



THE HIGHLANDER

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The Coronavirus Issue



THIS ISSUE OF *THE HIGHLANDER* IS DEDICATED TO TIM GASTON, OUR FEATURES & COPY EDITOR EMILY JACKSON'S GRANDFATHER, WHO PASSED AWAY IN LATE MARCH DUE TO COVID-19 COMPLICATIONS.

THE STAFF SENDS OUR HEARTFELT CONDOLENCES TO ALL FAMILIES AFFECTED BY CORONAVIRUS. WE HOPE EVERYONE REMAINS SAFE AND HEALTHY DURING THIS UNPRECEDENTED TIME.

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WMHS News Show

WMHS News is filming and posting weekly at-home editions of the news show that focus on how McLean is being affected by COVID-19 and offer ways to stay entertained while social distancing.

Subscribe to WMHS News on YouTube to catch each week's news show!



COVID Blogs

The Highlander staff

Staff members provide a look into their quarantine experiences. Take a look at how some Highlanders are keeping busy (and sane) while in social isolation.



Student-led project fights effects of pandemic

Jack Shields

The Fairfax County Community COVID Aid Project, founded by McLean senior Sophie Howery, is giving teenagers in the local community the chance to join the fight against COVID-19.

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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Dear McLean,

In response to COVID-19, members of our staff came together with one mission: to continue reporting during this pandemic.

As reporters, we understand the importance of distributing information to the public, especially during a crisis, so we decided to create this special edition of *The Highlander* to explore the many ways students' lives have been affected. We have been working diligently at home (and spent countless hours on Zoom calls) to provide our readers with the most updated and accurate information, as this outbreak continues to present new challenges every day.

We hope this issue of *The Highlander* helps you feel connected to the McLean community. Do your best to stay healthy and reach out to those around you who need help. Stay strong, Highlanders!

Yours truly,

The Highlander staff

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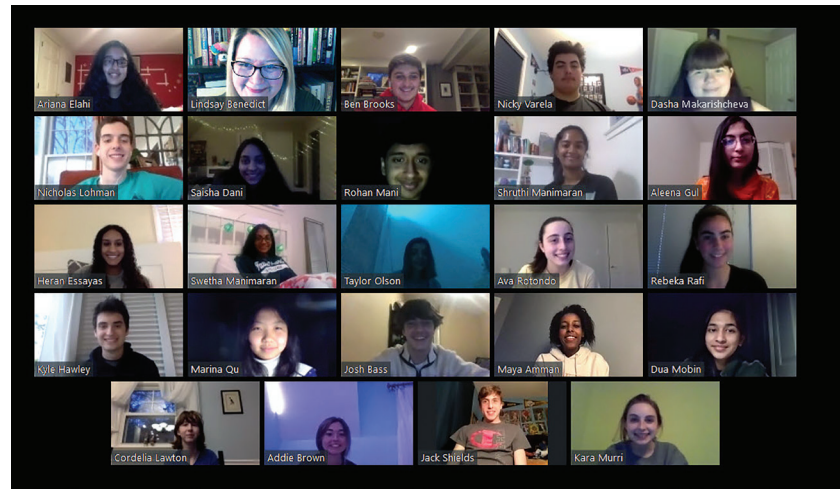
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Coronavirus cancels students' culture
Cover illustration by Dasha Makarishcheva

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SUDDEN SCHOOL CLOSURE LEADS TO DIVIDED VIEWS

FCPS shuts down school, responds to community comments

MARINA QU NEWS EDITOR


Since the first cases of COVID-19 appeared in Maryland and D.C., followed by the first case in Fort Belvoir in Fairfax County, students, parents and staff have paid more and more attention to the spread of the virus. As of April 11, Fairfax County's number of positive coronavirus diagnoses reached 777, including two deaths.

Virginia schools are now closed for the remainder of the school year, and Fairfax County students will proceed with online learning on April 14. However, the sudden announcement of the school closings was considered problematic by many students and staff.

During a Fairfax County Health Department press conference on the afternoon of Thursday, March 12—the same day neighboring Loudoun County announced its school closures—Superintendent Scott Brabrand announced that FCPS would remain open as no “community spread” of COVID-19 had been documented in the area. Less than eight hours later, at 11:50 p.m. Thursday night, Brabrand sent out an email to cancel school the following day.

FCPS had originally designated Monday, March 16, as a day to instruct teachers on utilizing online resources and to allow students to retrieve their learning materials and other belongings from the school. However, the presumptive positive coronavirus diagnosis of a teacher at Lynbrook Elementary School in Springfield contributed to the change in plans.

“Overnight our leadership team got more information, and it looks like we did have a positive COVID-19 case in one of our schools,” said Fairfax County School Board member Elaine Tholen, who represents the Dranesville District. “Given that piece of information, they made

 **189K** STUDENTS WILL BE REACHED THROUGH DISTANCE LEARNING

 **16K** TEACHERS WILL ENGAGE IN THE FCPS DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAM

 **49** FREE LUNCH DISTRIBUTION LOCATIONS IN FAIRFAX COUNTY

the decision to close on Friday, just to make sure everybody was going to be safe and not bring staff in on Monday for training.”

In the county government, Brabrand made the final decision to close schools, with guidance from his COVID-19 task force that consisted of numerous senior leaders from across FCPS. They tackled a variety of issues such as food distribution, communications and distance learning.

McLean students and community members expressed concern over the delay in decision-making, but they were satisfied with the eventual closure.

“I was much relieved when the announcement regarding school closure was made,” sophomore Zhicheng Zhao said. “Despite negative academic impacts, I considered quarantine as necessary and the most effective approach to minimize the risk of catching coronavirus.”

The abrupt closure deprived both students and staff of opportunities to prepare. School board member Abrar Omeish suggested that the sudden change of plans was partly due to the overwhelming community pressure to shut down schools.

“It can be very difficult when the community doesn’t have the full picture or the context of the decision and just freaks out and pushes everyone towards

one direction,” Omeish said. “Then you’re between the pressure of not disappointing the community, but also making the right decisions.”

As the 10th largest school district in the U.S., the county has to consider multiple perspectives when making the decision to shut down the school system. For example, FCPS consists of 47 Title I schools where a majority of the student population is on free and

A MONTH AGO, NO ONE WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THAT WE SHOULD BE PLANNING THAT WE’RE GOING TO CLOSE SUDDENLY OVERNIGHT. IT’S NOT PERFECT, BUT WE’RE WORKING REALLY HARD TO GIVE OUR STUDENTS WHAT THEY NEED.”

- ELAINE THOLEN

DRANESVILLE DISTRICT
SCHOOL BOARD REPRESENTATIVE

NECESSARY PREVENTION

This sign on Longfellow Middle School's field notifies the public the grounds are closed. School tracks, fields and basketball and tennis courts have been closed since the shutdown order from Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam.
(Photo by Marina Qu)



reduced lunch and are entitled to two meals a day.

“When you close the school, students don’t get those meals,” English teacher Annette Billingsley said. “Then you have issues with parents who don’t have childcare, or special education students, and especially Category B, where their therapies happen in school. I think they were grappling with that and trying to figure out the best answer with the information they were given.”

Whether problematic or necessary, the decision is in the past. Now both FCPS officials and the community are coping with the current outcome. FCPS has been providing free daily meals for students at designated locations. In addition, it extended FCPS On laptop programs to middle school students and is seeking to support families that lack internet or devices to help students participate in distance learning.

“A month ago, no one would have thought that we should be planning for the fact that we’re going to close suddenly overnight,” Tholen said. “It’s not perfect, but we’re working really hard to give our students what they need.”

For students and parents, however, the outbreak of COVID-19 in the U.S. and specifically in Fairfax County was expected. They attributed the lack of preparation from the county to the overall absence of proper attention given to the outbreak of the virus in the U.S.

“Right when FCPS knew of the virus, board members should have begun instruction for online learning, instead of starting almost a month after the news,” sophomore Songhan Pang said. “Then again, this issue does not apply to only FCPS, but to the entire U.S. We should not have to force college students off campus within a week or lay off so many small business workers last minute.”

Since the school closure, Brabrand has hosted several Facebook

livestreams to answer questions from the community. The school board has also conducted live meetings online to proceed with planning for the rest of the school year.

Managing and allocating the budget for different purposes has become a more important task than ever before. On a normal school day, FCPS has over 6,000 school buses and incurs many more daily expenses. Since schools and offices have shut down, the county has been saving money on the energy used by buildings and buses.

“On the flip side, though, we have our food service staff and our custodians working overtime to get food to people that need it to live,” Tholen said. “Bus drivers are now delivering food to bus stops around the county. So, we are incurring additional expenses around paying staff for the additional hours that they have to work.”

Students and other community volunteers have reached out to offer help to the most vulnerable student populations. Pang works as part of a nonprofit organization that provides after school tutoring; now, she and her teammates have continued their efforts through an online platform.

“After talking with the school board about an online tutoring program, I can tell that its members are doing everything they can to help the community during these hard times,” Pang said. “I truly appreciate their actions.”

Although people throughout the county are facing difficult circumstances, county officials are hopeful that cooperation, communication and supporting each other in new ways will ultimately lead to a positive result.

“I am confident we will get through this situation,” FCPS Director of News and Information Lucy Caldwell said. “None of it is easy, but I continue to be amazed by our students and staff and the contributions they continue to make despite this challenging crisis.”

THE STATE OF THE

An overview of COVID-19's

KYLE HAWLEY OPINIONS EDITOR



In response to novel coronavirus transmission across Europe, several western leaders ordered their nations to shut down. Britain, though, chose not to lock down. On March 27, Prime Minister Boris Johnson tested positive for the virus. This came shortly after news of Prince Charles' infection with the virus, throwing the British government further into turmoil. British efforts to control immigration from coronavirus hotspots could exacerbate pro-Brexit nationalist forces in England.

From border closures to statewide lockdowns, both federal and state governments have been active in attempting to prevent the spread of the disease. Numerous states including New York, California, Illinois, Virginia and Maryland have issued stay-at-home orders, limited large gatherings and public outings and forced nonessential businesses to close. Even with such measures, the White House Coronavirus Task Force is preparing for at least 60,000-100,000 deaths nationwide. With cases increasing, America's health resources like COVID testing kits, protective gear, ventilators and ICU spaces are dwindling.

Authorities believe that COVID-19 is reaching its peak in Spain. The country had recorded over 10,000 deaths by April 2, according to the Spanish Ministry of Health. As of April 4, the nation's official unemployment figure had risen to 3.5 million, the highest since 2017, after the government banned all outings and shut down all nonessential businesses. 882,822 people have lost their jobs since the start of the pandemic.

January 31

President Donald Trump forbids foreign nationals who were in China from traveling to the U.S. for two weeks.



March 11

In a primetime address from the Oval Office, Trump announces the closure of the U.S. border with Europe, giving a mere two days for people to return or leave the country. This sparks panic among families with relatives in Europe.

"My house was chaotic [after Trump's announcement]. The border was set to shut down the next day, so my parents immediately called to awaken my sister who was studying abroad in Spain," junior Adianna Lockwood said. "Then they called the airlines, where we were put on hold for three hours since everyone was trying to change their flights. My dad eventually drove to Reagan National Airport to change her flight in person."



First death on American soil from the novel coronavirus is reported in Washington state. The White House asks Congress to allocate \$1.25 billion in funds as countermeasures to fight the virus.

February 29



President Trump officially declares a state of national emergency. He also announces the formation of the White House Coronavirus Task Force Team led by Vice President Mike Pence, U.S. Global AIDS coordinator Deborah Birx and director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Anthony Fauci.

March 13

INFECTED WORLD

progression throughout the globe

JOSH BASS SPORTS EDITOR



After COVID-19 arrived in Italy, the number of cases quickly surpassed that of China. The incredibly high death toll is mainly attributed to the age of the population. Italy has the highest median age in Europe, making the country more vulnerable to the virus. At the beginning of April, Italian officials announced that the number of cases had plateaued, contributing to the growing consensus that the worst had passed.

While many countries are struggling to distribute test kits and decrease the transmission of COVID-19, South Korea has been praised for their handling of the virus. Having dealt with Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome in 2003 and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome in 2015, the South Korean government has made efforts to regulate public and private data to track their patients' health.

Since China detected its first case of COVID-19, there have been more than 1,889,849 reported cases and 117,652 deaths worldwide as of April 13, according to the World Health Organization. Recently, Chinese officials proclaimed that the worst of the virus had passed in the nation. Slowly opening up and lifting restrictions, China will allow travel in and out of Wuhan, the original epicenter of the virus. Met with intense skepticism in record keeping, Chinese officials have responded by arguing that public health should not be politicized.

March 23

The U.S. surpasses its foreign counterparts with a record number of 82,404 cases of COVID-19.

#1

March 27

The president signs a \$2.2 trillion urgent stimulus bill. The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act, widely known as the CARES Act, allocates money to qualifying Americans while also supporting hospitals and furloughed workers.

\$

April 2

The U.S. Department of Labor announces that 6.6 million Americans filed for unemployment insurance the week before April 2.



The president invokes the Defense Production Act, a Korean War-era power which allows presidential administrations to mobilize specific industries for national defense. Since then, a majority of American businesses have been complying with the president's "we are all in this together" doctrine.

March 27

March 31

In a roller coaster of events, the stock market has a 2,000-point gain in a single day—a record-breaking statistic. Wall Street left March with its worst quarter since the Great Depression, furthering the fears of a major recession.

RESEARCH AND PREVENTION CONTINUE IN U.S.

Stimulus package passed by Congress, vaccine research accelerates



BEN BROOKS
MANAGING EDITOR

Two trillion dollars. More than the cost of the Iran War, the largest ever U.S. stimulus package was signed into place by President Donald Trump on March 27 in an attempt to combat the effects of COVID-19 across the country.

With cases skyrocketing throughout late March, the bipartisan Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act was passed, allocating a combined \$2 trillion to a variety of different recipients. Of this sum, an estimated \$560 billion will be sent to individuals to help those struggling as a result of the pandemic's economic consequences.

Everyone who filed a federal tax return form and netted less than \$75,000 in earnings are eligible for the full payout of \$1,200 per person, or \$2,400 per couple should their total adjusted gross earnings not surpass \$150,000. The checks decrease in value the more money the individual makes, eventually completely disappearing after the \$99,000 per person threshold. Recipients receive another \$500 per child.

"I think the way they determine needs through last year's taxes is flawed," senior Nathan Zhu said. "I don't think many of the poor, homeless, college students or undocumented workers have filed taxes in the last year, and they need it the most."

Also included in the act is \$30 billion to help with education. Of this, \$13.5 billion is allotted to go to K-12 schools.

"If it's nationwide, I think it is adequate to try and integrate online education throughout the nation," Zhu said. "I think it is not enough but a good start. During the Obama administration, their stimulus package in response to the 2008 crisis was around \$77 billion."

To complement the influx of money into the public school system, Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos granted the power to allow states to alter and/or cancel certain standardized tests.

"I think the fact that they switched their initial proposal from targeted waivers to a blanket rule is a smart move," Zhu said. "Every school district and state is being impacted in a different way, and I think the rule reflects this unpredictability."

With much of the world put on pause, many hope that the package will pave the path to recovery.



AVA ROTONDO
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

A COVID-19 vaccine prototype named PittCoVacc developed at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine recently saw success when tested in mice.

Due to the fact that scientists have never seen this strain of coronavirus before, the team is using the similar coronaviruses Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) to develop a COVID-19 vaccine.

By studying the SARS and MERS viruses, the team has found that spike proteins, a specific protein, is what provides immunity.

The tested mice experienced immunity against the virus for weeks, but researchers are unsure of how long that effect will last.

A similar MERS vaccine was previously tested, and the immunity effects lasted for about a year. It is expected that PittCoVacc will act the same way, judging from antibody levels and trends in the animal subjects after vaccination.

The next step will be to conduct clinical trials on human subjects, and those are expected to begin in the coming months.

"It would be great if a vaccine could run its course in people with efficiency, though I would worry about how rushed it seems," senior Eli Sporn said.

White House health advisor and director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Dr. Anthony Fauci claims that a vaccine for the new coronavirus will be available in 12 to 18 months.

"Vaccines can take years to fully develop, and it seems like putting one out in a couple of months may cause a flawed but popular solution," Sporn said. "But really the vaccination's criticisms are far less about its consequences and more about its possible lack of consequence, if it is incapable of doing anything."

In the meantime, without a vaccine as protection, the White House and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have been emphasizing the importance of preventing the spread of the virus by washing hands frequently and practicing social distancing, which entails minimizing time spent in public and staying at least six feet away from others.

Researchers still have a long way to go, but these recent findings provide optimism the world needs.

A BUMP IN THE ROAD FOR EXCHANGE PROGRAMS

Junior's year abroad in Germany cut short because of COVID-19

DUA MOBIN
FEATURES EDITOR

Anger, tears and disappointment filled the day of March 12 for junior Paulina Nejfelt. That was the day she was informed that her year abroad was suddenly ending. Nejfelt had spent the majority of the year as an exchange student in Halle an der Saale, Germany.

"[My year] was just a collection of amazing memories that I am going to take with me for the rest of my life and incredible experiences that I really couldn't get anywhere else," Nejfelt said.

Nejfelt's parents had encouraged her to do the exchange year, thinking it would lead to personal growth.

"The year for her to study abroad was an excellent opportunity to gain additional experiences and insights that she would be able to take at this point in her life to use during her high school years as well as through college," her father, Thomas Nejfelt, said.

Once Nejfelt arrived in Germany, she and her host family faced some challenges. Adjusting to new people and a brand new life caused some awkwardness.

"The completely new structure in the family is difficult. You have to get to know each other first if you understand each other at all," said Holger Moser, Nejfelt's host parent.

In addition to studying and completing her required daily activities, Nejfelt took time to explore different areas in the region.

"Being in the city of Cologne was probably one of my best [experiences]," Nejfelt said. "I just love that beautiful city."

But Nejfelt's unforgettable time in Germany abruptly came to an end when

exchange programs notified their students that their year abroad was finishing early.

"My first reaction was I cried. I was just in shock really. I knew it was coming, but I still didn't think it would be that soon," Nejfelt said. "It was just this complete shock, anger and sadness but also uncertainty because I didn't know when I was leaving."

After receiving the news, the ordeal of returning home as quickly as possible began. Nejfelt and her fellow exchange students had little time to pack and leave the lives they had created for themselves.



**WE LITERALLY HAD
HOURS TO PACK AND
SAY GOODBYE TO
OUR HOST FAMILY
AND FRIENDS."**

**- PAULINA NEJFELT
JUNIOR**

"A few hours after [receiving the news] we found out our flight was Saturday morning, and we had to get on a train to Frankfurt from wherever we were the next day," Nejfelt said. "We literally had hours to pack and say goodbye to our host family and friends."

Being ripped apart from a life that Nejfelt had been immersed in for months was very difficult.

"The hardest thing was definitely just saying bye to my life that I had built up from scratch for the past seven months and just saying goodbye to it knowing that I'm not going to have it back," Nejfelt said.

After coming home, Nejfelt was hit with a rush of emotions due to the abrupt transition

she faced upon returning to the U.S.

"You're back home, and you just don't know how to feel about it. You're sad. You're mad. You're happy to be home, but you also want to be back, which is a complete mix of emotions," Nejfelt said.

Her exchange year's early ending led to the cancellation of several plans she and her family had in mind.

"I was personally planning on visiting [Paulina] in April to celebrate my birthday," Thomas Nejfelt said. "Had I known the exchange year would get cut short, I would have maybe visited her in January instead."

Nejfelt's education also faced drastic changes, and its future is still unknown.

"They're taking online classes over in Germany, but I'm so uncertain about what my education is going to look like in the next few months," Nejfelt said.

Disruptions to exchange programs affected other McLean students as well. Junior Paul Pietsch was an exchange student at McLean who had to return to Germany because of the growing coronavirus pandemic.

"The email came on a Thursday morning, which was the last day of school. I was shocked, and I could not believe it," Pietsch said. "A few weeks ago, my exchange year started being fun, and now they wanted me to go back? It was hard to leave everything, everyone and the hard work I put into making friends and new contacts."

Despite the disappointing finish to a once-in-a-lifetime experience, Nejfelt said she would do it all over again and would encourage others to do the same.

"If you have the opportunity to go on an exchange, even if you don't want to apply for it, you never know what's going to happen," Nejfelt said. "Go somewhere else to do something different. Really just go for it."

LOCAL LOSSES

Students and families struggle to

NICHOLAS LOHMAN
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

REBEKA RAFI
MANAGING EDITOR

A new virus causing hundreds of thousands of deaths has terrified people around the world, not just for their physical health, but for the prospects of an economic crash worse than the Great Depression.

Non-essential businesses in 46 states have been forced to close due to COVID-19 as of April 3, leaving employees jobless and small business owners scrambling to save their companies from shutting down for good. *The Washington Post* reported that a record 10 million-plus Americans filed for unemployment insurance in March—equal to the number of jobs that were lost over two years during the 2008 recession.

The economic crisis is already hitting the Washington D.C. area hard, and the regional economy is expected to contract for three straight quarters. The service industry, which

accounts for nearly one-fourth of workers in the area, will be greatly affected.*

Senior Marybeth Khoelicker, the culinary lead manager at McLean's Cava Mezze Grill, experienced the impacts on the service industry soon after FCPS closed its schools. Her location was forced to condense their menu and limit customers to takeout orders.

"I was first excited for no school because I thought I could work more," Khoelicker said. "[Instead], I went from 36 hours a week to 10 and lost three of my five days. We are closing at 8 p.m. instead of 10, and our sales are down by over 50%."

While Khoelicker works to gain professional experience and help her parents pay for non-essential services, like college and car insurance, she acknowledges that many of her coworkers are not in the same boat.

"My coworkers depend on this job, and many are the sole provider for their families and children," Khoelicker said. "I work with this one man, and he has three jobs,

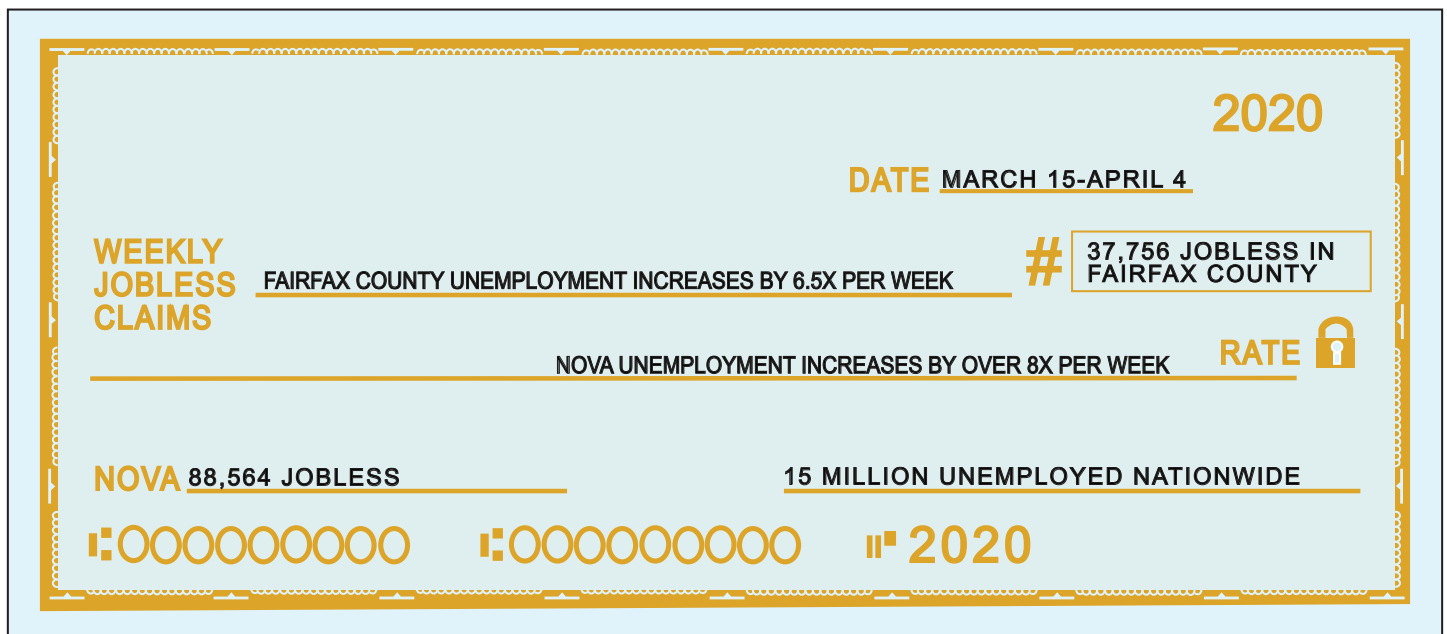
working 80 hours a week to support his wife and daughter here in America while sending money to El Salvador. But now [other than at Cava], he's unemployed completely. I actually turned down a third day a week to work because I know I don't rely on it as much as others."

According to Khoelicker, Cava restaurants in Vienna and along Route 7 have already laid off workers or closed.

"We are all scared that our store could close at some point, not just because of our sales, but because of government mandates as well," Khoelicker said. "My best friend [has already] lost her job because of slow business."

Senior Paloma Galdo and her family are among the millions of low-income individuals who are struggling to make ends meet during this crisis. Galdo's mom is a housekeeper and her family's main income provider.

"Since the outbreak and social distancing guidelines were put in place, a lot of people



Infographic information obtained from InsideNoVa

LOOM LARGE

to keep up in lagging economy

are feeling uncomfortable with my mom coming to clean their house,” Galdo said. “People have canceled on her or asked her to come less frequently, which is minimizing the income she brings into the house to support me and my brothers.”

Galdo’s mom and two older brothers are searching for work to help pay for college and essential items, like groceries. While Galdo qualifies for free lunch and could receive meals at one of the food distribution sites set up by FCPS, she says she would rather not risk contracting COVID-19 by venturing out.

“A large amount of money is going towards buying groceries and food for my family,” Galdo said. “We go through the food pretty quickly, so money is spent often to try and keep up with each meal.”

Choosing between receiving government benefits and contracting a deadly disease is just one of the many injustices low-income families have experienced. Some of McLean’s wealthier residents have flocked to vacation homes to make the quarantine feel more like a vacation, leaving families like Galdo’s to face social isolation and the reality that they will not be able to relax any time soon.

“Low-income families already struggle enough as is trying to make ends meet, and with this pandemic taking away jobs, it has caused [us] to adjust our priorities,” Galdo said. “I know some friends who have gone to Mexico or Florida to get out of the house. My family doesn’t have this luxury.”

Even the charities designed to help families in need have been squeezed for resources by the unique nature of this situation. Unlike with other economic downturns, where donors have been able to provide resources to charities, the shortage of essential goods as a result of excessive shopping and hoarding has left food banks empty.

Share of McLean—a charity that provides goods and services, including food, furniture, clothes, laptop repair and emergency assistance for 30-50 households and two local

senior centers—has experienced this scarcity firsthand. They have been distributing leftover items from Thanksgiving to make up for a shortage in donations.

As of April 6, they had already served over 210,000 meals to low-income students.

Despite widespread criticism for their handling of COVID-19, Lucy Caldwell, the



LOW-INCOME FAMILIES ALREADY STRUGGLE ENOUGH AS IS TRYING TO MAKE ENDS MEET, AND WITH THIS PANDEMIC TAKING AWAY JOBS, IT HAS CAUSED US TO ADJUST OUR PRIORITIES.”

**- PALOMA GALDO
SENIOR**

“What this country and the world is facing is unprecedented in our lifetimes,” said Erica Shane, co-chair of Share Food Pantry and Clothing Room. “We’ve seen an uptick in requests from senior centers and provided supplies to over 60 households. I suspect there will be an increase in emergency aid requests if jobs are lost over the coming weeks.”

Hoping to fill this void, band director Chris Weise and the band’s booster organization mailed seven Giant Food gift cards to families who had applied for financial aid in the past to help cover band costs. Each contained \$150 of spending money.

Galdo, a member of McLean’s marching and wind ensemble bands, was touched by the act.

“It’s nice to know that McLean and its different programs are recognizing students and their families and providing for them,” Galdo said. “To many people, it may seem insignificant, but to a lot of other families, it symbolizes access to better food and meals. It just goes to show how McLean is there to help all of its students in and out of the classroom.”

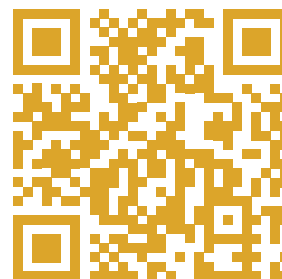
In addition, Fairfax County created the COVID-19 Task Force in part to mitigate the financial challenges the pandemic poses.

director of news and information for FCPS says “that the school system continues to plan and carry out decisions that will best serve our students and staff during this difficult time.”

While the future of the pandemic and economic crisis remains unclear, Weise notes that one thing is as clear as ever—the importance of helping others.

“Let’s just keep looking out for each other, reaching out to those that need support and helping each other get through this pretty strange, stressful situation,” Weise said.

Scan this QR code to donate to Share of McLean or become a volunteer:



LIFE OF A [QUARANTEEN]

Q&A with junior Alexia Granados, who has not left her property since March 12 to protect her grandmother

DANA EDSON MANAGING EDITOR

Why have you been in quarantine for so long?

I started my quarantine the day before school got canceled, so starting March 12. My mom realized that schools wouldn't close until there was an actual case, and since symptoms don't show for weeks, she would've rather been safe than sorry.

What is the best way to pass time while in quarantine?

The best way to pass time is honestly doing something you're passionate about. It sounds silly, but I love dancing, so learning Tik Tok dances has been very entertaining. [Also, on Netflix], I love the show *On My Block*, and they just released a new season, so that's been an enjoyable pastime as well.

Have you set any goals you would like to accomplish while you're at home?

I actually made a little bucket list to occupy myself. The biggest project I'm working on right now is turning our unused shed into a hang out space I can use with my friends during the summer.

What tips do you have to deal with boredom?

When it comes to boredom, a lot of it has to do with how creative and optimistic you are. If you can't think of anything to do and just dread being alone, it's going to be awful. But if you think of fun little things to do around the house or outside and think positively of this quarantine period, it helps with maintaining your sanity.

Daily Schedule

9:00 a.m. Wake up

9:30 a.m. Eat breakfast

10:00 a.m. Schoolwork

Noon Work out

2:00 p.m. Make lunch

3:00 p.m. Netflix,
Tik Tok or
work on
the shed

7:00 p.m. Dinner

8:00 p.m. FaceTime
friends,
Netflix or
Tik Tok

Midnight Bedtime

VIRTUAL CLASSES BECOME REALITY



Fairfax County prepares to deliver online education to students

MAYA AMMAN FEATURES EDITOR

As “coronacation” comes to an end, it’s time for distance learning to officially begin. Teachers in schools across Virginia have been busy exploring new ways to teach their students before online school begins.

“We’re not sure what is expected in terms of assignment variety for the fourth quarter yet, but my thought moving forward is that it will be all optional analytical and classwork-type assignments, with one possible summative project to close out the year and quarter based on a student-selected novel choice,” English teacher Anna Caponetti said.

McLean’s school-based technology specialist, Nishi Langhorne, has been making sure teachers are prepared.

“I feel that McLean is ready to make the transition to distance learning, as we have been focusing on blended learning for the last couple of years,” Langhorne said.

The shift is different for teachers of other grade levels. Kent Gardens Elementary School teacher Alex Ptasienski started out by using Flipgrid with her third grade class.

“This is all new and at this time we are getting organized, meeting online with our colleagues and we as teachers are doing distance learning so that we can be well prepared when we begin,” Ptasienski said. “This is something that has to be well-organized.”

Without their classroom environments, teachers must find ways to establish the same relationship their students found at school.

“I feel really sad because I love being in the classroom and teaching,” Ptasienski

said. “You really build a connection with the kids in your class. However, I think that it’s the right thing to do in order to keep the community safe. I am still my students’ teacher. We are just doing it online.”

Because FCPS distance learning doesn’t begin until after spring break, teachers have been assigning optional work to keep their students engaged and occupied.

“I have been holding my scheduled classes remotely and online office hours via Google Meet,” said Anne Taranto, an English teacher at Stone Ridge School of the Sacred Heart. “I also keep in touch with my students via email. I think it’s important to establish a sense of continuity and normalcy for them in this uncertain time.”

Students have been enjoying their free time, but they still liked hearing from their teachers to help them maintain a routine during their four weeks off.

“My teachers have been keeping in touch with me via email,” sophomore Zora Rodgers said. “I get at least one email from each teacher every day regarding the distance learning plan for that class, optional work, reminders regarding third quarter assignments, and simply just to check up on how my class period is doing.”

Learning from the comfort of one’s own home can also reduce the stress that is usually found in a classroom environment.

“I love seeing my students cozy and comfortable at home when we hold class via Google Meet,” Taranto said. “I think it helps most of them focus better. They certainly seem less stressed out and happier overall.”

While some teachers and students are already enjoying this new style of teaching and learning, some are more apprehensive about the transition.

“I think this is a new learning experience for all of us, and we need to be patient with ourselves and each other,” Langhorne said. “We need to take it one day at a time.”

With online learning set to begin, a new era commences for students and teachers to explore the virtual world.

“Distance learning is much more intimidating for teachers than for students—we’re probably much more anxious than you are. Except, unlike with students, none of it is optional for us, and it’s 100% our responsibility to be functional at it,” Caponetti said. “So, ready or not, here it comes...for us all!”



CORONA CLOSURES — Anne Taranto grades schoolwork during her short hiatus from school. “I want to make sure that we keep a feeling of classroom community intact as we move into this virtual realm,” Taranto said. (Photo by Ava Rotondo)

A&E COVID-19 STEALS THE SPOTLIGHT

Theater community struggling during virus outbreak

SAISHA DANI, SWETHA MANIMARAN & KARA MURRI | REPORTERS

The curtains have dropped. The theaters are empty. Broadway is dark.

Perhaps no businesses have been harder hit by COVID-19 than those which rely on group gatherings and shared experiences. Local, national and international theater and arts organizations in particular have felt the devastating economic impacts of the recent pandemic. The immediate repercussions of the virus are evident at schools, where closures have abruptly canceled upcoming events. For TheatreMcLean, the highly-anticipated spring musical was forced to shut down thanks to the pandemic.

"The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee musical unfortunately will have to be postponed. There is no way we can put on [the show] we want to with the limitations that are provided," McLean theater teacher Phillip Reid said. "However, this does not mean the end of the show. There are possible avenues we may look into next year."

As the show's music director was only available for a limited amount of time, actors immediately began music rehearsals after auditions in February. They learned the music in about three weeks, and everything seemed to be moving along rapidly.

"We were pretty far into the show. We had almost blocked the whole thing, and press photos were coming up really soon. We had all of our music done and were starting to memorize our lines," said junior Avery Versaw, who was set to play a leading role in the production.

FCPS initially closed through mid-April due to coronavirus, so rehearsal arrangements were pushed back but still being made. Shortly after, Governor Ralph Northam closed Virginia schools through the end of the school year, halting all of those plans.

"When school was canceled for a limited amount of time we had plans to learn the rest of the show—the show must go on and all that—but then school was canceled for the rest of the year. We were all really upset, obviously, because we were starting to see that the show could have been amazing; it was starting to get up on its feet," said sophomore Kylee Majkowski, who was also

cast as a main character in the show.

Seniors were especially saddened by the closure of the musical since this was their last main stage and Cappies production of their high school career. Actors and crew members look forward to this final performance as a last hurrah.

THERE WERE ALL THE THINGS I HAD BEEN TOLD ABOUT SINCE I WAS A FRESHMAN IN THEATER THAT JUST LET YOU LEAVE WITH THE BEST POSITIVE CLOSURE — AND I KNEW I WASN'T GOING TO HAVE IT."

**- SHERIDAN DALIER
SENIOR**

"My dream of assistant directing next to Mr. Reid had been crushed," senior assistant director Sheridan Dalier said. "There were all the things I had been told about since I was a freshman in theater that just let you leave with the best positive closure, and I knew I wasn't going to have it."

Cancellations of so many activities both in and outside of school are more than mere disappointments for students who devote countless hours to various theater productions and ventures.

Senior Rebecca Blacksten, TheatreMcLean actor and member of the Unruly Theatre Project (UTP) improv theater troupe, watched some of her most exciting opportunities disappear in an instant.

"I was set to perform at the Kennedy Center in two weeks in a scholarship performance and in three UTP shows, and they were all canceled," Blacksten said. "It hurts my heart that I have to give up these opportunities and that I won't get to do Cappies."

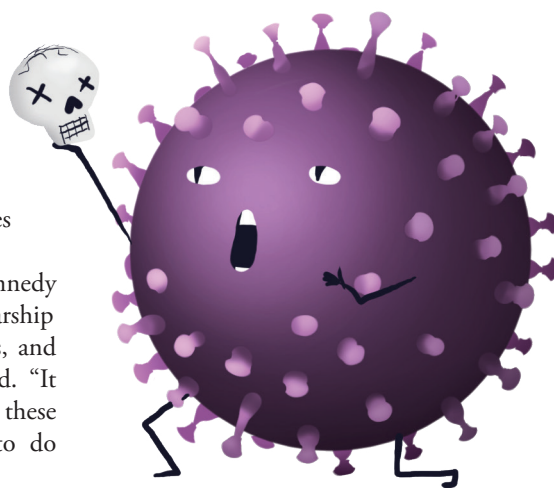
Cappies is a theater awards program for which student critics review and vote on local student productions, and awards are given out to those critics, shows and individual cast and crew members. This year's Cappies Gala at the Kennedy Center, the grand finale to the Cappies season where awards are announced, will not take place.

"With schools closed and the hope that social distancing will slow the COVID-19 spread, we had to make a very difficult decision [to cancel the gala]. The health of our community is now our focus," said Janie Strauss, the National Capital Area (NCA) Cappies program director. "We must all do our part."

This was an unfortunate turn of events for the actors, critics and crew who were looking forward to celebrating their hard work and possibly receiving awards at the gala. All the work put into the event came to a standstill.

"The gala souvenir program and even the backstage passes were in production. The people to help the vocalists, dancers and orchestra rehearse, the nominee photo shoots, the rehearsal locations—everything was set," said Glenda Miesner, the program manager of the NCA Cappies. "The wheels were in motion, and we've had to stop the moving bus."

Beyond high school productions, local theaters have also been hurt due to the pandemic. Social distancing has caused



local theater organizations to lose audience members and profits. National and international theaters have felt these same effects.

"Broadway, the West End, the Kennedy Center, the Cappies and many local theater organizations, out of safety and concern for their staff and patrons, have found it necessary to cancel events, suspend operations and/or temporarily close. The loss of revenue and momentum for many of these organizations could be devastating," said Tara Taylor, the FCPS theater and dance educational specialist.

As of now, Broadway is closed through June 7, leaving the date for the Tony Awards up in the air.

"The Tony Awards were originally scheduled to take place on June 7, the new date of the closures, but had already been postponed indefinitely," *Broadway News* writer Caitlin Huston said.

Productions that were planning to open before the eligibility cutoff for the awards have been pushed back, and some may never reopen. These cancellations have left individual cast and crew members unemployed for an unknown period of time.

"While most theaters don't rely solely on ticket sales, missing shows hurts our organizations from a dollar perspective and from a mission perspective," said Chris Rushing, director of education at Synetic Theater in Arlington. "Nearly all theaters that I know about have to cancel or postpone at least one show. Now those artists are living in an uncertain gray area."

Even after social distancing requirements and stay-at-home orders have been lifted, a residual fear of group gatherings may continue to harm the theater community.

"Audiences might be anxious to be a part of a large group again for weeks and maybe even months after the virus is gone," said freshman Jack Abba, an actor in the spring musical and member of the UTP troupe.

Although theaters across the nation have been canceled, there are still ways to help these suffering organizations.



**THEATER HAS BEEN
AROUND FOR
THOUSANDS OF
YEARS. AS LONG AS
THERE ARE HUMANS
ON THIS EARTH, WE
WILL BE GATHERING
TOGETHER TO TELL
STORIES."**

**- EVAN HOFFMAN
NEXTSTOP THEATRE
COMPANY PRODUCING
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR**

"Donating money, if possible, is important to various actors' funds, and when theaters have reopened, going to watch the productions is a way of supporting the arts," sophomore Clare A'Hearn said.

Miesner offers alternative ways to continue supporting the theater community to prevent future fiscal uncertainty caused by the pandemic.

"If you purchased a ticket to an upcoming performance that you can't use, and you can afford it, please don't ask for a refund," Miesner said. "Besides helping financially, we need to recognize the work and talent of the arts community."

Despite the tremendous burden the pandemic is placing on theaters worldwide, the "show must go on" mentality runs deep. Reid is encouraging his students to continue their artistic expression.

"We will get through this. Never lose your creative spark—find something to fulfill that need," Reid said.

Theater students are working to make the best of this crisis. Senior Marguerite Godwin, head of costume crew for the spring musical, has been making masks out of fabric originally intended for costumes to distribute to places in need, such as hospitals and nursing homes, during the outbreak.

"I'm so grateful that I have so much material to use to help aid our health heroes who are risking their lives to help those in need. Definitely need to give another thanks to Reid who gave permission to use the show fabric so that I can donate more," Godwin said.

Amid this global crisis, the resiliency and irrepressible nature of the theater community is evident.

"Theater has been around for thousands of years. As long as there are humans on this earth, we will be gathering together to tell stories. So no matter how dark and scary things get, you can be certain that we will be back in some form," said Evan Hoffman, the producing artistic director of NextStop Theatre Company in Herndon.

During this time of crisis, the theater community has rallied together, even virtually, remaining optimistic and hopeful for the future.

"Just sit tight, be patient, try to stay positive and take care of yourself and those around you," Taylor said. "The curtain will rise again."



SICK STARS SHOCK STUDENTS

Celebrities' diagnoses prompt Highlanders to take virus seriously

ROHAN MANI SPORTS EDITOR | SAM NAEMI REPORTER

As the coronavirus sweeps across the country, some of the most familiar household names have been infected, sending shockwaves around the world.

In entertainment, COVID-19 has shaken Hollywood to its core. One of the first cases was reported by widely popular actor Tom Hanks, who contracted the virus along with his wife, actress Rita Wilson, while filming a movie in Australia. Other popular entertainers who have been infected include Andy Cohen, Idris Elba, Colton Underwood and P!nk.

Tragically, some have even died from the virus. Famed playwright Terrance McNally, chef Floyd Cardoz, jazz musician Ellis Marsalis Jr., "Stacy's Mom" songwriter and Fountains of Wayne member Adam Schlesinger and songwriter John Prine all passed in recent weeks.

Notable COVID-19 cases have led students to take the threat of the virus more seriously and encouraged them to follow the guidelines issued by health experts and government officials.

"Personally, seeing celebrities like Tom Hanks and many more getting infected has changed my view on the danger of the virus," senior Ethan Bacica said. "[It has] definitely reinforced my belief in the importance of social distancing and staying safe in order to allow this virus to stop spreading."

The sporting world has not escaped unscathed by infection either. Numerous superstar basketball players, including Kevin Durant, Donovan Mitchell and Rudy Gobert, tested positive for COVID, which caused the NBA season to be suspended. New Orleans Saints coach Sean Payton and Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta also contracted the illness.

Major sporting events, such as March Madness and Wimbledon, were canceled while other events, like the Olympics and Euro Football Championships, were postponed due to the fear that athletes and fans would get sick and spread the virus.

Additionally, important political figures around the world have become sick with COVID, demonstrating that anyone, no matter how powerful, is susceptible to the virus. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was the first to self-isolate after his wife, Sophie Trudeau, tested positive the week of March 9.

Two of the highest ranking officials in the U.K., Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Prince Charles, recently tested positive for the virus, and Johnson spent two nights in the ICU. In the U.S., two congressmen and Senator Rand Paul reported they had COVID-19 after working at the Capitol for weeks with no visible symptoms.

"When the coronavirus actually hit America, I was a little anxious and alert about the whole thing, but once important officials and famous leaders around the world got the virus, I realized that everyone was vulnerable," senior Shaeer Sajid said. "It was a reminder that I needed to begin to watch where I was going, how healthy I was being and how I could make sure my family and I remained safe."

All of the reports of celebrities getting the coronavirus, though, have raised questions about how famous people were able to access testing during a shortage that plagued the U.S. Many people have pointed out that the apparent ease with which celebrities are able to get tested and access to superior medical care are a result of the inequality in America's healthcare system.

"I have close friends who have most of the virus symptoms yet can't get tested because they don't have a high enough fever. However, an entire NBA team can get tested without an issue and have it be known to the public within less than 24 hours," Spanish teacher Melissa Duluc said.

McLean's college and career center specialist, Laura Venos, noticed a similar trend.

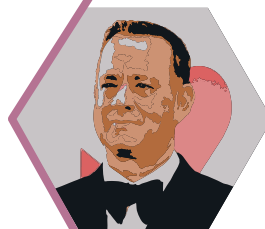
"Celebrities and the wealthy have an easier time in general," Venos said. "They are self-isolating in their large homes and have everything they need delivered to them. They don't hesitate to seek out medical treatment."

While celebrities certainly have privileges that average people do not, at least some of them are offering inspirational guidance for the rest of us. On March 12, a recovering Hanks posted on Instagram, where he channeled his role as coach Jimmy Dugan from the film *A League of Their Own*.

"There are things we can all do to get through this by following the advice of experts and taking care of ourselves and each other, no?" Hanks said. "Remember, despite all the current events, there is no crying in baseball."



Boris Johnson
Prime Minister
of the UK



Tom Hanks
(recovered)
Actor



Kevin Durant
(recovered)
NBA Player



John Prine (died April 7, 2020)
Grammy award-
winning songwriter

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LAWTON**
NEWS EDITOR

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LIFE ON HOLD

IN-DEPTH

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2020

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MISSING OUT

Prom. The Highlander Internship Program. Graduation. All highly anticipated events that seniors look forward to as their high school careers come to an end. Little did the Class of 2020 know, Thursday, March 12, was their last day of walking the McLean halls as high school students.

"I felt like I couldn't reach one of my dreams because, since I was in sixth grade, I always wanted to walk down [the stage] and take my diploma proudly in front of my family," senior Al Bashumeel said. "I wanted to see how they would feel when I become an independent person and how I accomplished a really big milestone in life."

Recently, Bashumeel took a picture of himself wearing his older brother's graduation gown at home, knowing that he might never be able to toss his cap in the DAR Constitution Hall.

"The coronavirus took that opportunity from the Class of 2020. My first reaction was just denying it," Bashumeel said. "And then when I came to realize it's really not happening, I began to cry and just asked, 'Why me? Why the Class of 2020?'"

Seniors across the U.S. have been grieving the time taken away from their final moments in high school. They will never get to relive memories of these monumental events, and their experiences will not reflect the typical senior year they'd been waiting for all their lives.

"I'm sorry. I feel so sad for them. This is a milestone that is just gonna happen without any celebration or anything to go with it. You don't get a do-over," English teacher Annette Billingsley said. "They're probably trying to do some virtual grad party or a virtual graduation, or all those things. But that is not the same as walking across the floor."

Seniors aren't the only ones missing out. Students in all grades

have been victims to the cancellations of important events. The McLean VEX Robotics team had spent countless hours every day after school and sometimes on the weekends, ever since the summer of 2019, to finally qualify for the 2020 VEX Robotics World Championship.

"Qualifying for the world championship was really gratifying because it felt like all of the time and effort we put into this team and our robot had paid off," junior Veda Hegde said. "The cancellation was discouraging because we've worked really hard throughout the season to get to where we are now. We have also never been to the world championship, and it's an opportunity that we may not receive again."

Meanwhile, student-athletes have felt the pain of their sports season ending abruptly. Senior color guard member Nandini Shine has been on the team for all four years and has witnessed the growth and dedication of the team. This year, the team finally qualified for Winter Guard International (WGI).

"We have been working hard to go to WGI and going there was a dream for us because we never thought we would be good enough to go," Shine said. "It wasn't really about going there and winning something, but it was just really to step on that stage that we've admired for so long."

Hardworking athletes were shocked as their aspirations for having a successful season were suddenly taken away.

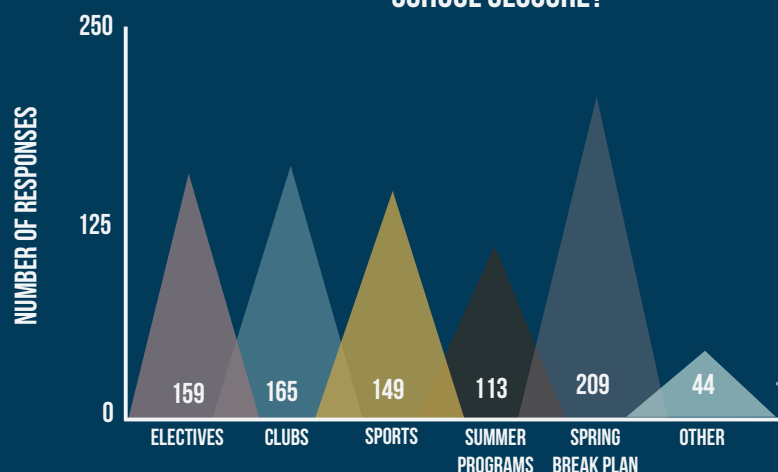
"I couldn't imagine anything worse to happen. I went into the bathroom and I cried," Shine said. "It was very sad because we have worked for a really long time to achieve everything we have this season, and it's really sad that the season was not able to reach its full potential."

Students have mixed feelings pertaining to the school closures. In a survey of 268 FCPS students, 55% said they think the decision to shut down school for the rest of the school year was made too soon, while 45% think otherwise.

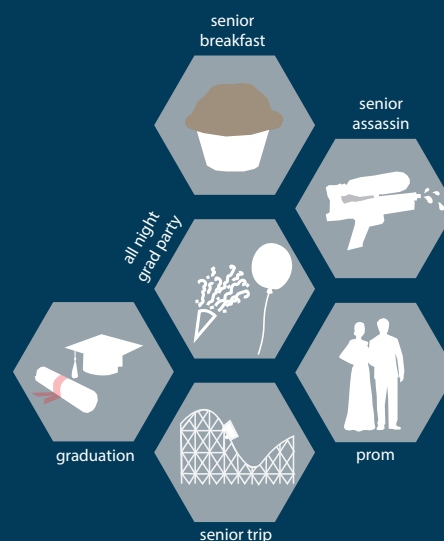
"I do support Governor Northam's decision [to close school for the remainder of the year]," sophomore Zhicheng Zhao said. "In this unforeseen epidemic the safest option is to close school."

*Data obtained via a poll of 268 FCPS students

WHICH AREAS OF YOUR LIFE HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY THE SCHOOL CLOSURE?



SENIOR YEAR MILESTONES:



INCLUDING:
marching band
spring musical
competitions
grades
standardized
tests
and more

McLean students in exchange programs faced some severe blows from the pandemic as their year abroad was interrupted. Junior Maria Zurbuchen was on an exchange year in Switzerland, but she had to return home to McLean.

“My exchange year ending just really sucked because I didn’t get to actually finish it,” Zurbuchen said. “And I didn’t get to see everything I wanted to see and do everything I wanted to do.”

Motasem Bamashous, who is currently a college freshman in Saudi Arabia, has faced the same situation regarding a sudden closure of his university. Bamashous graduated early from McLean, completing his senior year during what was supposed to be his junior year of high school.

“It felt pretty good that after 11 years, I finally got to go up on stage, get my diploma and finally have a conclusion when I was a senior,” Bamashous said. “You guys had to suddenly cancel school, so there’s no end since the school year got cut off right away.”

Bamashous was able to reflect on his last moments as a senior, something he would not be able to do if he were graduating with his former classmates this year.

“On my last day of school, I took a ton of pictures at school because I knew it was the last time I’m going to be in this building and have lunch with my friends. I like to take it all in, but you guys didn’t have that,” Bamashous said.

Rather than enjoying the last day of high school as a memorable ending, for this year’s seniors, this meaningful moment passed without their realization.

“I would be pretty devastated if I was a senior right now. I’m sorry for all the seniors who won’t be able to experience their last few months of senior year because, in my opinion, they were the best couple months of high school,” Bamashous said. “Because

all the stress is gone. The teachers are really chill. And you guys aren’t able to experience that.”

Although seniors will not be able to have an ideal ending to the typical high school experience, the Class of 2020 will not be forgotten.

**“YOUR SENIOR YEAR
WILL NOT END THE
WAY YOU ALWAYS
PICTURED IT, BUT WE
WILL CELEBRATE WITH
YOU.”**

**- LAURA VENOS
COLLEGE AND CAREER CENTER SPECIALIST**

“It’s okay to grieve. It’s okay to be mad. And it’s okay to feel robbed. Your senior year will not end the way you always pictured it,” College and Career Center Specialist Laura Venos said. “But we will celebrate with you. Graduating from high school is a huge accomplishment that you can feel very proud of.”

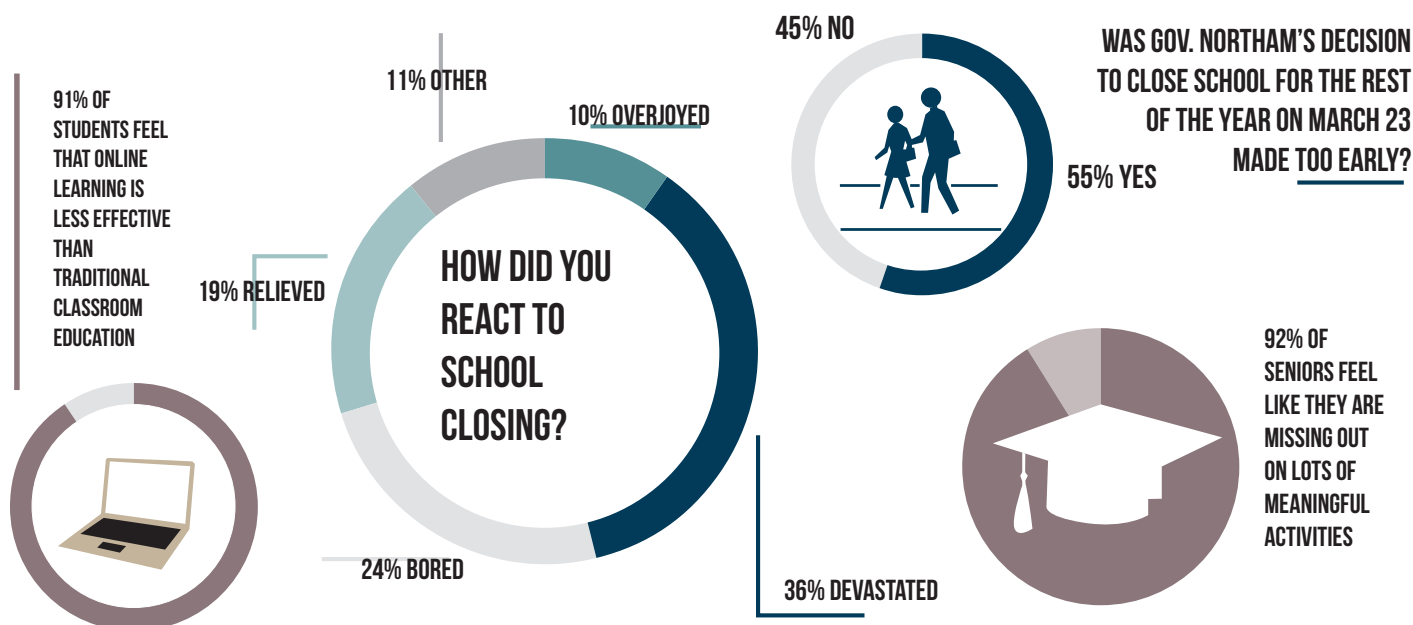
Although decisions are constantly evolving, during a Facebook livestream with the community on March 20, FCPS Superintendent Scott Brabrand said he is hopeful that seniors will get

a fair conclusion to their high school careers.

“Prom and graduation are important milestones in every child’s life. I’m going to do everything I can working with our high school principals to delay the decision around cancellation of proms until as late as possible,” Brabrand said. “I remain committed to find a way for all of us to have the opportunity to participate in graduation. My commitment is to do everything we can to have a graduation for our students.”

STANDARDIZED TESTING LEFT BEHIND

While seniors are saddened over the abrupt ending to their high school careers, juniors stress about their future—college. This spring would be their first time taking standardized tests like the SAT. After months of studying and taking practice tests, they received the cancellation email the day before the test date. ►



"I was just so shocked and I didn't know how to react," junior Emily Chen said. "But I'm happy that we have some safety measures."

The April ACT and May SAT cancellations followed. Juniors are counting on the remaining few standardized testing opportunities, although some colleges have already decided to change test score submissions to optional.

"Colleges will have to be more flexible when reading the applications from juniors in terms of their second semester junior year grades and their standardized test scores," Venos said. "High schools around the world will be handling grades

hands, and that makes my understanding of the content weaker. So right now, I feel uneasy about my AP exams—however, I think I will start to feel better once I adjust to online learning."

A VIRTUAL FOURTH QUARTER

Following school closures in FCPS, teachers and students have been navigating through the early stages of online learning through various digital platforms.

"So far some programs I've used are EdPuzzle, Albert.io, AP



SCHOOLS ARE NOT JUST A PLACE FOR STUDENTS TO LEARN; THEY ALSO SERVE A CRUCIAL FUNCTION IN OUR COMMUNITY. THESE CLOSURES REMIND EVERYONE OF THE IMPORTANT ROLE OUR SCHOOLS PLAY."

- LUCY CALDWELL

FCPS DIRECTOR OF NEWS & INFORMATION

differently, and colleges will have to have that understanding when reading applications."

Some juniors hope submitting a test score will provide an advantage to those who put in effort to take an earlier standardized test.

"It would still be nice for some people to [submit their scores] because it could be positive for them if they do well," junior Eliana Durkee said.

To many's surprise, the College Board revised AP tests for exam takers to complete at home through a secure, timed platform with a limit of 45 minutes.

All multiple choice questions are eliminated and students around the world will be taking the exam at the same time to prevent cheating.

"Like many college-level exams, this year's AP exams will be open book/open note. The exam format and questions are being designed specifically for an at-home administration, so points will not be earned from content that can be found in textbooks or online," the College Board said in an email sent to students participating in the AP program.

Students may not consult with their peers or anyone else when completing the test. The College Board has implemented free response questions for all exams, which includes essays in history and English subjects and multi-step short answer questions in other areas.

Canceling the rest of the school year led the College Board to announce that significant amounts of information will be cut from AP exams in order to make up for the lost classroom time. The College Board is providing students with resources to help prepare them for AP exams due to school closures around the world.

"For example, in AP Physics 1 we are skipping some units I might need to know for AP Physics C next year," Durkee said. "This means I have to take that learning initiative into my own

Classroom, Google Classroom, YouTube videos and Blackboard," Durkee said. "My teachers have also offered collaborative classroom hours that I will be sure to use as I need them."

Teachers are trying to keep students engaged and prepare them for their AP exams through optional online tasks and assignments. This method allows students to learn on their own time while staying productive.

"You can do a lot more, and if you don't understand something or you feel like you're falling behind, you can pause the video and you can learn at your own pace," junior Brian Lewis said.

Closing schools and switching to online learning is drastic, but it is the only option for schools in this challenging time. With synchronous learning—online lessons taught in real time—not set to begin until April 14, teachers have done their best to keep students engaged over the past month, but there have been some drawbacks.

"It's hard, especially with all the different methods and formats that teachers are going about assigning online work," Lewis said. "It's hard to balance all that and really to get motivated because you don't have to do it."

This shift has brought a lot of uncertainty about how learning will continue during this unprecedented time.

"So far it's been really confusing, but that honestly isn't surprising as all of this is happening and developing so quickly. I think as we get used to it, it will improve," Durkee said. "I think it's going to be effective as due dates and real classes come into play, but as of now the lack of solid guidelines has made it difficult."

For high school students, the schedule for the remainder of the school year will include self-directed learning on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Teachers will hold office hours on Wednesdays and Fridays to give students extra support. Live lessons for Red Day classes will be held on Blackboard Collaborate on Tuesdays for 45 minutes each, while Silver Day

classes will be held on Thursdays.

“Optional instruction is never going to be the same as our normal school day,” English teacher Seth LeBlanc said. “Honestly, I think that teachers and administrators have been working very hard to make sure that what is happening with distance learning is sensible, equitable and achievable for all students.”

One of the goals of the distance learning plan is to foster communication between students and teachers in absence of traditional classroom instruction.

“We urge our students to stay in touch with their teachers; ask questions. This is new for all of us. Do not be afraid to speak up,” FCPS Director of News and Information Lucy Caldwell said. “This situation has been a disruption for all of us and dealing with uncertainty is hard. Stay connected and reach out to FCPS, teachers, counselors or other adults in your life.”

For elementary school students, learning will be delivered through printed packets with both review materials and new topics. FCPS expanded the FCPS On laptop distribution program to middle schoolers and assigned approximately 15,000 laptops to middle and elementary students who lack a device.

Keeping equity in mind for families without reliable access to technology, the school board announced that students will receive a “no mark” for their fourth quarter grades. However, the optional assignments for the rest of the school year will provide chances for students to boost their overall grade.

“Teachers will be working directly with students to make sure all students can finish third quarter work and get a grade that reflects their understanding of the material,” Caldwell said. “We have set the expectation that no third quarter grades will be lower than they were the last day schools were open.”

The decision to not grade fourth quarter was made to encourage students to continue their education while keeping the digital divide in mind.

“We want to be fair and equitable to all of our students, and we know that our students and families are all in different places with how they will be able to finish the year academically,” Caldwell said.

Although the school year isn’t ending the way anyone imagined it would, FCPS is making an effort to continue to support its students and staff while prioritizing everyone’s health.

“Schools are not just a place for students to learn; they also serve a crucial function in our community,” Caldwell said. “These closures likely remind everyone of the important role our schools play.”

Students may be separated from their friends, clubs, teams and teachers right now, but no one is truly alone.

“We are all in this together,” Caldwell said. “Look for ways to be positive, establish new routines and perhaps look for ways to help others in need, whether it’s a call or a letter to a neighbor or distant relative or reading a book on the phone to someone far away. These are lessons that will remain with us long after this situation is resolved.” ■

HOW HAVE YOU BEEN SPENDING YOUR CORONACATION?

Studying for SATs, going outside, FaceTiming friends

It sucks. It's terrible. I actually miss school.

Youtube, Netflix, exercise, Khan Academy

Feeling more energetic and stress-free

Sleep, eat, sleep more, eat more, educating myself online, eat, sleep

Hiking, hanging with family, baking, gardening

I've been trying to remind myself, this is for the better of everyone and many people are going through a lot worse thing than me. I'm pretty grateful for what I have and the people I'm with, though!

Spending a lot of time outdoors in good weather. Playing video games all the time otherwise.

Knitting and taking a lot of walks

I've been calling my friends often, enjoying myself on social media, wasting away on social media, going on walks, exercising with Nintendo Ring Fit, and I have strangely picked up weeding.

I have been learning stuff online. I'm also getting paid more at my job for working during this time.

Baking and getting fat, binge watch TV

I've been doing some of the work and what has due dates but I'm not always on task with it and mostly spend time with my family as well as relaxing. I'm mostly upset that there's a chance I won't get graduation, and that means that the grandfather I never get to see won't be able to visit me, as he was going to make a special trip for it.

Painting, swimming, working out, listening to music, sleeping, eating and anything else to stop boredom

Staying up all night, sleeping during the day. I am nocturnal.

I'm gonna draw, play *Animal Crossing* and complain about school being closed.

I've been dissociating and browsing Reddit and not having a good time. I made a big list of things I'd do and draw but I'm too exhausted and unmotivated to do any of them.

I feel like I haven't totally processed the situation.

Working out every day for about 30 minutes to an hour

I've been procrastinating all my work because I have absolutely no motivation.

I've been programming video games.

Bored

Scared

Did online college class like Coursera plus played a ton of video games.

PLEASE STAY AT HOME

Social distancing should be a priority for all students

The staff editorial represents the opinion of the majority of *The Highlander* editorial board

In response to the growing number of COVID-19 cases, the federal government has urged people across the country to practice social distancing. Since then, restaurants and schools have closed their buildings to minimize contact between people.

While most McLean students have taken steps to limit their interactions with others, some have not, jeopardizing our ability to conquer COVID-19. It is crucial that all students exercise proper social distancing to protect their health and the health of the community.

For one, the CDC recommends that everyone distance themselves from other people if their community is experiencing coronavirus spread. They say not doing so puts those vulnerable to developing serious illness in danger.

A common misconception is that teens will not be severely affected by the virus, so students have dismissed the government's recommendations. But a CDC report shows that children may experience different symptoms than adults, causing their cases to go undetected and further the spread of the virus. As a result, the elderly or people with underlying health conditions that teens regularly come into contact with would be faced with more life-or-death situations.

"I decided to social distance because my dad is at very high risk for the virus, so I have to stay home," junior Audrey Alder said. "I'm not worried about contracting it, but I am worried that if I got it, then I would give it to my dad."

**FOR THOSE WHO
HAVEN'T BEEN
PRACTICING SOCIAL
DISTANCING, I THINK
IT'S IMPORTANT THAT
THEY START NOW."**

**- AUDREY ALDER
JUNIOR**

If students continue to venture out, it becomes nearly impossible to control the virus. According to the CDC, all 50 states have community spread of coronavirus, meaning that people are infected without knowing how or where they contracted the disease. Asymptomatic students who continue with their daily activities worsen community spread, increasing the number of COVID cases. So it's critical that students take necessary precautions.

"It's important to social distance because carriers of the virus don't know they have it for a while, and if those people are going out and giving it to others, then the virus will continue to rapidly spread," Alder said. "Staying home helps stop this domino effect."

Precautions include avoiding mass gatherings and remaining six feet away from others whenever possible. Individuals should stay away from public places, with the exception of grocery stores and other essential services. Simple actions, such as ordering food for delivery instead of dining at restaurants and not traveling, are crucial to prevent people from getting and spreading the coronavirus.

"I decided to self-isolate to limit the risk for myself and others from contracting the disease," junior Chelsea Park said. "It's important for everyone to do this because staying at home gives you a 100% guarantee that you won't get the disease, while going out will always put you at a chance of contracting it."

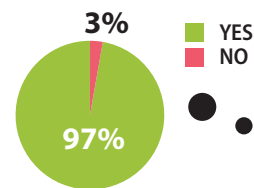
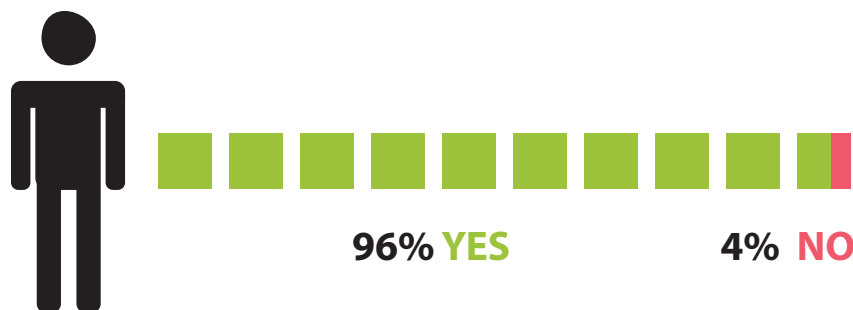
And for those still refusing to comply with social distancing guidelines, Governor Ralph Northam issued a stay-at-home order for Virginia until June 10, so not doing so is in direct violation of a government mandate. It's plain and simple: students should not use this time off of school to dismiss regulations so they can continue their normal lives but should instead focus on protecting themselves and others from the virus.

"For those who haven't been practicing social distancing, I think it's important that they start now," Alder said.

It is unknown how long the virus will last in the U.S., so it is crucial that the community takes caution as soon as possible. Students have a responsibility to social distance and help mitigate COVID-19's spread.

ARE YOU SOCIAL DISTANCING?

186 students weigh in on current guidelines



**DO YOU THINK
SOCIAL
DISTANCING IS
IMPORTANT?**

BOTCHED CAMPAIGN

COVID-19 infects Trump's chances at re-election

ALEENA GUL ONLINE NEWS EDITOR

A struggling economy, shortage of medical supplies, empty streets and a rising number of positive COVID-19 cases has brought panic to our nation. In such desperate times, people look up to their leaders for hope, encouragement and effective solutions.

President Trump, unfortunately, has provided none of this support for the American people. The U.S. is faced with huge challenges, including a rising death toll and limited medical resources, thanks to Trump's delayed response and hesitant decisions. His denial of the crisis left the nation unprepared for this critical situation. With the presidential election just a few months away, his unsatisfactory performance will cost him his re-election—unless he makes some major changes.

In crisis, the first response is crucial. Trump downplayed the seriousness of the COVID-19 outbreak in January while overestimating the nation's ability to combat it. He later called it the "Chinese virus." While Trump is known for such remarks on political issues, his statements have been undiplomatic, racist and irresponsible.

"Trump is notorious for reactionary dialogue as opposed to researched commentary," social studies teacher Ian Howell said. "If the intel story is true from January, then his lack of initiative will be clear—but then when has that ever been an issue for him? His base continually overlooks his inadequacies and changing statements even when they result in total contradiction."

No matter what Trump and members of his administration claim, the increasing number of positive cases and deaths raises questions about the administration's slow response. As a world leader with one of the most powerful economies and militaries, how is

it that our health practitioners are facing a shortage of the necessary protective gear for treatment? These problems arise from the administration's lazy, discombobulated and irreverent response to it. Even people within the Republican party can hardly defend this approach.

"He resisted calling it serious for far too long," Republican-leaning junior Zachary Litt said. "His attitude, while occasionally amusing, set a precedent for the disobeyal of the mandates set out by federal, state and local governments. In short, if he doesn't take it seriously, why should we?"

As COVID-19 continues to wreak havoc on daily life, disrupt society and destroy the already struggling economy, Trump's re-election bid has been put into jeopardy. Unlike past presidential elections where campaigns mostly focused on issues such as the economy, healthcare, immigration and foreign policy, this election, coronavirus will be a major determining factor. As President Trump is a shrewd politician, he can still seize the occasion and turn things in his favor before the election if he makes effective decisions.

"People will be split between wanting something entirely different, or wanting more of the same, with little room in between," Litt said. "Therefore, if he continues to take it seriously and takes more action to help reduce the impact of the economic recession, I think it will either be a close race in the election, or he'll win by a larger margin than last time."

While the latest polls suggest that Trump's approval ratings have gone up to 50%, we should not forget that the fight against the coronavirus is a long battle. A rocky road lies ahead. What the U.S. needs is a leader with the political maturity and responsibility to help us overcome this pandemic.

"[Coronavirus] is a true test of leadership capabilities, and it is really allowing some people to shine—people who actually have good leadership capabilities and are able to take action and protect their citizens," said junior Sophia Powell, a member of the Young Democrats. "It also shows people who don't have the capabilities to lead."

While political leadership on both sides of the divide need to rise above petty politics, a huge responsibility rests on Trump's shoulders. He needs to display leadership by making productive and wise decisions in order to unite the nation under these stressful conditions. More than a campaign issue or a matter of political differences, the ongoing crisis is a matter of life and death for millions of Americans.



HUMOR SPRING BREAK STAYCATION

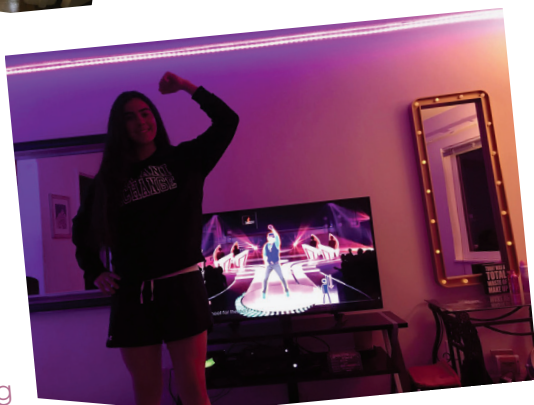
Exotic destinations can't compete with your living room

REBEKA RAFI MANAGING EDITOR & ADVERTISING MANAGER | THOMAS LOHMAN REPORTER



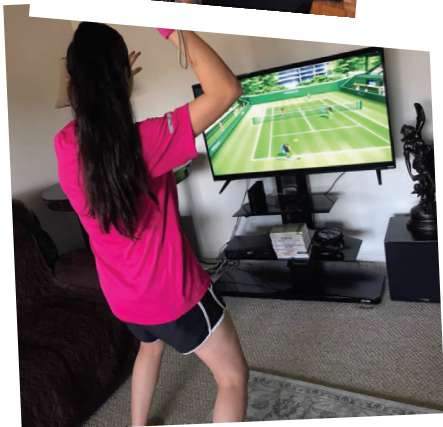
Thomas scavenges for food in his pantry after a long journey down from his room.

Rebeka has the "Moves Like Jagger" as she busts a move with *Just Dance 2015*. She has beat her high score three times during break.



Utilizing his culinary skills, Thomas assists his mom with dinner. Chef Boyardee? More like Chef Thomas!

Rebeka crushes her opponents, CPU1 and CPU2, in an intense Wii tennis match. She is considering a career in the Wii Sports field.



Backpacking in the Alps. Sightseeing ancient ruins. Soaking up the sun on a warm beach. Tasting the finest European cuisine. A perfect spring break family vacation taken right out of a travel brochure and sure to provide relief from the stress of third quarter grades.

Thankfully, we can all ditch these cliché vacation activities and instead spend spring break in the comfort of our own homes. Who needs authentic spaghetti aglio e olio from a five-star restaurant in Sicily when you can help Mom make her "special" Chef Boyardee SpaghettiOs on your personal stovetop?

Relaxing on a sun-kissed Mediterranean beach? How about lounging in the unkempt grasses of your backyard? There's no need to pay big bucks for a mud bath spa treatment when April showers have provided you with freshly churned, all-natural mud mere steps from your house.

Why visit the ancient ruins of Greece and Rome when they can visit you? With technology these days, all it takes is one click to download a virtual tour from the comfort of your own couch. You can tour the entire Colosseum in as few as five minutes!

Having trouble social distancing? Well, fret no more! Just bring out your old Wii console set and isolate yourself from all human interaction. Bring back old memories while locking yourself in your room and playing a tennis tournament against Computer Player 1. Not a sports fan? No worries! Dance your heart out to "Moves Like Jagger" on *Just Dance 2015*. No need for social interaction!

Are none of your friends texting you? Just turn on notifications for Google Classroom and Remind. There's no better way to spend your time outside of school than being constantly reminded of the material you are now responsible to learn by yourself. You'll have cool older friends in no time!

Even hiking doesn't have to be an outdoor activity anymore. Reserve your energy for the greater feat—the mental and physical strain required to get out of bed after countless hours of TikTok scrolling is a far greater challenge than scaling an Alpine summit.

While many people are touting the quarantine as a perfect time to get fit, we prefer exercising our legs with a walk down the stairs to the pantry and our jaws with the crunching of Oreos and potato chips. Say goodbye to ellipticals and treadmills, and say hello to chewing exercises!

On a serious note, while this spring break may not be ideal, we must all prioritize safetiness and the health of vulnerable members in the community and comply with CDC recommendations. And who knows, maybe Chef Boyardee and Wii Tennis will be better than any spring break getaway, especially if it means avoiding putting ourselves and our loved ones at risk.

FCPS FUMBLES WITH CORONAVIRUS MEASURES

School board's disorganized pandemic response causes confusion

AVA ROTONDO
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

DUA MOBIN
FEATURES EDITOR

A storm raged on Twitter the night of March 12 as #CloseFCPS surged in popularity once again.

Superintendent Scott Brabrand had just announced that Fairfax County Public Schools would be open for the foreseeable future—that is, until there was a positive case of coronavirus at a school. Then, only that one school would be shut down.

The county proceeded to cancel all clubs, sports and extracurricular activities occurring on and off school grounds. This would have done little to stop the spread of the virus, though, as 15 players spread across a tennis court would have much less interaction with one another than 2,000 students sharing an overcrowded school.

FCPS's passive approach to the COVID-19 pandemic was nothing short of astonishing. The county was essentially planning to put students and staff in direct contact with the virus before taking action.

"I have family members who are immunocompromised that would be in critical condition if they got sick, which made it frustrating that FCPS at first refused to close until there was a confirmed case [of coronavirus in a school] because it would've meant that the virus had been there for days or even weeks before it was discovered," junior Ryan Shue said.

Other students have situations similar to Shue's, and Brabrand's announcement caused widespread frustration and fear among families.

"I was outraged," senior Summer Schwarztrauber said. "My mother has Type 1 diabetes and high blood pressure as well as kidney defections, so I felt as if FCPS was throwing me to the lions."

FCPS should have made the call to close schools much earlier than they did.

**I WAS OUTRAGED...
I FELT AS IF FCPS WAS
THROWING ME TO
THE LIONS."**

**- SUMMER SCHWARZTRAUBER
SENIOR**

Later that same night, Brabrand amended the announcement he made earlier and canceled school on Friday, March 13. This caused more confusion for working parents of younger students, who had to scramble for child care, and for other families, who had to change their schedules to account for the last-minute closure.

FCPS was caught off-guard by the virus, despite the fact that the county was hit later than many across the country. The reasoning behind the school system's lack of preparedness for the pandemic was because

they were working off of a decade-old crisis plan from H1N1, according to school board member emeritus Ryan McElveen.

This lack of preparation from the get-go caused a ripple effect. The following Monday, March 16, was supposed to be a work day for teachers to become familiar with online learning platforms and a day for students to pick up belongings they'd left behind.

That day was canceled as well, causing the transition to online learning to be much longer. While other districts were able to transfer learning to online platforms in a matter of days, FCPS left their students hanging for four weeks without formal instruction, leaving them entire units behind other schools nationwide.

Luckily, the school board has taken this messy situation as a learning experience.

"We had the benefit of having [coronavirus emerge] after so many other places [were affected], so we could learn from this," at-large school board member Abrar Omeish said. "We could have come up with strategy plans, and that kind of stuff could have happened, so we would have been more prepared now."

FCPS should have canceled and announced a closure sooner. The turmoil surrounding the county's muddled pandemic responses reflected their lack of preparedness and caused unnecessary stress to students, parents and teachers. The school board should use this rocky start as a warning to respond more rapidly to crisis situations in order to prioritize the county's safety.

March 10

FCPS announces that schools will close for one teacher work day on Monday, March 16, to instruct faculty about online learning platforms.

March 13

Governor Ralph Northam closes all Virginia schools through mid-April.

Monday, March 16, is no longer a teacher work day or pick-up day

April 14

Four weeks after closing, distance learning begins for FCPS students.

March 12

Superintendent Scott Brabrand announces that FCPS will remain open until a confirmed case appears at a school. Then that school will close.

Monday, March 16, remains a teacher work day and pick-up day for students.

March 20

Northam closes all Virginia schools for the remainder of the academic year.

SIDE EFFECTS OF 2020 MAY INCLUDE...

Our 2020 vision didn't see this coming

ARIANA ELAHI FACT CHECKER | GRACE GOULD FACT CHECKER | CC PALUMBO REPORTER

Welcome to 2020, where each month brings a new tragedy. As the clock struck midnight on New Year's Eve, millions awaited the decade with hopes of an improved world. Needless to say, 2020 has not lived up to these expectations.

This January, we sure did start off with a bang. Less than three days into the year, President Trump pushed America to the brink of war with Iran after ordering an airstrike to assassinate Iranian general Qasem Soleimani. It reminded us of just how glad we are to have a president who has no concept of consequences. How can we blame him, though! Pulling triggers is so much fun.

Although the U.S. was on the verge of war with a near-nuclear power and our patriotic president was being tried by the Senate for treason, we aren't the only nation who's been having a rough 2020.

On the other side of the Pacific, Australia had burned for 210 days. No biggie, though, only a billion animals were killed in the bushfires and a mere 200 homes were destroyed. But who cares? Global warming is a myth. Anyway, that was just a little fiery bump in the road to what would be the best year yet, right?

Not exactly. On Jan. 26, basketball legend Kobe Bryant and his daughter Gianna died in a helicopter crash while traveling to her basketball game. As it turns out, this was just a taste of what was to come for the rest of the year.

In a fun twist of events, the world became the breeding grounds for an exciting pandemic, which wasn't surprising considering this whole year has felt like a fever dream. COVID-19 was first identified in Wuhan, China, and quickly spread to over 200 countries and territories worldwide. The disease has isolated billions of people, tanked thousands of businesses and left a powerful leader in the ICU. But at least Purell is having a good year.

And let's admit it, we all got what we wanted—a day off. Well, actually, we got an entire semester off, so maybe we wished a little too hard (RIP Senior Season).

With every passing month worse than the last, we're at the point where people are horrified of what April will bring. But you know what they say, April showers bring

May flowers. So hopefully, the summer months will return 2020 to what it once was...a disaster, but not a total disaster.

To the billions of people sitting back and watching the year unfold on their Reddit accounts, good for you! Watching cheap drama unfold on your phone screens is undoubtedly the best cure for boredom.

And maybe it's good that people are numb to tragedy, using the events in this awful year to create viral memes and TikToks. It seems like no matter what comes next, be it an alien invasion or a good old-fashioned sharknado, everyone is ready—at least the greatest meme creators of our generation seem to be. Come on, 2020, is that all you got?

10 WAYS 2020 COULD GET WORSE

1. Tiger King wins 2020 presidential election
2. Boomers take over TikTok.
3. Bob Ross comes back from the dead just to tell you how disappointed he is in you.
4. McLean High School decides to spend its Coronavirus Sanitization Fund on more hallway TVs.
5. The Office accidentally gets deleted from existence.
6. Three words: new Bieber album. Oh, wait, that already happened?
7. FCPS decides that fourth quarter DOES count.
8. The College Board gives 1s to every McLean student on their AP exams.
9. Our moms decide to cut our hair.
10. Netflix becomes free, but the only thing available is *Cats*.

ATHLETES GET OVERTIME **SPORTS**

Redshirt Corona Year movement extends college spring sports careers

ADDIE BROWN
NEWS & COPY EDITOR

JACK SHIELDS
MANAGING EDITOR

Athletes at all levels of competition are frustrated by sport cancellations across the country amid the coronavirus pandemic, but calling off athletic activities has left college athletes in a particularly complex situation.

In mid-March, the NCAA announced that all winter and spring collegiate championships would be canceled. Winter athletes were left unable to finish their season, and spring athletes had almost their entire season canceled due to the health crisis. Because college athletes are typically only allowed four years of eligibility, the cancellations sparked the nationwide “Redshirt Corona Year” movement.

Redshirting is when an athlete delays or suspends their participation to lengthen their period of eligibility, meaning an athlete could sit out a year of competition in order to be granted an extra year to play at the collegiate level. Athletes typically do this when they transfer between schools or contract a season-ending injury so that they will still get to experience all four years of their college career.

Following the termination of both winter and spring NCAA seasons, athletes across the country demanded that college athletes who had their season canceled be granted an extra year of eligibility.

“I do think, morally, that college athletes who are seniors should have another year of eligibility because the last year is so important, and if they really cared about their final season they could take the fifth year eligibility option,” said Rice University freshman soccer player Kendall Robertson, who graduated from McLean in 2019.

With the training and dedication required to be a college athlete, student-athletes believe they should be able to participate in a full four years of competition. For this reason, the NCAA approved an extra year of eligibility for all spring sport athletes who had their seasons canceled.

“At that level, athletes take their sport seriously and a lot of them chose schools specifically to play there, and for those not going pro this is their last time ever playing,” said junior Kyra Bolden, a member of the McLean varsity soccer team.

Though athletes are relieved that they will have the opportunity to finish their college careers with an extra year of competition, the decision has also brought unintended complications.

“[Giving another year of eligibility] would be very complicated with scholarships and NCAA rules,” Robertson said.

Still, allowing college athletes to participate in their full four years of play gives all athletes, especially seniors, a fair end to their lifelong dedication.

“I think seniors deserve to finish their college careers with closure because they have most likely worked most of their lives to become the player they are and have put so much time and effort into training,” Robertson said.

**College athletes
playing these sports
will be eligible to have
an extra year of
participation:**

- 
- baseball
 - softball
 - tennis
 - golf
 - outdoor track and field
 - lacrosse
 - rowing
 - men's volleyball
 - beach volleyball
 - women's water polo

**Information from ESPN*

“
**SENIORS DESERVE TO FINISH THEIR
COLLEGE CAREERS WITH CLOSURE
BECAUSE THEY HAVE MOST LIKELY
WORKED MOST OF THEIR LIVES TO
BECOME THE PLAYER THEY ARE.”**

- KENDALL ROBERTSON
FRESHMAN SOCCER
PLAYER AT RICE



SPRING SPORTS SACKED

COVID-19 brings an end to McLean athletics

NICKY VARELA
SPORTS EDITOR

Since the very beginning of the 2019-2020 school year, spring athletes have awaited the opportunity to compete. Their time to shine would have been now, especially for seniors who were looking forward to saying their final goodbyes to the sports they love so dearly. Unfortunately, athletes across the country were hit with a major plot twist—the season was canceled.

This news was a devastating blow to Fairfax County spring athletes. After months of waiting for their seasons to finally arrive, athletes were met with an announcement from Superintendent Scott Brabrand that as of March 16, athletics were canceled until midway through April due to the recent COVID-19 outbreak.

“Everyone’s frustrated with the decision, but we know the health of the people comes before sports, so we’re just praying for our season to resume in April,” senior varsity baseball player Randy Shephard said in an interview on March 13.

However, that would not be the case. On March 23, Virginia Governor Ralph Northam announced that all school activities, including sports, were canceled for the rest of the academic year.

“Even though I thought this was a possibility all along, it was like a punch to the gut,” Director of Student Activities Greg Miller said.

For seniors like Shephard, having their high school careers end on such a sour note

was a truly disappointing development.

“It’s scary knowing you might be done playing baseball forever,” Shephard said. “For it to get canceled like this is crushing to everybody.”

The fact that this cancellation came as a surprise served as the final heartbreak for the soon-to-be graduates.

“For [the season] to be taken away is heartbreaking, especially when two weeks ago, this wasn’t even on their radar as a possibility,” Miller said.

Not only is the season’s cancellation bad news for the athletes themselves, but it devastated fans as well. McLean supporters are missing out on the thrill of cheering for their school. Students and parents only have so many opportunities to do so.

“I think our entire community enjoys coming to watch our athletes compete. For our fans, and especially for the parents of our athletes, I am sure this is disappointing,” Miller said.

Luckily, sports funding has not been severely affected by the cancellation. The spring season generates a large profit for McLean, but recovering from this loss will not be too difficult a task.

“We do bring in about \$15,000-\$20,000 in ticket revenue from spring sports, but we are going to be okay. We are very lucky to be supported by a great community and an amazing boosters club,” Miller said.

In spite of the disruption, hopeful recruits are thankful that their opportunities to play at the college level have not been hurt by the outbreak.

“Most colleges would have been in the midst of their own seasons, and not a ton of recruiting goes on during the actual high school season,” Miller said. “Most recruiting takes place in the off season when the colleges aren’t in season and they are free to travel to see high school athletes.”

Junior lacrosse player Christian Margita has received interest from several colleges about continuing his career at their schools. While an athlete’s junior year is typically the most important season in terms of peak college interest, this season’s cancellation has not hurt the aspiring star’s chance to compete at the next stage.

“This season is usually an important one for recruiting, but [recruiting] can be going on over the summer, so it’s not something I’m super worried about missing,” Margita said. “To get my name out there, I’ll just keep getting ready for my club season that’ll [hopefully still] occur this summer.”

The takeaway from this unfortunate situation is that athletes have grown to realize that nothing, not even sports, are guaranteed. An entire season, championship aspirations and even an athletic career can be taken away in the blink of an eye. Players are reminding themselves that they need to cherish what they have before it’s gone.

“In the short term, I hope [the cancellation] makes us all appreciate the little things and to especially appreciate each other,” Miller said. “None of us are guaranteed tomorrow, so it’s important that we are kind to one another and make sure the people close to us know that we love them.”

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