

The Talon



The team of volunteers moves boulders and debris from a flood-affected yard in North Carolina

PVCA STUDENTS HELP WITH DISASTER RELIEF

by Rachel Kaye

The last four months of 2024 proved to be an extremely difficult time for the citizens of North Carolina. Hurricane Helene, one of the deadliest hurricanes in several years, hit North Carolina on September 27th and brought disaster with it. This past J-term, a group of PVCA students, led by Mr. Malloy went down to help those who had lost everything.

“It’s really a shame to look at all the things that happened, all the roads coming up, the buildings getting destroyed, people going homeless and having to live off of canned food,” shared junior, Nick King. But the group was determined to help. “I believe that God was definitely working through us,” says Charis Smith. The team spent several days clearing debris off of people’s property, and helping to the rebuild a basement. When asked what her biggest take away was, Shalimar

Reyes-Torres said it was seeing the gratefulness and encouragement the people expressed. “Their smiles and gratefulness was really very impactful,” and it led her to realize that “no matter how much the enemy tries to destroy us, through storms and tribulations, physically, emotionally, or spiritually, God will always be there to cover and protect”.

While the team made many wonderful memories, each had specific moments that stood out to them. For King, it was playing hide and seek in the dark at the church where they stayed. For Reyes-Torres it was experiencing fellowship with the workers that the group was with, and meeting new people there. Something they both agreed on was how good the food was in North Carolina. “I swallowed a raw egg,” Shalimar added, immediately after which Nick expressed his gratitude for avoiding that endeavor.

Charis Smith shared that seeing how the people of North Carolina are living helped her realize what great need they are in and that every little effort made to help them counts. Nick King found himself impacted by one particular person that the group met. “I want to give a big thank you to Ms. Nancy,” he said. Ms. Nancy was one of the people who the group helped, and would afterwards supply them with lunch. “She was always so kind and grateful for having us,” Nick continued, “I couldn’t imagine myself in her shoes having practically everything destroyed, yet she still had a smile on her face. I’ve never seen anyone else like that before”. Although the trip was hard work, it was a wonderful opportunity for the students to serve the people of North Carolina and make memories that they will not soon forget.

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Sports & Health

ATHLETE IN FOCUS:

Ava Knox



by Patrick Sherman

Managing school work, maintaining high grades, and performing competitively in high school sports can be difficult for rising freshmen as well as other upper class students. At PVCA, Ava Knox does both. When asked about managing school work and sports Ava answered, “A big part is staying focused, keeping your goals in mind, being willing to sacrifice free time, and prioritizing things that are important (like grades).” It can be difficult

to stay motivated, but Knox exposes a secret in order to overcome the lack of inspiration that comes from a heavy school workload:

“When I have a lot of assignments I plan them out using a phone planner; English takes up the most of my time.” But sometimes (especially as a senior), planning isn’t enough. “I overcame my challenge of not being motivated, by becoming disciplined, listening to Spotify music, and working harder,” Knox shared.

On average, Knox states that she spends around an hour and 30 minutes on homework each night. Additionally, “After school ends, I go to the weight room at 3:30pm to do weights, warm ups, and stretching. I also work every week, and get a schedule 3 weeks in advance and I plan around it. In the end, it’s most important to prioritize creating a good schedule, building good work habits, and successfully fulfilling that routine.”

“God plays a big part in keeping a good balance between school and sports. Keeping my focus on Him is very important and He drives my motivation to do my work for the Lord and not for men. A verse that really summarizes the Biblical work ethic is Colossians 3: ‘And whatever you do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.’”

While Knox clearly loves sports and has many priorities, Knox shared that when her motivation is playing for God and not for man, it leads to her playing better and being less anxious about the outcomes.

Bulking *Are you doing it right?*

by Christian Garvey

Do you think you’re too skinny and want to put on some healthy weight? I was in the same boat, but didn’t have the right plan until I knew these facts.

Although everyone thinks they know what bulking is, there are many misconceptions about how to do it and how it benefits you. People are often misinformed online, by others in the gym, and even their friends or family. Common bulking misconceptions are: bulking alone helps gain muscle, bulking will give you quick muscle definition, the kind of food you eat for bulking doesn’t matter, and everyone can gain muscle on the same bulking plan. These misconceptions lead to bad practices and unhealthy choices.

Bulking can be defined as a “diet that includes nutrient- and calorie-dense foods to promote muscle gains.” However, eating these nutrient and caloric dense foods does not always lead to muscle gain. Without a good workout plan with resistance training, almost all of those excess calories from the extra eating will turn into unwanted fat.

Another commonly made mistake is thinking that muscle definition and gain will appear in the short term; this is decidedly false. The first problem is that if you are aiming for muscle definition, you should be cutting rather than bulking. Cutting is eating in a caloric deficit and still getting in the necessary nutrients while continuing to train. Secondly, muscle growth results may not be immediate, by staying consistent with your workout, you will experience noticeable muscle growth.

To bulk correctly, you must eat 15-25% more calories than you’re eating already. As far as protein intake goes, you should be consuming around 0.7-1 grams of protein per pound. Rounding out your carbs and fats is also important. To help find the right numbers for you, there are many calculators available online.

When lifting weights, make sure to focus on form and use a weight that can be slow and controlled, but is still challenging. In both nutrition and resistance training, it’s important to be safe and follow right guidelines. I used to be a lot skinnier and didn’t see any growth until I used this method and got my eating right. For anyone who wants to try bulking or has tried it and is not seeing any progress, I highly suggest following this research.

The Season is Over, But This Team Will Be Back

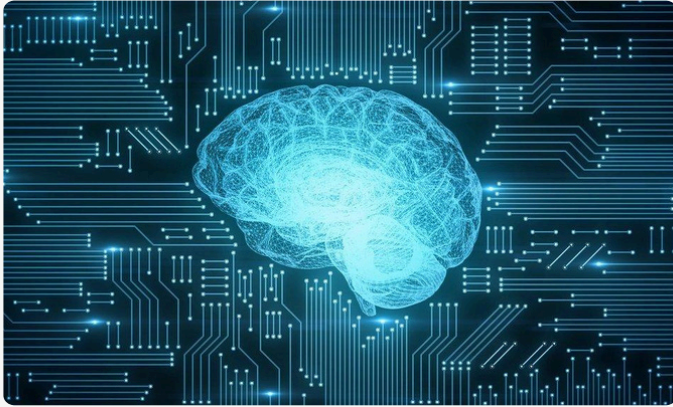
by Nate Hill

The PVCA Boys varsity basketball season had highlights and lowlights. In spite of losing a few players from last season and at times being without a bench, the overall outcome was one of growth. First time player, Caleb Qi said the team’s environment was one of encouragement and operated as a close-knit unit. This aspect of the team is an improvement from previous years.

Other highlights consisted of a buzzer beater against Chinese Immersion and a close win against Pathfinder. Both of these games showcased a fighting mentality and willingness to play through any challenge. In interviews, every teammate mentioned the close loss to Smith Voc as the worst moment of the season. Junior guard Issac Souza said, “this game was so winnable and we really wanted to get our revenge since they beat us badly the first time.” But even despite the difficult loss, the boys came back and fought hard every game, losing several by only a few points.

The team’s overall takeaway has been positive – looking to the future season where juniors Myron Callender and Caleb Hill both said they will drop a combined total of one million points. Jokes aside, the team is looking forward to next year and continuing to build the program with previous and incoming players.

News



AI: SHOULD WE USE IT?

by Patrick Shermans

Artificial Intelligence has risen in its development and utility over the 21st century. For context, “Artificial intelligence (AI) is technology that enables computers and machines to simulate human learning, comprehension, problem solving, decision making, creativity and autonomy”(IBM). After learning this definition, now there is an access to a “problem solving decision making” system which can be beneficial or harmful if used improperly.

One efficient way to use AI is to aid in learning. Artificial intelligence can be a resource to students who are struggling with schoolwork by giving them “Personalized Learning”. According to Washington State University, AI-based educational tools can provide students with a tailored learning experience, adapting to individual learning approaches, pace, progress, and providing customized feedback, recommendations, and resources. If used correctly, this system can become a tool for those who find it difficult to keep up with a class pace, or have questions that a teacher might not be able to answer with in depth personal responses.

In addition to helping students with their learning, AI can also be of use for people in the workforce, “The possibilities for leveraging artificial intelligence in project management are truly endless – helping project managers make more informed decisions, increase efficiency, and improve project outcomes”(Planview). Accuracy and efficiency are great for potential business success, and AI can facilitate planning ahead for future projects and business success.

Artificial Intelligence can be beneficial. However there are some concerns. According to the National Library of Medicine, “Biased software and technological artifacts may result from poor design or from incorrect or unbalanced data being input into algorithms”. Although AI can give superlative results, artificial intelligence still has the possibility of giving out faulty information, or incorrect results. Most of AI’s problems are due to the “biased software...poor design...or from incorrect or unbalanced data being put into algorithms”(National Library of Medicine). This implies that there are design errors due to faulty or biased programming.

Regardless of who is to blame, it is paramount for AI users to be aware of the issues. Checking the sources and output of AI information is important. Ultimately, artificial intelligence has inherent benefits and risks. Only the future will reveal which one outweighs the other.

TRUMP’S EXECUTIVE ORDERS

by Aly Centeno-Cruz

Imposition of Reciprocal Tariffs on Trading Partners.

What Happened: President Donald Trump issued a series of executive orders aimed at reshaping various aspects of American life and governance. Among the notable executive orders was the imposition of reciprocal tariffs on trading partners, which intended to level the playing field and protect American industries from unfair trade practices. This move sparked intense debate, with supporters praising it as a necessary measure to strengthen the U.S. economy while critics argued it could lead to trade wars and increased costs for consumers.

Why It Matters: Donald Trump's imposition of reciprocal tariffs is significant because it aims to protect American industries from unfair trade practices, which supporters believe will strengthen the U.S. economy. However, it also poses risks such as potential trade wars and increased costs for consumers, which critics argue could harm the economy. Additionally, this move impacts international trade dynamics and diplomatic relations, altering the balance of global trade and setting policy precedents for future administrations. The executive order fuels the debate between economic nationalism and globalization, influencing public opinion and voter behavior in American politics.

United States’ Withdrawal from United Nations Organizations

What Happened: Trump also directed the withdrawal of the United States from certain United Nations organizations, which he claimed were ineffective and biased against American interests. This decision was part of a broader effort to reduce U.S. involvement in international bodies that Trump believes undermine national sovereignty. Critics of this move warned that it could diminish America's global influence and leadership.

Why It Matters: The withdrawal has significant implications because it can diminish America's global influence and leadership, as critics argue, by reducing its role in shaping international policies and decisions. This move may also strain diplomatic relations with countries that value multilateral cooperation. While the decision reflects a prioritization of national sovereignty, it contrasts with the view that international organizations are essential for addressing global challenges.

Ban of the Penny

What Happened: Another significant executive order is the discontinuance of the penny. Trump instructed the U.S Treasury to cease minting new pennies due to the rising production cost, which now exceeds the coins face value. The announcement was made on his Truth Social platform, where he highlighted the inefficiency of continuing to produce pennies since there has been a significant financial loss for the U.S. Mint. However, there is still an ongoing debate on whether to make this decision without Congress' approval.

Why It Matters: Conversely, eliminating the penny could result in price rounding, potentially impacting consumers who depend on cash transactions. Moreover, the penny holds sentimental value for many Americans and is a significant part of the nation's history and culture. The debate over the penny also underscores broader discussions about government waste and the role of physical currency in an increasingly digital world.

Opinion



Should our mascot think about wearing a uniform... and maybe using mouth tape?

ALY'S CORNER

The way you dress says something about you whether you like it or not.

by Aleannys Centeno-Cruz

The way a person dresses plays a significant role in how they are perceived by society. When someone dresses neatly and stylishly, it communicates a sense of confidence and self-respect. People are more likely to take them seriously and view them as competent and professional. On the other hand, if they dress sloppily or inappropriately for the occasion, it might send the message that they are careless or indifferent about how they present themselves. Which is why I think the way a person dresses is important as it reflects how much someone values a situation or the place they are in.

The choice of clothes you wear according to the occasion is also significant. You will never see a lawyer go to court in a hoodie and sweatpants because that already damages their credibility as a lawyer and people may not take them seriously. Or if I was at a sleepover with friends, I'd probably wear pajamas since it fits the occasion I am surrounded by people I'm familiar with.

Moreover, how you clothe yourself also tells people what your interests are and what you believe in. Do you want people to think you are professional? Do you want people to think you are fun and artsy? Do you want people to think you are classy? If someone wears eco-friendly and sustainable fashion, it signals that they care about the environment. Similarly, dressing in bold, unique outfits might suggest that they are creative and open-minded. This is why styles such as Punk, Goth, and Bohemian exist because they communicate other people's interests, beliefs, and state of mind.

In essence, clothing choices are a form of non-verbal communication. They can create first impressions and even affect one's sense of self-worth. Therefore, paying attention to how one dresses is important for both societal perception and personal well-being.

MOUTH TAPE:

Should you use it?

by Christian Garvey

When scrolling on social media, or following your favorite athletes and celebrities, you can see that mouth tape has become viral and is being discussed nonstop. What is mouth tape? Simply put, mouth tape is a tape that is used to keep your mouth closed while sleeping. But should you use it?

There are varying opinions regarding mouth tape: One, is that it's a viral trend that is not medically correct but just a hypothetical self-care process that tightens facial skin and sharpens the jawline. On the other hand, some people believe mouth tape can remedy problems related to breathing with your mouth open.

Although not much of a problem to some, snoring is either completely prevented or greatly reduced with the use of mouth tape. While not completely proven, some medical research says breathing through your mouth during sleep can cause health problems and several other side effects. However, some of these smaller effects such as bad breath, dry mouth and snoring prevent the creation of saliva which helps clean the mouth and help prevent dental disease.

Depending on who you ask (or who you follow), mouth tape is believed to sharpen the jawline and improve overall sleep. However, a proverbial saying that you can't trust everything on the internet applies to this situation. Until further research is done, whether it works or not is just an assumption that hasn't been proven or disproven.

Highlights

{from the bookshelf} Dr. Keegan

Here is a brief recommended reading list for anyone who wants to learn more about Black history. For those of you who love reading biography and history, these are some gems.

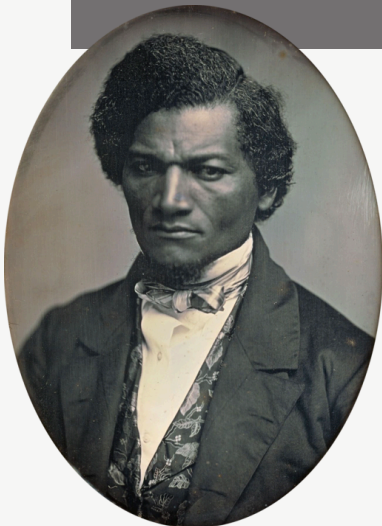
The Warmth of Other Suns by Isabel Wilkerson – An incredible and moving account of the Great Migration. Everyone should read this book.

Long Walk to Freedom by Nelson Mandela – This autobiography tells the incredible story of one man’s rise to the South African Presidency after spending twenty-seven years as a political prisoner. It is an inspirational testimony of the power of forgiveness and the importance of perseverance.

How Far to the Promised Land by Esau McCauley - Esau McCauley is a public theologian and professor at Wheaton College who has authored several books and written many articles for a wide range of publications. This book is his story.

Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom by David W. Blight – This is the story of an escaped slave who became one of America’s leading intellectual voices for freedom during the Civil War era.

King: A Life by Jonathan Eig – This 2023 biography tells the remarkable story of one the most influential Americans of the 20th century, who by his example and sacrifice, brought lasting change.



FREDERICK DOUGLASS {Black History Focus}

Someone You Should Know

by Nate Hill

Frederick Bailey was the most photographed person of his time, including the President. Why was this? Unlike the well-known and wealthy white men of the era, Fredrick Bailey, commonly known as Frederick Douglass was a black man born into slavery on Feb. 14, 1818 in Talbot County, Maryland. His master was a cruel slave owner and a direct symbol of the south’s beliefs. Even though the common belief was that slaves were no different than animals, young Fredrick Douglass was filled with a desire to learn and had an extraordinary intelligence.

Frederick Douglass moved to Baltimore Maryland after being bought by his owner’s wife, Mrs. Auld. A craving for reading was ignited when she started to teach him how to read unbeknownst to her husband. When her husband found out, he immediately put a stop to young Douglass’s lessons. However, Douglass was not perturbed and instead either exchanged bread for the white school children to teach him some of their lessons or tricked them by challenging their ability to write and read. When they demonstrated their skills, they were simultaneously continuing to teach him how to read and write. After learning how to read, Douglass dove into any book or newspaper he could find.

After several years, Douglass was leased by his slaveowner to another master, Edward Covey who was

known as “The Slave Breaker.” One day Douglass stood up to the cruelty of Covey and was severely lashed. Unlike many of the slaves, his fighting spirit was not quenched and in another break out between him and Covey, Fredrick was the victor in a short but very physical fight. After this fight Fredrick was never whipped again at that plantation.

After a failed attempt to escape from slavery, Fredrick was finally able to escape from the south because of a carefully thought out and executed plan. Once he arrived in New Bedford, MA. he changed his last name from Bailey to Douglass in order to conceal his identity because of the Fugitive Slave laws.

Frederick Douglass then gained thousands of supporters due to his Abolitionist work as well as his autobiography that exposed the cruelties of the deep south and its slavery. He was a powerful influence in challenging the status quo. His powerful oration for the cause of the African American inspired countless abolitionists. And his words and papers, through their widespread distribution from slaveholders to the President of the United States, led the thoughts and actions of civil right fighters across the nation.

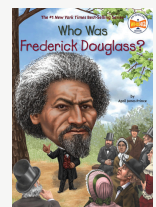
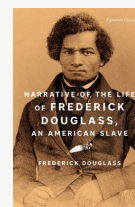
Read More About
Frederick Douglass



Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave
by Frederick Douglass

Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom
by David W. Blight

Who Was Frederick Douglass?
by April Jones Prince



Entertainment

{elementary} teacher's inferno

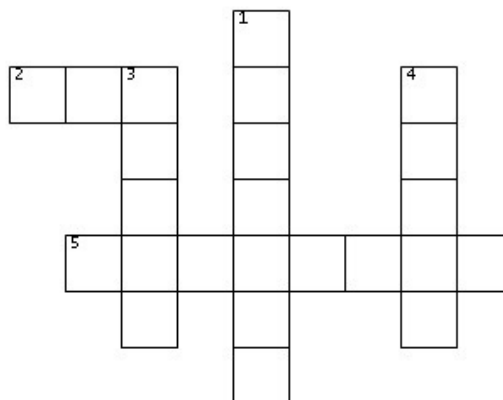
Use the clues to fill in the blanks with an Elementary teacher.

DOWN

1. "Pep Rally Basketball Pro"
3. very tall
4. girls sports court

ACROSS

2. musical note
5. Star Wars



Black History Month Fun Facts: By Kareem Abdul Jabar

- George Crum, a skilled black chef invented the potato chip.
- Frederick McKinley Jones, a black mechanic invented a portable x-ray machine.
- First successful open heart surgery was by black doctor, Daniel Hale Williams.
- Jesse Owens, a black track and field athlete was the first American to win four gold medals.
- Thurgood Marshall, a black judge and lawyer was a justice on the Supreme Court from 1967-91.
- Benjamin O. Davis, Sr. was the first black Army general in 1940.

free birds

Seeking a Christian home for **two male Parakeets** that are sweet and very quiet. Cage and food for months included!
Contact Mrs. Samantha Mozdzanowski quickly (as in anytime) before someone else snatches these adorable birds!

{movie review} Captain America: Brave New World

by Patrick Sherman

Captain America: Brave New World has been long awaited and anticipated by marvel fans. Personally liked the cinematography and got to watch the film in IMAX which gave me the opportunity to experience the film in a high definition at the movie theater. There were pleasing aesthetic visual shots, from explosions of cars, aircraft carriers in the ocean, and fighting scenes between Captain America and his foes.

Brave New World is fast paced, with a lot of action sequences. However, there are some slower points throughout the movie, where the main characters are trying to unmask the villain. The movie also explores themes of leadership, how to manage stress, learning how to be reconciled, and taking responsibility for actions that deserve consequences.

I appreciated the fighting sequence at Celestial Island where Sam Wilson has to stop two rogue American Fighter pilots from attacking Japanese forces, and de-escalate a possible war between the United States and Japan. This is part of an engaging plotline with an undercover villain who tries to manipulate the current President Thaddeus Ross, and orchestrate a war between Japan and America over the new discovery of Adamantium metal at Celestial island.

The performances in this movie are well played. Sam Wilson, and Joaquin Torrez, perform their roles well. Harrison Ford's acting is

particularly impressive. Sam Wilson is relatable. He is an original cast of the avengers called the Falcon, who picks up the mantle of title Captain America after Steve Rogers, the original Captain America, passes the vibranium shield to Sam Wilson at the end of Avengers: Endgame.

I can relate to the pressure that Sam feels. People who have taken the place of successful leaders in any situation of life, can feel the weight of responsibility that is placed on them. He has to inspire people. One of my favorite quotes from the movie is when Bucky says, "Steve gave people something to believe in. And you give them something to aspire to." This statement is given after the Falcon (now played by Joaquin Torres) is injured during a battle over the Celestial Island.

While the new Captain America, Sam Wilson feels weaker and incomparable to his predecessor Steve Rogers. Bucky then appears and delivers this quote as motivation for Wilson who is feeling that he has let down his friend and the title he is supposed to live up to.

This film creates a moral hero who tries to take the mantle of Captain America, a leader who motivates people to take a stand against evil and injustice, something we still need today.