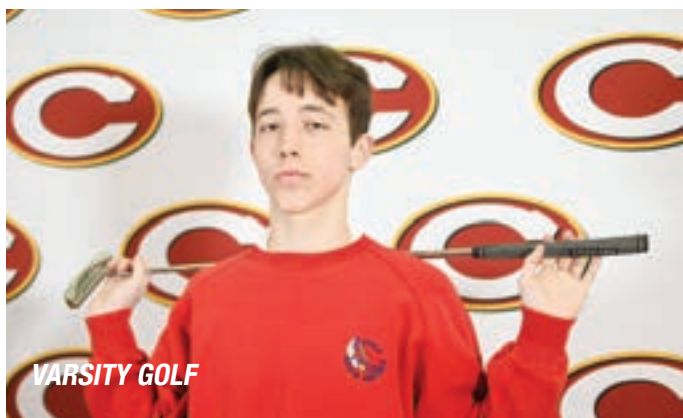
— CCHS head varsity soccer coach Chris Aiken

**Outlook:** "I expect there to be pretty hard games and we gotta just battle through. We just gotta really prepare ourselves for what's to come."

— CCHS boys varsity soccer player Jackson Ogilvie, a senior



**BOYS VARSITY SOCCER**



**VARSITY GOLF**

**Last season's record:** N/A

**What's new:** "I've been going to the driving range, practicing my short game and actually playing some golf to get better."

— CCHS varsity golfer Tommy Hogan, a senior

**Outlook:** "I think because it's such a small group of people, it'll all just be like a couple of friends going out and playing golf. At least from what I see and hear, it's not too serious, it's just to have fun."

— CCHS varsity golfer Tommy Hogan, a senior





**Last season's record:** (8-8-1)

**What's new:** "We want) to try to have more consistent play out of the team. It's hard because I wasn't here last season, but it felt like the team went through some ups and downs with injuries and (things like that)."

– CCHS head girls varsity soccer coach Jacob Baxley

**Outlook:** "We definitely lost a lot of big leaders last year, we had a lot of seniors, but we're definitely trying to (work on that)."

– CCHS girls varsity soccer player Evin Carvell, a junior

**Last season's record:** (8-5)

**What's new:** "It's mostly underclassmen on the team, which I think is interesting, but it'll definitely be good for the future because they'll have a lot more experience and they'll be able to help other people develop."

– CCHS girls varsity tennis player Willa Frierson, a junior

**Outlook:** "In a way, we're all on a clean slate, so we're able to just really have that chemistry (with teammates) without it being something that was already there."

– CCHS girls varsity tennis player Willa Frierson, a junior



**Last season's record:** (7-18)

**What's new:** "I think the chemistry we have (makes us special). This year, we have a will to really do some damage and be a better team than we were last year."

– CCHS varsity baseball player Benjamin Campbell, a senior

**Outlook:** "We've been working a lot harder, so I'm really hoping that it's gonna be evident that all of our work has been paying off. I want to hopefully have a winning season, make the playoffs and ultimately just be a good team."

– CCHS varsity baseball player Tristan Lowery, a senior

**Last season's record:** N/A

**What's new:** "I keep on pushing (other athletes) because sometimes it can be hard at practice and some of them do want to quit, but that's not the mindset we're going for this year."

– CCHS girls varsity track athlete Ty'asia Brown, a sophomore

**Outlook:** "Coming from state last year, school was almost over and I was ready for the summertime, (but) then school came back around and I was ready for track to start."

– CCHS girls varsity track athlete Xzaria Hanks, a sophomore





# IN THE LONG RUN

*Sports Staffer Kendarius Butts talks with CCHS boys varsity track and field athlete Jamir Hall, a freshman, about this passion for the sport.*

STORY BY KENDARIUS BUTTS  
Sports Staffer

LAYOUT BY WYATT MEYER  
Sports Editor

## SPORTS STAFFER KENDARIUS

### **BUTTS: WHAT THINGS ABOUT TRACK DO YOU ENJOY?**

Clarke Central High School boys varsity track and field athlete Jamir Hall: *It's just the best feeling in the world. You always want to be better than somebody else and just watching people that are probably better than you is hard. But then again, you take it and you work to get better than that person.*

### **KB: WHAT CHALLENGES DO YOU ANTICIPATE HAVING DURING THE SEASON?**

JH: *Last year, I was doing track for the first few weeks (and) I did pretty well, but there was this one runner at this meet at Jefferson (High School). It was my turn (and) my personal record was 17.8 feet. (This runner) jumped like 18 feet with ease. I was just devastated. I don't even think I placed, (but) I took that (and) tried to get better and make it where that wouldn't happen again.*

**Above:** ZEST FOR THE BEST: Clarke Central High School boys varsity track and field athlete Jamir Hall, a freshman, poses in the Competition Gym during the ODYSSEY Media Group's Spring Media Day on Feb. 4. Hall found his passion for track through his desire for competition. "It's just the best feeling in the world. You always want to be better than somebody else and just watching people that are probably better than you is hard," Hall said. "But then again, you take it and you work to get better than that person." Photo by Aza Khan





## KB: WHAT'S YOUR OPINION ON THE TEAM THIS YEAR?

JH: I feel like we have a pretty good track team. I think that we're strong in a lot of our events. I've seen a lot of people run, like one of our best runners, (CCHS boys varsity track and field athlete) Shavique Bascus, (a senior), I know that they are at the top when it comes to the things that they do.

## KB: WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS THIS YEAR?

JH: I'm really just focusing on my (personal records and) trying to do things that I couldn't do last year. I definitely expect to help score points for our team and this track season, and definitely place in some of these games I do.

## KB: HOW PREPARED DO YOU FEEL FOR THE SEASON?

JH: I think that it seemed like over the summer I couldn't prepare as much just because of other sports that I played. I feel like I have to do much more than the next person to try to be better. **O**



## KB: WHAT THINGS ARE DIFFERENT FOR YOU FROM MIDDLE SCHOOL?

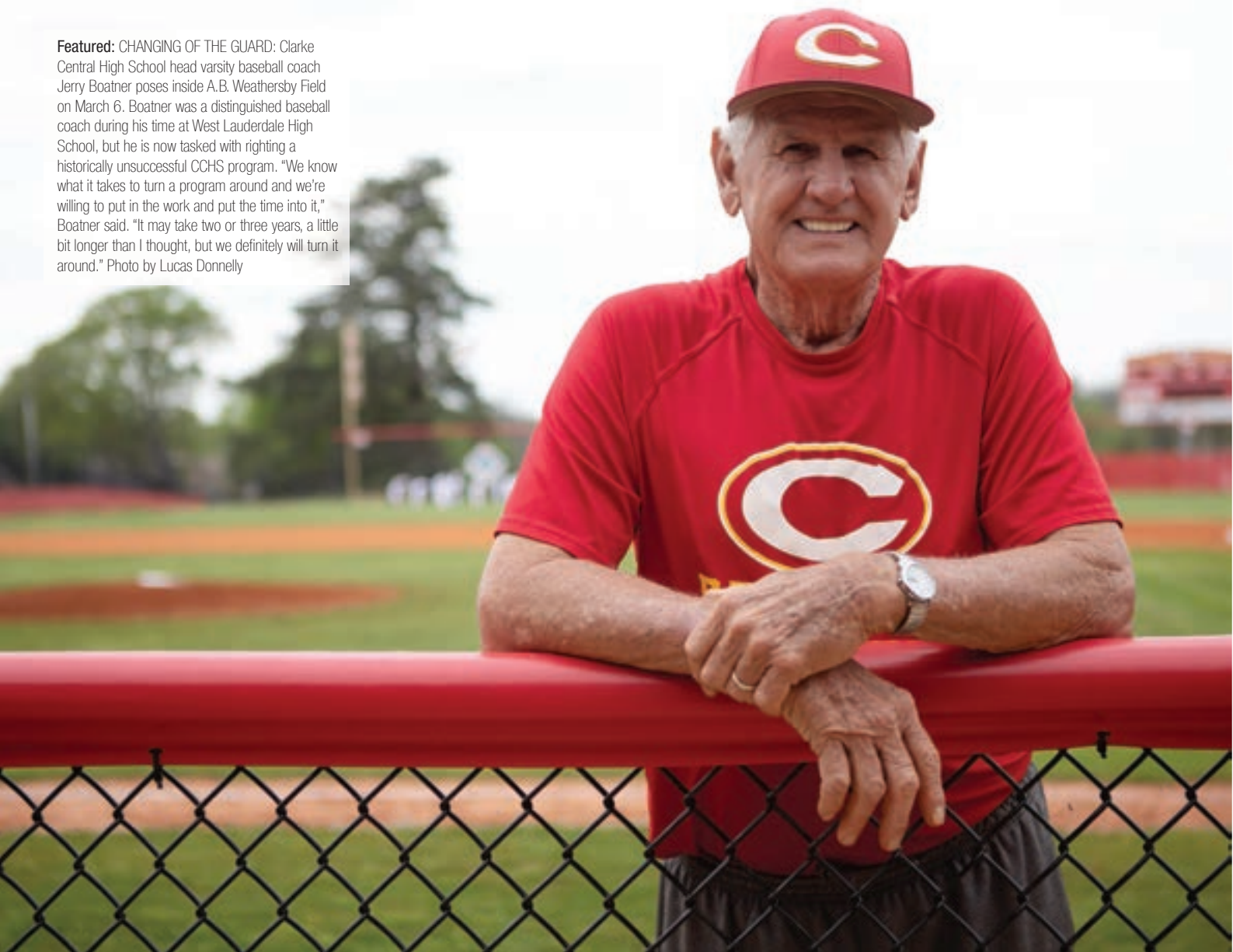
JH: (It's) a lot more work. If you expect to come here and do things (the same as in middle school), it's basically going to be very different. (CCHS track is) a lot more challenging and you have to stay humble.

## KB: WHAT WORKOUTS HAVE YOU DONE TO PREPARE FOR THIS SEASON?

JH: I came here a lot in the spring. (Last year), working on conditioning. I did a lot of lifting for my legs to keep working on getting my technique better.

**Above:** LEARNING FROM LOWS: Clarke Central High School boys varsity track and field athlete Jamir Hall, a freshman, starts his running long jump during practice at Billy Henderson Stadium on March 28. During his time at Clarke Middle School, Hall struggled with facing other talented long jumpers. "There was this one runner at a track meet at Jefferson (High School). It was my turn, my personal record was 17.8 feet, and (the runner had) jumped like 18 feet with ease," Hall said. "I was just devastated. I don't even think I placed, (but) I took that (and) tried to get better and make it where that wouldn't happen again." Photos by Kendarius Butts

**Featured:** CHANGING OF THE GUARD: Clarke Central High School head varsity baseball coach Jerry Boatner poses inside A.B. Weathersby Field on March 6. Boatner was a distinguished baseball coach during his time at West Lauderdale High School, but he is now tasked with righting a historically unsuccessful CCHS program. "We know what it takes to turn a program around and we're willing to put in the work and put the time into it," Boatner said. "It may take two or three years, a little bit longer than I thought, but we definitely will turn it around." Photo by Lucas Donnelly



# OLD-SCHOOL, NEW SCHOOL

*After coaching in Mississippi for over 40 years, CCHS head varsity baseball coach Jerry Boatner has brought his hard-working personality to Athens.*

STORY AND LAYOUT  
BY WYATT MEYER  
Sports Editor

**A**bove all else, Jerry Boatner knows two things: hard work and baseball.

The new Clarke Central High School head varsity baseball coach came to Athens as a 77-year-old high school coaching icon with a mountain of accolades from his time in Mississippi, aiming to right an ailing CCHS program.

But in reality, Boatner's time on the diamond stretches back before CCHS, before his trophies and championships, even before he coached his first game. Rather, Boatner's baseball journey started in his parents' backyard in Meridian, Mississippi, with a world of baseball ahead of him.

As a kid in Mississippi, Boatner didn't always have the best relationship with his parents, but that didn't stop them from being a huge influence on his life

and coaching career. In particular, his father taught Boatner the importance of hard work and politeness.

"(My daddy) made me say, 'Yes, sir (and) no, sir.' We had to wear our shirttails in, wear our socks. If he told us to go get something, we had to run to do it," Boatner said. "The older I got, I realized (that) my daddy was just what I needed."

Boatner played baseball growing up, attending East Mississippi Community College before moving on to Delta State University as a pitcher. There, Boatner met Delta State pitching coach Dave "Boo" Ferriss, a former Major League Baseball pitcher and the man who would become like a second father to Boatner.

With Boatner aiming for the pros, Ferriss taught him about baseball and life in the big leagues. But, when Boatner injured his arm in an incident that would



ultimately end his professional baseball dreams, Ferriss's emphasis on commitment became all the more important to him as a coach.

"My prayer every day (is) that I have just half the influence on these kids that Coach Ferriss had on my life," Boatner said.

After graduating from college, Boatner had to make a decision: would he pursue his baseball dreams from the sidelines or make a career out of something else?

He opted for the former, taking the position of head baseball coach at Clarkdale High School, a program that hadn't won a game in five years. But after a summer of training, Boatner's team came out and won their very first game against local rival Northeast Lauderdale High School.

"I got all excited (and) pumped up, jumping up and down, players jumping up and down, the fans (doing the same)," Boatner said. "I got on a baseball high 55 years ago and I've been on one ever since. I can't come down."

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"I got on a baseball high 55 years ago and I've been on one ever since. I can't come down."

**-- JERRY BOATNER,**  
CCHS head varsity baseball coach

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Boatner coached at Clarkdale from 1969-1973 before moving on to West Lauderdale High School on the other side of Meridian in Collinsville. Just as with Clarkdale, Boatner inherited a losing program: two years before Boatner arrived, the Mighty Knights hadn't had enough players to finish out their season.

Little did Boatner know that he would remain at West Lauderdale for the best part of 40 years, leading his team to 14 state championships while collecting innumerable national honors including being named the National Coach of the Year by "USA Today" in 2007. But Boatner wasn't teaching anything special – just the importance of hard work that he'd learned from Ferriss and his father all those years before.

West Lauderdale Athletic Director and assistant varsity baseball coach Jody Hurst attended West Lauderdale in the 1980s, playing for Boatner. While he returned to the school later, Hurst admitted that

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**Right:** WHAT IT TAKES TO WIN: Clarke Central High School head varsity baseball coach Jerry Boatner watches his team from the dugout during the Gladiators 17-5 loss to Oglethorpe County High School on March 6. CCHS has made a rough start to his coaching tenure, with no wins in his first eight games in charge. "We never miss practice and I think that's an important part of our philosophy is everybody's got to desire to win," Boatner said. "We're looking for people with the desire to practice to win. And that's the key." Photo by Lucas Donnelly



Boatner's coaching style was a learning curve.

"I had to realize that at first, (his coaching style is) a little different, it's a little bit 'Ooh, okay,'" Hurst said. "But then, you realize that he's (being tough) for you, he's doing it to try and make you the best person off the field as well as on the field."

When the dust settled in 2014, Boatner had amassed the most wins of any baseball coach in the state of Mississippi, which would eventually lead to him being inducted into the Mississippi Sports Hall of Fame in 2020.

Even then, Boatner wasn't done coaching. In fact, the only reason he left Meridian was because of a chance encounter with an old high school sweetheart at Meridian Senior High School's 45th class reunion after his first wife passed away in 2007.

"(The reunion) cost \$100, (but I'd) made up my mind (that) I wasn't coming. But after she called, I changed my mind and said, 'I'm gonna go,'" Boatner said. "To make a long story short, we got married three months later and she'd been a gift from the Good Lord."

After their marriage, the pair remained in Meridian for several years so Boatner could continue to coach at West Lauderdale. But eventually, the pair moved to Braselton, Georgia, so they could see his wife's grandchildren grow up.

Once in Georgia, Boatner returned to the baseball field in an assistant coaching capacity at West Jackson Middle School. But after three years, Boatner wanted a change, a return to the big time: he wanted a head coaching position.

"Some of the travel ball parents (on my grandson's

team) knew that I had coached in Mississippi and had a pretty good resume, so they asked me to coach (at CCHS) a couple years ago and it went in one ear and out the other," Boatner said. "(When) they asked me (again) last year, I couldn't get it out of my mind."

CCHS Athletic Director Jon Ward didn't immediately know of Boatner's baseball expertise when they were introduced to each other by one of his grandson's teammates parents, but when Ward did a deeper dive on Boatner's coaching experience, he was blown away by his history of success.

"I feel very confident that (Coach Boatner is) with us for years to come and he'll give us everything he can. That's just the kind of person (he) is," Ward said. "(I have) a lot of respect for his optimism and the way he approaches baseball, but (also) life."

Now, Boatner is tasked with rebuilding a Gladiator program that hasn't had a winning season since Maxpreps began tracking records in 2008. In order to change the team's

culture, he's upped the frequency and intensity of practices.

"All three schools that I've had (head coaching positions at) have never had a winning tradition, we had to develop it," Boatner said. "If you go where there's a winning tradition, you don't have to work near as hard, so we have worked hard."

Although the Gladiators started their season a winless 0-16, CCHS first baseman Luke Davis, a junior, believes the team has started to reap the rewards of Boatner's teachings.

"There's really no breaks when it comes to Coach Boatner, which I really like because we're always

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"He's (being tough) for you, he's doing it to try and make you the best person off the field as well as on the field."

**-- JODY HURST,**

West Lauderdale High School Athletic Director and assistant baseball coach

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**Bottom left:** WICKED WINNER OF THE WEST: Clarke Central High School head varsity baseball coach Jerry Boatner coaches at his previous job at West Lauderdale High School in his hometown of Meridian, Mississippi. Boatner's biggest influence in the baseball world was former Major League Baseball player and Delta State University pitching coach Dave "Boo" Ferriss, who taught Boatner the value of affecting student-athletes both on and off the field. "The older I become, the more important I see the value of impacting people's lives when in early years, I'd be climbing the ladder of success," Boatner said. "My prayer every day (is) that I have just half the influence on these kids that Coach Ferriss had on my life." Photo courtesy of Jerry Boatner

## WHERE'S JERRY?



### CLARKDALE:

*Boatner's spent the first five years of his coaching career in his hometown of Meridian, Mississippi at Clarkdale High School.*



### WEST LAUDERDALE:

*Boatner enjoyed most of his success at West Lauderdale High School, winning many awards and championships.*



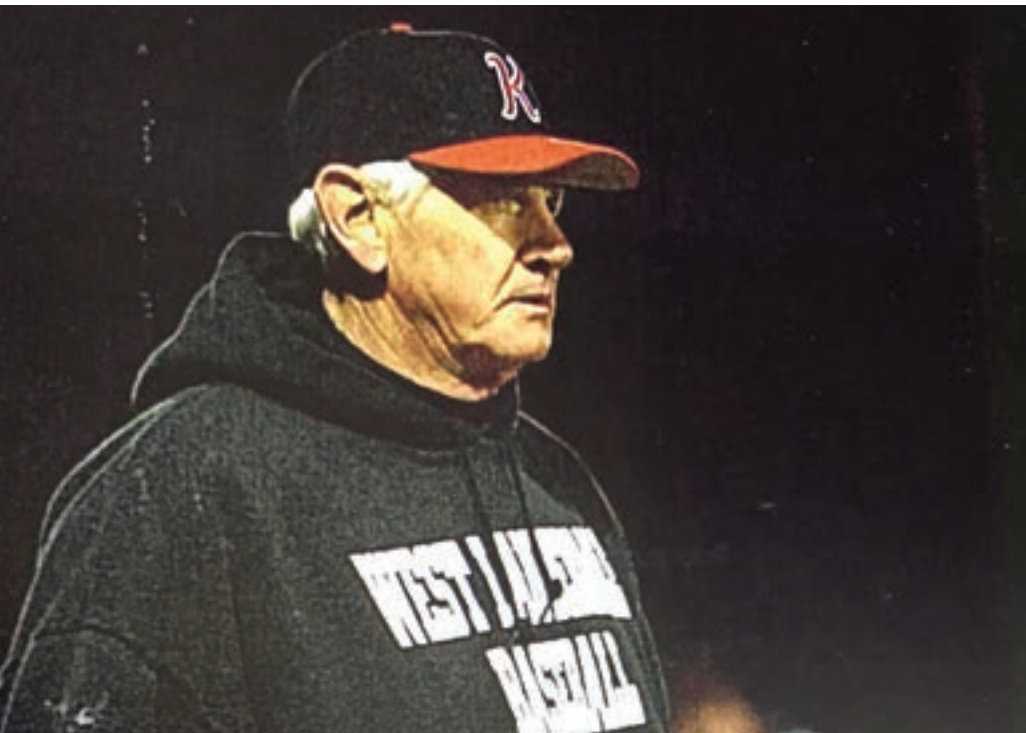
### EAST JACKSON:

*After moving to Georgia, Boatner took a step back and became an assistant coach for East Jackson High School.*



### CLARKE CENTRAL:

*Boatner returned to head coaching by taking stewardship of Clarke Central High School's baseball program.*





# RECORD-BREAKING BOATNER



## PLAYING DAYS:

*Boatner's team at Delta State University finished runner up in the NCAA Division 2 World Series.*



## WINNING TRADITION:

*Boatner won 14 state championships at West Lauderdale High School, bringing roughly a trophy every three years.*



## PERSONAL PROWESS:

*Boatner was named National Coach of the Year by "USA Today," though he has won numerous other personal awards.*



## ALL HE DOES IS WIN:

*Boatner finished his career in Mississippi with 1,202 wins, the most in Mississippi high school baseball history.*



doing something that's going to help us win," Davis said.

Boatner acknowledges that this isn't his most talented team and he believes he will need time to rebuild. He's started by placing emphasis on the little things, the things that don't require skill, the things that all his teams are built upon: hustle, communication and situational awareness.

"(Coach Boatner has) the old-school mentality (that we're) here to work and there's a job to get done. Yeah, (we're) gonna have fun, but there's a mission that needs to take place and it takes everyone," CCHS assistant varsity baseball coach William Lance said.

It would be near impossible for his time at CCHS to overshadow his accomplishments elsewhere and most people his age have long since retired. Yet, here he is, doing it all over again – the summer workouts, the week-end practices, the away-day blowouts, all in the name of a school 300 miles from where his legacy lies.

But for Boatner, baseball is life. The game is his craft,

and he's honed it finely, no matter how rough around the edges his teams are to begin.

"I made up my mind when I was 13 years old: I wouldn't let anyone outwork me and I developed a work ethic second to none," Boatner said. "(To) this day, at 77 years of age, I still haven't seen anybody (who has) more energy and enthusiasm and work ethic than I do."

Regardless of his performance in Athens, Boatner has established himself as a high school coaching legend. However, if he ends up righting the ship at CCHS, he can dedicate that turnaround to himself, from

the little boy in Meridian working tirelessly on the mound to the 77-year-old coach doing the same from the dugout.

"I don't know if anybody loves coaching more than I do," Boatner said. "I don't want to be a coach, I want to be the coach. (I want to) be the very best coach I can possibly be."

**-- JERRY BOATNER,**  
CCHS head varsity baseball coach

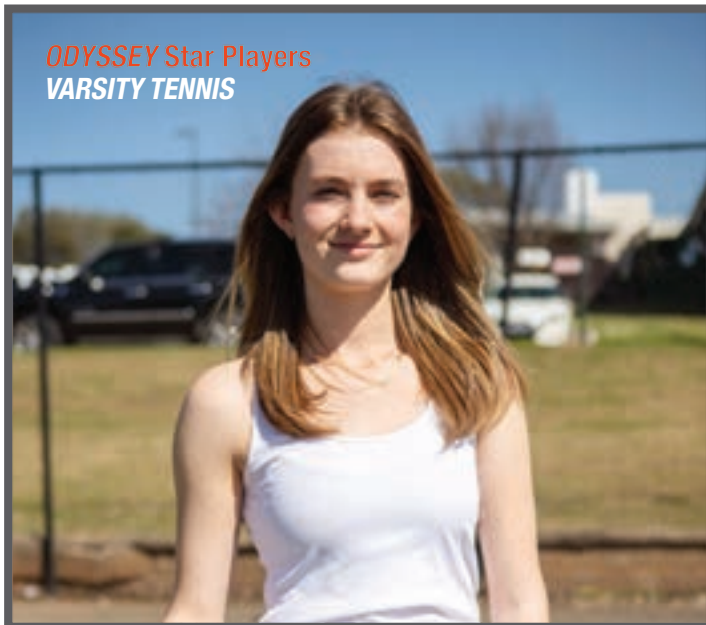
**Left: EVERYDAY HE'S SHUFFLING:** An infographic displays the schools Clarke Central High School head varsity baseball coach Jerry Boatner has worked at. Boatner plied his trade in Mississippi for most of his life before moving to Georgia after a chance encounter with an eighth-grade sweetheart at his 45th class reunion. "She came down those steps at the Holiday Inn where we was having (the) class reunion and hugged me. Her hip went up against my hip and, lord, I felt electricity, just (an) awesome feeling," Boatner said. "To make a long story short, we got married three months later and she's been a gift from the Good Lord." Graphic by Wyatt Meyer

**Above: ROUND THE BASES:** An infographic displays Clarke Central High School head varsity baseball coach Jerry Boatner's achievements as a baseball coach. West Lauderdale High School Athletic Director and assistant baseball coach Jody Hurst credited Boatner's success to his energetic coaching approach. "As a person, he cares a whole lot about his family, his friends. He's a person that we all looked up to when he was over here," Hurst said. "It's always been amazing to me, the way he shows up in the field every day." Graphic by Wyatt Meyer

**Top right: CHEERING THEM ON:** Clarke Central High School head varsity baseball coach Jerry Boatner watches his team from the dugout during the Gladiators' 5-17 loss to Oglethorpe High School on March 6. While he hasn't done much winning at CCHS so far, Boatner attributed his career success to his team's implementation of his hardworking and energetic approach to baseball. "The Good Lord blessed us with great success, but we found out early, you get out what you put into (baseball), (so) we developed a great work ethic. (We were) not gonna let anybody outwork us," Boatner said. Photo by Lucas Donnelly

# Star Players

*ODYSSEY Star Players are selected based on their academic standing and commitment to teammates, their sports program and Clarke Central High School. Star Players are written for each issue by the Sports Staff based on interviews with players and coaches.*



**ODYSSEY Star Players**  
**VARSITY TENNIS**

Photo by Lucas Donnely

## WILLA FRIERSON

**GRADE:** 11

**GPA:** 4.0

**YEARS OF EXPERIENCE:** 2

**GAME DAY RITUAL:** I always make sure I eat a good lunch before and a good breakfast and drink lots of water. Sometimes I'll take an electron tablet or something, but that's kind of it.

**FAVORITE MEMORY:** I didn't play freshman year in the Region 8-AAAAA Tournament, but seeing everybody play was really fun. They were all putting in a lot of effort and the bus ride, even though we didn't do the best, was fun.

**ROLE MODEL:** My dad, because he's the one that got me into tennis and growing up, he was very good, so he helped me and inspired me.

**WHAT COACHES SAY:** "Willa is a focused and consistent player while regularly playing against opponents' top competition."

-- Elliot Slane, CCHS head boys and girls varsity tennis coach

## KENE ONUNKWO

**GRADE:** 10

**GPA:** 4.0

**YEARS OF EXPERIENCE:** 8

**GAME DAY RITUAL:** I just try to calm down before the game, get loose and have fun. I listen to hip-hop and Afro-beats.

**FAVORITE MEMORY:** When I was younger, I would play soccer with my dad and his friends and also my brother who also played varsity for Clarke Central.

**ROLE MODEL:** I don't have a specific one, but anyone who lifts me up and also strives (for) me to be better.

**WHAT COACHES SAY:** "(Kene is) just the engine of the midfield. He makes all the passes you could ever hope for, he covers all the ground, (he's) got a great shot on him and he's a leader. Everybody looks up to him."

-- Alec Zimmerman, CCHS head boys junior varsity soccer coach

Photo by Wyatt Meyer



**ODYSSEY Star Players**  
**JV SOCCER**





# 5 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT THE CCHS GIRLS JUNIOR VARSITY SOCCER TEAM

BY CLARICE BURIL, AS TOLD TO MICHAEL CAMPBELL

## 1. TACKLING PREGAME

For game days, we usually do our little warm up, which is less than our stretches. Then, we do some simple (passing) drills (and), sometimes, (we) just shoot, but it really depends on where we're playing.

## 2. JUST KEEP RUNNING

We do more conditioning than the varsity (soccer team) does, which is kind of surprising to me. I think the whole difference between varsity and (junior varsity) isn't necessarily skill, it's just the drive to work and how conditioned you are. Obviously, if you get tired after like 10 minutes, you can't play on varsity because they have longer halves, so conditioning is definitely important.

## 3. BETTER THAN THE BASICS

I think a lot of people think the girls team (doesn't) know how to dribble and (do) things that are basic, like ball touches. But from what I've seen, or at least maybe not even not at Clarke Central (High School) but like at the Young Men's Christian Association, I think the women have better footwork. I think there's also just that stereotype that the boys put in more work, but from what I see, the boys usually just scrimmage and we do more conditioning.

## 4. HEART OF A GLADIATOR

I really love the coaches. I think (head girls JV soccer coach Alex) Sams is almost a parental figure. (He's) that type of person (who) praises you when you're doing things correctly, but then also gets on you when you're making simple mistakes, but it's not like you're getting yelled at. (The coaches are) trying to boost your confidence and just make sure you're doing what you need to do.

## 5. KEY TO SUCCESS

I would definitely say the CCHS soccer community (is a key) because I think no matter who you are, no matter how you behave, you are just people. It's really just an open community. There's so many different people that play (in) it, and everyone's open-minded, so you really bond with everybody.

**Featured:** CREATIVE COACHING: Clarke Central High School junior varsity girls goalie Clarice Buri, a freshman, practices at the CCHS practice field on March 15. Buri played goalie on the team this year and has experienced a tight knit soccer family. "I think (head girls JV soccer coach Alex) Sams is almost a parental figure. (He's) that type of person (who) praises you when you're doing things correctly, but then also gets on you when you're making simple mistakes, but it's not like you're getting yelled at," Buri said. "(The coaches are) trying to boost your confidence and just make sure you're doing what you need to do." Photo by Lucas Donnelly





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