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Professor Jennifer Koster wins Outstanding Faculty Award

Read a tribute to
Beryl Solla, pgs. 12-13

Ginger Hood, assistant editor

The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) Outstanding Faculty Award is an award given to faculty members who “have a demonstrated record of superior accomplishments in teaching, research, knowledge integration, and public service,” according to the SCHEV website. This year, there were 72 faculty members nominated; only 12 of those 72 were recipients. Among these recipients was Jennifer Koster, an English professor and the writing center coordinator at PVCC.

“PVCC salutes Jenny Koster on this tremendous accomplishment,” said PVCC President Frank Friedman in an article about the award. “Professor Koster is a talented, dedicated faculty member who is committed to providing

opportunity for students. She goes the extra mile to help all students succeed. She epitomizes the quality of faculty that students encounter at PVCC.”

In addition to teaching and acting as coordinator of the Writing Center, Koster has been the coordinator of the Virginia chapter of the Southeastern Writing Center Association (SWCA) and the Virginia representative to the SWCA Board for the past four years. She also helped initiate Virginia’s first statewide tutor collaboration, TuColla-VA, in 2020.

“We call it TuColla — it sounds like a music festival,” said Koster. “It was in October, and we invited tutors from all around the state to submit proposals ... we had representatives from 16 schools in Virginia, and I think 70 people signed up. It was a great week.”

See Koster on page 4



English Professor and Writing Center Coordinator Jennifer Koster
Photo courtesy of Jennifer Koster

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DATES TO REMEMBER

— **Exhibition: Barbara Shenefield *** —
Feb. 5 to March 31, Virtual

— **Deliberative Dialogue:
A House Divided *** —
March 24, noon to 1:30 p.m., Virtual

— **Open registration for students** —
March 26

— **Richmond Ballet Swan Lake ^** —
March 28 to April 14

— **Advocacy in the Capitol *** —
March 31, noon to 1 p.m., Virtual

— **SGA Game Night *** —
April 2, 7 p.m., Virtual

— **Sámi people Guest Lecture *** —
April 7, noon, Virtual

— **SGA Drive-in *** —
April 9, 8 p.m.

— **Last day of classes** —
May 3

— **Spring Semester final exams** —
May 4 to May 10

— **Graduation** —
May 14

*Free Event ^Student Vouchers Available

Editor's Note

Maxwell Walpole, assistant editor

When I started out at PVCC, the medium of journalism was not even on my radar. Ever since I was a child, I had a deep fascination with storytelling. But back then, my passion had solely lied with fiction. I paid attention to current events and had a keen interest in history, but it took enrolling in Journalism 1 for me to realize there was just as much potential for expertly crafted, impactful storytelling in real life events as there was in the realm of fiction.

Frankly, I was not expecting to become as invested in the field of journalism as I am today. I rationalized enrolling in Journalism as a pragmatic decision. It would allow me to pursue an interesting career, and that would have to be enough.

But as I attended each class session and completed the weekly assignments, I began to learn that journalism was not just a career path, but an art form all of its own.

Journalism 1 was easily my favorite class that semester, and I was champing at the bit to learn more. That dogged determination got me where I am today, an assistant editor on PVCC's student newspaper, *The Forum*. It is a position I am honored to have the privilege to serve in, and I anticipate that even after my time as an editor has ended I will use the skills I developed while working on *The Forum* in my future career.

Above all else, I hope that telling my story will inspire young and talented writers to enroll in a Journalism course and join the writing team of *The Forum*. I know that my time as a journalist has changed me in ways I never could have imagined and opened up a whole new world of possibilities for me.



SGA Presents: PVCC Game Night

Come play
Jackbox
TV games
with us!



Theme:
Costume
party so
come
dressed to
impress!



Prizes
awarded
up to
\$100



April
2nd at 7
pm EST

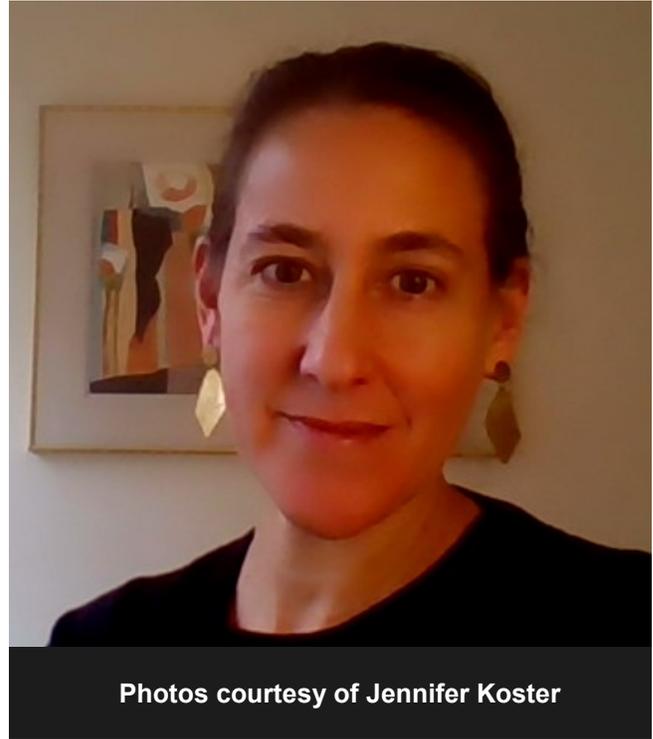


Koster, continued from page 1

Of the 12 recipients of the Outstanding Faculty Award, Koster is the only recipient from a community college. “It’s nice to be recognized, particularly in a community college. We often get a little overlooked,” Koster said. However, when it comes to personal recognition, Koster is more hesitant. “I’m trying not to, but it feels funny to get [the award] because so many of my colleagues are such talented and deserving people. It’s strange...I’ve struggled with the attention.”

Attention is not the only overwhelming factor of winning the SCHEV Outstanding Faculty Award — a lot of work goes into providing examples and resources for review. “The honor of being nominated comes with a lot of work,” says Koster. “You work with the president’s office putting together a package, so it’s quite a bit of work, actually. I found out a couple of weeks before the holiday, it was surprising— it’s a big honor,” she said. She continued with a chuckle, “A lot of people kept calling me tireless, and I was like— I’m very tired! It’s very tiring.”

Besides all the work of being nominated, Koster has also been kept busy with transitioning both her classes and the writing center online. “I had thought I would spend the summer doing



Photos courtesy of Jennifer Koster

creative writing. But with getting the Writing Center and also getting teaching completely online, it’s been very consuming,” Koster said. “I was kind of in the groove, and then [the pandemic] came along.”

Among all this work, Koster still finds the time to encourage her students to use their voices. She cites her upbringing as part of her inspiration: “My mother’s family is Mexican; Mexican families are very close. They’re very tight knit. We would spend a lot of time traveling to visit various family members, but I did not speak Spanish— I was not raised speaking Spanish, though my mother was raised bilingual. That was a challenge ... I couldn’t speak to my grandmother, who only spoke Spanish and who very much wanted to be a good grandmother. I was terrified of her most of my childhood because I couldn’t speak to her,” she said. “Language, family — that’s something that comes up in my writing a lot, I think it’s really just wanting people to be able to speak their experiences and— I hate to say it, it sounds a little hokey— but speak their truth, and be able to express themselves.”

To learn more about the 2021 SCHEV Outstanding Faculty Award and view the full list of winners, visit www.schev.edu/index/institutional/outstanding-faculty-awards.



The Writing Center’s English Conversation Circle in 2018

PVCC Scholars Receive Academic Awards

Chelsei Moore, staff writer

The 2020-2021 academic year just became a bit more rewarding for three members of Phi Theta Kappa. Yanir Haim, Trent Zakielarz and Gustavo Guevara were the most recent recipients of academic achievement awards at PVCC. It takes hard work and dedication to achieve a degree from any institute, whether it is a community college or a four-year university. The students that show tremendous strength and determination in their everyday lives are members of the All USA Academic Team led by the PTK organization.

There are two awards that can come from being nominated for the All USA Academic Team at PVCC: the Transfer Pathway Scholarship and the Workforce Pathway Scholarship.

Both of these scholarships are granted to students who show genuine interest in their academics, but in two slightly different ways.

The Transfer Pathway Scholarship is granted to students who demonstrate excellent academic performance and intellectual ability combined with leadership and service.

These individuals would possess the tools necessary to extend their education beyond the doors of the classroom to

Breakfast held during the American Association of Community Colleges Annual Convention,” said Bruce Robinson, Khi Theta Kappa advisor and associate professor of Information Technology.

Unlike the Transfer Pathway Scholarship, the



Trent Zakielarz

Workforce Pathway Scholarship (also known as the New Century Workforce Pathway Scholarship) is awarded to one student per state each year. The individual that receives this award would be recognized as someone who has the most outstanding performance as a workforce-bound student.

The \$1,250 scholarship can be used to complete an associate’s degree, obtain a certificate, or purchase any trade-related tools to enter the workforce.

Everyone can congratulate the two Transfer Pathway Scholarship recipients, Yanir Haim and Trent Zakielarz.

Congratulations are also in store for the Workforce Pathway Scholarship recipient, Gustavo Guevara.

“Please join the Alpha Epsilon Tau chapter’s officers, members and advisors of Phi Theta Kappa here at PVCC in recognizing our three outstanding nominees for the All-Virginia Academic Team for the 2020 – 2021 year,” said Robinson.

Led by PTK advisors Bruce Robinson and Kit Decker, these students will be recognized at an event in Richmond, Va. in the spring with the college’s president, vice president of instruction, and the chancellor of the Virginia Community College System.



Yanir Haim
Photos Courtesy of Bruce Robinson

benefit others in society.

Twenty members of the academic team are named annually and each will receive a \$5,000 scholarship, totaling \$100,000 in awards.

“In addition to scholarships, team members are presented at the annual President’s



Gustavo Guevara

Rebecca Payton: VAACE Teacher of the Year

Maxwell Walpole, assistant editor

On Dec. 2, 2020, PVCC Career Coach Rebecca Payton was awarded the Virginia Association for Adult and Continuing Education (VAACE) teacher of the year award, another benchmark in a long and successful career. The VAACE teacher of the year award is given to only one adult education teacher from a pool of educators from all across Virginia. According to Payton, “A career coach is someone who helps people determine a career path that is a good match to them by using interest inventories and personality assessments. The coach will also help them map out a plan to reach their career goal.”

Prior to winning the award, Payton worked as a career coach for 13 years. For the first three years of her career, Payton served as a career coach with the Jobs for West Virginia Graduates program at PikeView high school in Princeton, West Virginia. “I was called a job specialist and I worked with at risk youth. I assisted students with staying in school and creating a plan after graduation... I was with the JWVG program for 3 years until funding was cut,” said Payton.

For the next 10 years, Payton worked at the Mercer County Academy of Adult Learning as a member of the Strategic Planning with Occupational Knowledge for Employment Success program. Then, she and her husband moved to Charlottesville to be closer to their daughter. Through a series of job applications and transfers, Payton was transferred to the Thomas Jefferson Adult & Career Education (TJACE) center at PVCC. “My years of experience in adult education in West Virginia combined with my experience as a career coach made a great fit for

TJACE,” said Payton.

For Payton, the best part of her job is helping her students to succeed. “I love working with individuals who are goal oriented and have a passion to work towards those goals. Sometimes I can help them discover their passion and that is exciting” said Payton. “The people who are most successful in their careers are very self-aware of their strengths and weaknesses... I encourage all my students to use self-reflection to become self-aware of their gifts and talents and how to best use them.”

Payton’s long tenure as a career coach has had a substantial effect on her view of the world. “Many of the individuals I have worked with are trying to better themselves so they can earn better pay to support themselves and their families. What I have become acutely aware of is that even the jobs that these individuals get after training are not jobs that provide self-sufficiency.” said Payton. “I have become aware of the systemic issues of income inequality. I look at a world that tells the individuals I work with to look at their wants vs. their

needs and budget appropriately. However, I think this is a good lesson for those who are hoarding wealth in our country and globally and for the leaders who develop our economic policies. It is my hope that the essential workers of this pandemic can now be seen as the vital contributors to our communities that they are and will be compensated appropriately for their efforts.”

The TJACE program is dedicated to helping adults earn a high school diploma or GED, assisting speakers of other languages in improving their english language skills, and helping adults to find their ideal career path. You can find more information about TJACE at the PVCC website.



Photo courtesy of Rebecca Payton

Professor Colum Leckey Reflects on his Career

William Waugh, staff writer

Colum Leckey, professor of history at PVCC, has always been passionate about the study of the past. From the responsibilities of a Civic Engagement course, the early days of being a professor, and the essence of world history, Leckey's teaching style has been anything but stagnant.

Leckey considers himself to constantly be learning and questioning the world.

"I've always been curious," Leckey said. As a self-proclaimed "bookworm," Leckey has a natural inclination to the analysis of historical documents.

"I guess I've always had a knack for history," he said, and then took a brief pause to reflect. Growing up, his father was always reading about history, and Leckey has no doubt that his passion was passed on to him.

Leckey remembered his old history professors at the University of Virginia and the University of Pittsburgh who inspired him to teach. He especially admired their "ability to frame a good discussion," he said.

Having taught for over 22 years, Leckey still remembers the difficulties of starting out.

"The first years of teaching college were really, really hard for me, and I think they are for all teachers," Leckey said. The most difficult part is acclimating to your environment and "developing your own approach and your own identity as a historian and as a teacher, and you don't know it yet, but you still don't have a style yet," Leckey said, laughing.

When starting out, Leckey tried to emulate his professors to no avail.

"I tried to do what [my professors] did, and I found out, in a zig-zaggy kind of way, that I am not them," Leckey said. It took time for Leckey to find his own style, but he quickly became comfortable in his approach to lectures.

One thing students quickly learn is that Leckey will call them out to include their perspectives in class discussions.

"I work hard to include all the students as much as possible in class, even if it means sometimes putting students on the spot. Kind of putting them on the hot seat and enduring long, uncomfortable silences," Leckey said.

This can be difficult for new students to adapt to, but quickly becomes second nature once they are used to it.

For myself, the idea was intimidating at first, but I ended up sharing opinions on topics in class where I never would have raised my hand traditionally. It began to feel like my input was wanted in the class discussions.

Leckey acknowledges that there were days when he had just felt off or had a terrible lecture.

"In the first five to eight years, even early into Piedmont, I had some god-awful days, just horrible days. Nothing I did worked, and I still feel that way sometimes, but little did I know at the time, I was steadily improving and working out my own method of teaching: one that suited me, and one that suited my students as well," Leckey said. "And I'm still striving for it," he added.

Leckey applies his same philosophy on learning to teaching; he is always improving and experimenting.

As for Civic Engagement courses, a new program brought by the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) for community colleges statewide, history courses naturally lend themselves to this prospect.

"I really want students to understand the Enlightenment origins of the American political system, more than anything else. I think it's really important for us to examine the intellectual, ideological, and cultural roots of our system," Leckey said.

Leckey argues that understanding political origins of the United States is crucial to being civically engaged and educated.

"I think it's really important for all students who are civically engaged to have some semblance of understanding about the Enlightenment origins of modern politics," Leckey said.

Leckey particularly struggles with a dilemma as old as time: teaching the uninterested.

"The main obstacle is those who are [not interested in history] are in a pretty big majority, so you gotta make it interesting for them, or at least try to for 70 percent of the time," Leckey said.

Read the full article online at piedmontforum.com.



Screenshot of Great Expectations program video

PVCC Continues Great Expectations Program

Jessica Coyle, staff writer

Every year, 19 percent of children age out of the Virginia foster care system according to FosterVA. Since 2009, PVCC's Great Expectations program has provided an avenue for these students to continue their schooling or job training in order to achieve their goals and enjoy successful adulthood.

Headed by Advisor La'Tisha Jackson, the Great Expectations program (GREX), was built to help the youth in the foster care system in need of resources and support. In order to be eligible for the program, students must be between the ages of 13 and 24 years of age and have a current or past affiliation with the Virginia foster care system. The program accepts high school students, college-age students and students that may already be attending college.

To apply for the program, students can sign-up for placement tests in order to decipher where they are academically. The program is made to help students utilize their current knowledge to start attending classes and learning again.

With the Covid-19 Pandemic, most services for the GREX program are no longer available on campus. However, through the GREX program webpage students can access all the sign-up and

scheduling info easily.

In 2018 alone, over 200 students were projected to age out of the system and its subsequent educational support according to FosterVA. Participating in the GREX program provides students with access to financial support, career coaching and academic essentials like computers and books. The program also offers a sense of community for these students, with experienced advisors and incentives for participation.

The program has a structure based on support, with regular meetings between advisors and students, as well as events and activities put together by the program.

Students not in the GREX program can still get involved and help. As a PVCC program, GREX takes donations in many forms. The public can donate items for incentives like gift cards or concert tickets, or they can donate books, calculators and hand sanitizer. Students are encouraged to get involved and embrace the opportunities provided by the GREX program and it has proven successful in helping students find success.

To learn more about the Great Expectations program, visit their PVCC webpage. <https://www.pvcc.edu/great-expectations-pvcc>

PVCC's Memorial Garden gets a Makeover

Ginger Hood, assistant editor

At the north end of PVCC's main building, overlooking mountains and a winding road, there is a quiet garden. PVCC's Memorial Garden, to be exact. It has stood there for more than two decades, becoming almost an outdoor extension of the student lounge.

When PVCC still had most classes on campus, it was not a rare sight to see students sitting in the garden socializing, doing homework, or enjoying the scenery of the garden and surrounding mountains. But do students know the story of PVCC's Memorial Garden?

The garden was founded in 1999 by former Professor of Philosophy Marietta McCarty, who dedicated it to her grandmother, Plum. An email from Ben Copeland and David Lermann about the garden touched on McCarty's relationship to it, "For many years Marietta could be found out there with her students. They would prune while discussing life's thorniest problems, weed while gravely examining life and death, spend time together on the mulched beds or perched on the gently curved stone walls." The garden was a peaceful respite from all the stress and deadlines of school.

When McCarty retired from PVCC and



The memorial garden before renovations

began writing books on philosophy, the garden went mostly untended. It was not abandoned, but it became overgrown and weathered. Years of students populating the garden and exposure to the elements began to age the garden — its metaphorical gray hairs began to show.

But hope was not lost for the garden. McCarty returned to PVCC this fall and, with the help of The Garden Spot's landscaping crew and an anonymous benefactor, breathed fresh air into the Memorial Garden.

New plant life, seating, and stone walls have been introduced to the garden, and the fruits of this refurbishing will be apparent in the upcoming spring months.

David Lerman and Ben Copeland concluded their email with an optimistic message: "Marietta sends her love and offers this place for rejuvenation during these hard times and hopefully, hopefully, we can again use this lovely space to work with our students next year."



The new and improved memorial garden
Photos courtesy of David Lerman and Ben Copeland

Let's Roam Charlottesville: Adventure Awaits

Zhaire Roberson, staff writer

This semester, take the opportunity to roam the streets of Charlottesville with purpose and discover scattered secrets throughout the city. The Let's Roam team has worked hard to find hidden secrets in cities across the globe. Charlottesville is one of the chosen destinations for the "Let's Roam Scavenger Hunt Adventure" experience.

Adventurers are split up into teams where they will walk together around the city. One member of the team can download the easy to use Let's Roam app for a route key and hints. The team members will work hand-in-hand to collect various items, execute actions, and solve riddles to complete challenges.

The more challenges and riddles the team completes, the more points they earn. The team with the most points earns the highest ranking on the leadership board.

The hunt takes about 2 hours to complete and up to 10 people can be on a team. The ticket is \$11 per person. Tickets can be used from the day

of purchase up to a year later. The scavenger hunt can be enjoyed by everyone, from family members and friends to a partner or co-workers. Reservations are not required and the scavenger hunt can be done during the day or at night.

Throughout the hunt, participants will walk through Charlottesville Historic Downtown Mall, Court Square, the McGuffey Art Center, and more. This scavenger hunt highlights Charlottesville's diversity and the town's historical aspect. Let's Roam Scavenger Hunts have received over 2,000 five star reviews since its establishment. To buy tickets visit www.LetsRoam.com.

According to Let's Roam's website, participants are guaranteed to "learn about [their] city and each other on a one-of-a-kind adventure." The Let's Roam Scavenger hunt is fun, interactive, and competitive. The scavenger hunt is an opportunity for the people of Charlottesville to make deeper connections with their fellow adventurers by obtaining knowledge about their city's history together.

Journaling as a New Form of Stress Relief

Jessica Coyle, staff writer

With the Covid-19 pandemic still limiting people and students, the website EventBrite is providing people with the opportunity to sign up for online events quickly and easily. The platform offers public and private events, classes and concerts with tickets available by register or purchase. One event offered by the website was "Self Care Sundays," a live streamed workshop every Sunday, centered on different stress-relieving activities. This public workshop, offered by Loughborough University in England, was one of many student-led sessions related to different departments within their college. This particular session on Jan. 31 was about the art of journaling.

The livestream started with student and host Yasmin Nwofor introducing herself and greeting new, as well as experienced writers while laying out her objectives for the workshop ahead. Nwofor began immediately with a writing

exercise, asking everyone to take a few minutes and write about what journaling meant to them. She then explained how the practice of journaling can be useful, and how for her, it was a form of self-awareness.

She said "journaling aids in building that strength to maintain a positive internal dialogue." Nwofor went on to explain that being comfortable when writing, particularly in a personal setting, is what leads to discovery and peace of mind. She listed ways that a bit of writing every day can be helpful, whether it is morning or evening.

Nwofor spent a large portion of time talking about how writing freely can help to ease anxiety. She described using a journal as a planner for her week, and taking time to work with self-affirmations like "I am, I can, and I will."

As Nwofor put it, "What you give attention to will expand its presence in your life...that can either be fear and worry and anxiety or it can be gratitude."

Read the full article on piedmontforum.com.

Walking the Blue Ridge Tunnel Trail

Danny Talbert,
staff writer

Located 500 feet beneath Rockfish Gap in Nelson County, Virginia has opened a brand-new walking trail called the Blue Ridge Tunnel Trail. This isn't any ordinary trail, but central Virginia's only former train tunnel converted into a trail. A 15-20 minute walk from the parking lot takes visitors right up to the nearly one-mile long former train tunnel.

Built between the years 1850 and 1858, the tunnel was built mostly by a poor Irish workforce and slaves. The tunnel hasn't been in use since the 1940s and was donated to Nelson county in 2007 by CSX

Transportation to construct this trail. It was finally opened to the public on Nov. 21, 2020.

On the trail to the tunnel, you will find many informational signs about the history of how it was constructed. The trail is relatively flat and very well maintained with trash cans along the footpath. The train tunnel itself is almost a mile long, 16 feet wide, and 20 feet tall. Most of the walls are exposed rock with some parts having to be bricked up to prevent debris from falling.



Photography by Danny Talbert

Since there are no lights in the tunnel the only light comes from each end, but that light doesn't reach far. I recommend bringing a flashlight stronger than a phone flashlight. It is so pitch black inside that the phone light is consumed by the darkness. If you have never been inside a long tunnel, being inside might feel odd at first because your eyes won't be able to adjust without the help of your light.

Thankfully, the path is flat, and also had no trash when I went through. Another thing that you should bring is a jacket, even if it's cool or temperate weather the wind is directed into the tunnel and is strong at times.

It is important to know that the trail isn't a loop,

so when you finish you go back through to get to your car. I also recommend going during the weekdays if possible because it does get busy and there's limited parking. There are port-a-potties located at the trailhead. This is truly a unique, beautiful, and relatively easy hike for the family. Just remember to not leave trash and to be respectful to the wildlife.

Address: Blue Ridge Tunnel Trail, Afton, VA 22920

Professor Beryl Solla Tribute

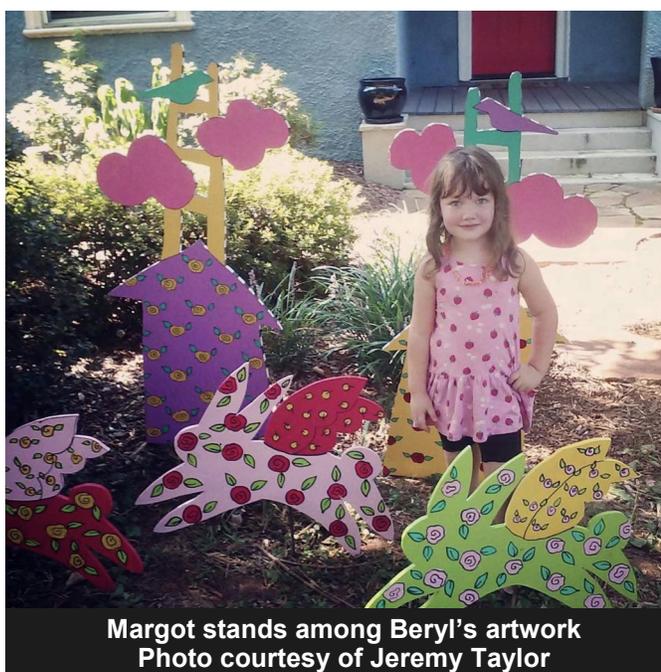
I remember helping Beryl set up for Let There Be Light. I remember Beryl's artistic flare—her lively eccentric hair styles and flashy shirts. I remember her speaking up in staff meetings and faculty senate. I remember her warm personality and her dedication to her students. She will be missed by many.

— *Wendi Dass*

Beryl had a special way of sharing her thoughts during faculty meetings. Always humorous, but no less serious, she cut through the bull-stuff and articulated what many of us were thinking (but may have been too shy to say). Beryl, you will be missed at these meetings and well beyond!

— *Anne Allison*

I always felt wholly connected to Beryl. Although I was a health science faculty and she an art faculty, I looked up to her and saw her as a mentor in many ways. She was confident, spirited, and full of advice and kindness. She was one of the first faculty who warmly welcomed me to PVCC 11 years ago. She was always the first to give me a compliment or offer a warm smile that would make me feel at ease. A couple of my favorite traditions here at the college were lead by Beryl; 'Art and Chocolate' and 'Let There Be



Margot stands among Beryl's artwork
Photo courtesy of Jeremy Taylor



Photos courtesy of PVCC
Marketing and Media Relations

Light'. It was a privilege knowing her and to call her my colleague and friend. Now, in her memory, whenever I look at a piece of art I'm going to want a piece of chocolate, if for no other reason than to think of her with the same warmth that she always showed to me. She will be greatly missed.

— *Nicole Winkler*

I am a professor at PVCC and Beryl was a dear friend and colleague for 12 years. I cannot share one specific memory because I have so many awesome ones with Beryl.

The one thing that stands out to me is that she was always so wonderful to my daughter Margot. Margot even had her own nick name for Beryl "Bear Bear." Since my wife and I have families that live far away, Beryl was always like an extra grandma figure to Margot. One thing I want to say here is that Beryl's love was infectious. Her care for her friends and loved ones was always so powerful. In her death I still feel her love and care.

To quote the Christopher Nolan film *Interstellar*, "Love is the one thing we're capable of perceiving... that transcends dimensions of time and space." I certainly feel this now. Beryl Solla's love certain transcends time and space and I still feel her presence.

— *Jeremy Taylor*

Beryl Solla Tribute continued

Now the campus was formless and void, and drabness was over the surface of the deep basement. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the drabness. And God said, "Let there be light," and Beryl said, "You're damn right, God, we need some color here!!" And lo, she began splashing. And there was light. And color. And excitement. And movies. And hot chocolate with banana bread. And God saw that it was good, and He said: "You rock, Beryl!"

There has been so much excitement in this place here below for so many years: red and blue and purple and orange and green and yellow bursting into our field of view. And now there is quite a tizzy in the Place upstairs: Previously dignified angels with slow, majestic steps are giddy with excitement and dancing the tango at the very thought of getting to shed their dull white robes and don some new robes that are bursting with color. We shan't begrudge them their joy, although we'll still miss our Beryl.

— Patricia Jassmann

During my first year at PVCC, I decided to go to Let There Be Light. By happenstance, Beryl and I noticed one another at opposite ends of a hallway in Dickinson. I knew who she was, but she did not know me. Not yet at least. She recognized me, but not as the recently hired sociology instructor. Instead, she mistook me for an artist. Beryl grabbed my wrist and started ushering me to the food station for artists. My meager protests went unnoticed, too much hustle and bustle for that. Minutes later, Beryl recognized her mistake. For me, the situation was too good to go waste and it became a joke between the two of us. For a long time after, I would often announce myself as 'The Artist' whenever we crossed paths at meetings or events. She always responded by slinging barbs my way or jokingly threatening to beat me up; all the

while, her smile poorly hiding her feigned outrage.

As the years passed, I started assisting in the set-up for Let There Be Light. It was here that Beryl gave me the nickname of 'The Brute' for my ability to handle many of the heavy props and exhibits. Anything heavy, call for me. One year, President Frank Friedman paid a visit to the set-up crew. Here belted out something to the effect of, 'Hey Frank! Did you know that Todd is a brute? He can lift almost anything.' It should be mentioned that Beryl often gave people nicknames, usually it was unique between her and the other person. No one ever called The Brute, just Beryl.

Beyond these stories and beyond similar ones that can be shared by colleagues and students, Beryl was a towering figure on campus. She spent fifteen years with us and accomplished what most people could not in forty. She spoke her mind and voiced her passion and compassion, always advocating for students, particularly those struggling academically or experiencing hardships. She will be missed, dearly.

— Todd Platts



Art from the memorial gallery "Solla World"
Art by Rose Guterbock

Art Classes in a Socially Distanced World

Jessica Coyle, staff writer

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, students everywhere have transitioned to almost entirely online learning. The few classes that do meet in person are hybrid classes and mostly related to the arts. Tom Clarkson, professor of art, teaches ceramics as a hybrid class on campus and shared some thoughts about how his practices and experiences have changed since the beginning of the pandemic.

Clarkson began with an in-person tour of the pottery studio. He demonstrated the high firing temperature used to solidify clay and glaze in the kiln, even removing a block to show me the red hot ceramics inside. The heat of the kiln room subsided as he walked through the finished works room.

Clarkson explained that his class goes through fewer materials, and uses their massive kilns less often with reduced class time and space. After the tour, Clarkson set up outside on the studio patio to take questions. The doors were open to let in the fresh air blowing across the pond, with the view visible from the studio.

Clarkson said for ceramics, a hands-on approach is necessary. On the potential benefits, Clarkson said, "It's like an extension of what we do."

Explaining that he tried to make his online school work an extension of what his students can do in class. He went on to say, "every culture has a ceramic culture, and everybody in ceramics has their own vision."

Clarkson encourages his students to research and take interest in ceramics that may be outside of class possibilities. Although they may not have the time or the resources to try everything, students can still explore ceramics outside the studio.

Ceramics courses have experienced a vast drop in participation, with a regular semester totaling around 100 enrolled students, and the current semester having only 28. "I think a lot of people are still worried about coming to campus," Clarkson said, "But it's still a class, and we're still learning and doing our best."

With only certain areas of the studio open for use, the class sizes are much smaller, but the class still makes their own glazes and has certain pottery wheels designated for students to work on.

Clarkson says he still has students who come back to "the best-kept secret at PVCC," with some taking his classes for years and continuing through the pandemic.

Thanks to a scenic and virus-friendly location, the class is as normal as possible.



PVCC Ceramics room with small kiln and view of the finished works room. Photography by Jessica Coyle

New Deal art Reimagined in Virtual Art Gallery

Jessica Coyle, staff writer

This month, PVCC's Visual Arts Department published a new visual arts gallery online. Featuring local artist Barbara Shenefield, the series of posters is reminiscent of America's history yet relevant to life today. Shenefield's exhibition is titled *World Progress Association: the New Deal*. Although the collection would usually be displayed on campus, the availability of the virtual gallery means the community can still enjoy the collection from home from now until March 31.

Based in Charlottesville, Shenefield's work is centered on local spots and iconic scenes. For this particular collection of posters, Shenefield drew inspiration from the depression-era art created during Roosevelt's presidency.

In her artist statement, she wrote, "Rather than being protest posters, which have pointed and direct critical messages on them, my posters will be more in the spirit of the New Deal."

With her art featuring thought provoking text and images related to modern life, Shenefield makes it known that her work is meant to acknowledge and bring attention to these subjects, it is not meant for protest. Her posters draw on existing works, but Shenefield's interpretation is meant to represent the future of what society is capable of, and "American possibility." The images are in vivid color and a familiar style, drawing on both previous and new designs to fit today's issues and crises.

The name of the exhibition itself is a nod to Roosevelt's New Deal. Shenefield's WPA is meant to mirror that of the great depression. The WPA was the Works Progress Administration; providing work, pay and infrastructure as a way of boosting the economy. Shenefield's version is a play on words as well as the old themes, with classic looking designs and values against a modern backdrop. She covers common causes,

like livable wage, climate change and propaganda.

Shenefield's reimagined WPA posters honor the American way of life; American workers, natural resources and government. The posters are meant to repurpose those used in the '30s, but as Shenefield herself explains, the two sets of art are not that different, as American values haven't changed.

But Shenefield's version of these WPA posters are meant to inspire American culture, and the continued importance of these natural and human resources.

"Take them as a call to action," she said.



The Continuing Legacy of Buck v. Bell

Max Walpole, assistant editor

On Feb. 18, the Virginia Festival of the Book and Encyclopedia Virginia came together to host a webinar focused on one of the most controversial aspects of Virginia's history — the forced sterilization of almost 8,000 people under a eugenics program that lasted until 1979. The panelists of this event were journalist Adam Cohen and author and historian Elizabeth Catte, both of whom have written books on the history of eugenics in Virginia.

When the livestream started, Catte appeared first. She immediately established a welcoming atmosphere, sitting clad in a yellow sweater and wide-rimmed glasses in her cozy-looking home. "I think that today, we would have more of an entry level discussion to these topics, because they can be intimidating, [and] very heavy," she said.

After Catte finished introducing herself, Cohen spoke. He is a stocky man with a salt and pepper beard and thick-rimmed glasses. His room was comparatively more spartan, with just a chair and two lamps, but his committed interest in this subject was clearly evident. As the two authors explained, the decision that would lead to decades of involuntary sterilizations all started with a woman named Carrie Buck.

In 1924, Carrie Buck was only 17 when she was sexually assaulted by the nephew of her adoptive mother. Later that year, Buck became pregnant, and her adoptive parents had her committed to the Virginia State Colony for Epileptics and Feeble-Minded because the circumstances of her pregnancy could have tarnished the reputation of the family.

"Carrie gets there just at the wrong time," explained Cohen, "just when Virginia has passed a sterilization law, just when the head of the colony is looking for a test case. And because Carrie's mother is already there, and she already has a child who they're able to say is mentally feeble... they're able to say 'oh look, she's part of a family pattern,' so they set her up and she becomes the test case."

Buck's selection as a test case had little to do with testing the medical procedure itself and more to do with testing its legality. The state of Virginia had recently enacted a eugenics law, and

Albert Sidney Priddy, the superintendent of the Virginia State Colony for Epileptics and Feeble-Minded, was eager to see if the law would endure the scrutiny of a court case. However, Buck v. Bell was far from an impartial case. The lawyer assigned to defend Buck, Irving Whitehead, was a supporter of the eugenics movement and a member of the board of the Virginia State Colony. The consensus among historians today is that Whitehead deliberately did the absolute minimum to defend Buck, in some instances even working against her to sabotage her case. "A lot of legal scholars are pretty comfortable today calling Buck v. Bell a sham trial," said Catte.

Her diagnosis of "feeble-mindedness" was also a sham. Buck was not only intelligent, but a gifted writer, as evidenced by the letters she wrote while interned in the colony. "This was a way to medicalize a lot of pre-existing beliefs about people who were poor, non-white, disabled, and people who were immigrants," said Catte.

But ultimately, Buck lost the case, and she was sterilized. Priddy did not live to see the outcome of Buck v. Bell, but his successor, John Bell, continued Priddy's work with the added assurance that the law was on their side. From 1927 to 1979, 7,325 men and women were involuntarily sterilized, although some researchers approximate that the total number of victims may stretch as high as 8,300. But outside of Virginia, the incorporation of eugenics policies into law had far reaching consequences.

In Europe, a particular group of political extremists were influenced by American eugenics policies: the Nazis. When asked to what extent American eugenics law had influenced the Nazis, Catte said, "This is sort of like the simplified version of the chronology of eugenics, that American eugenics exists as a social movement in the 1910s, 20s and 30s, and then Nazi science comes along and pushes that knowledge into an even darker abyss."

Eugenics also influenced America's immigration policies. According to Cohen, "[He] wasn't aware how much eugenics influenced American immigration law [such as] the Immigration Act of 1924, which cut off most immigration from Eastern Europe and all immigration from Asia and other places."

"Now the thing is," Cohen said, "a decade



A screenshot of Elizabeth Catte during the webinar

after this, Anne Frank’s father wrote a series of letters begging to get visas to bring his family to America. And they were turned down because of this 1924 law. So, of course, he ends up not being able to save his family, and Anne Frank dies in a concentration camp. [That] was when I realized that Anne Frank died in a concentration camp not only because the Nazis thought Jews were genetically inferior, [but] because the U.S. Congress did also. That was why they passed the law that prevented immigration from that part of the world. So the connections between America and the Nazis in that era were so much stronger than we realized.”

While the practice of eugenics is no longer as mainstream as it once was in America, the government has been slow to offer reparations to surviving victims. “My own take,” Catte said, “which I’ll mention briefly, is that possibly the supreme court is waiting for most of the victims of eugenic sterilization to die so that their status as victims is not elevated in states that have not, like Virginia, decided to pursue financial compensation for victims.”

As for Carrie Buck, while her sterilization prevented her from having another child, she went on to live a long life outside of the colony, marrying twice and working in an apple orchard with her second husband.

“One little detail that was for me so poignant,” Cohen said, “is they say that when she finally ends up in a retirement home, she’s very popular and well liked, and people thought of her as someone who was very intelligent. She would get very excited in the morning when the daily newspaper came, and she loved doing the crossword puzzle... I just thought, here’s this woman who, she’s not mentally defective, she seems to greet the day with a smile and attempt[s] to move forward despite what the state has done to her. And I think all in all, she persevered in a way that she should never have been made to persevere.”

If you are interested in learning more about this subject, you can view a recording of the livestream at the Virginia Festival of the Book’s website or purchase *Pure America: Eugenics and the Making of Modern Virginia* by Elizabeth Catte and *Imbeciles: The Supreme Court, American Eugenics, and the Sterilization of Carrie Buck* by Adam Cohen on Amazon or at other digital and physical retailers.

This event was hosted by the 2021 Virginia Festival of the Book, a 13 day long event centered around the celebration of literature. The festival will be held virtually from March 13 to March 26. You can find out more information at the Virginia Festival of the Book website (VAbook.org).

PVCC's German Baking Club gets Cooking

Ginger Hood, assistant editor

When a person joins a Zoom meeting, it is expected that they will be met by their peers in their bedrooms, living rooms, and other at-home workspaces. It is not every day you join a meeting with a group of people in their kitchens — some quaint and homely, others tidy and professional — each kitchen a glimpse into its owner's life. This semester, the German Baking Club welcomes members of any skill level to learn to bake German dishes at home in their own kitchens.

On Thursday, Feb. 11, the German Baking Club held their second ever meeting over Zoom. The recipe of the month was Lebkuchen, a gingerbread-like dessert with a lemon glaze that can be made as a cake or a cookie. Most participants chose to make cookies, though each batch came out different than the next.

Some baked the dough in a flat sheet, some hand-cut the dough into shapes, and some used shaped cookie cutters.

"Personally, I recommend cat cookie cutters. Those are my favorite," said German Baking Club President Skylar Trainum.

The German Baking Club, previously known as just the German Club, only recently began holding meetings over Zoom.

"We were the German club, but no one was really interested in that, so now we're the German baking club," said Sadie Harper, the club's vice president.

Virtual schooling helped to facilitate this shift of the club's focus towards baking; this way,

attendees can bake along in their own kitchens.

This month's meeting, which lasted just under 2 hours, had a total of 9 attendees. The atmosphere was friendly and welcoming — questions and conversation were encouraged, and topics ranged from visiting Germany and past baking experiences to upcoming movies and plans after graduation.

The club is open to inexperienced bakers as well as those who do not want to bake along. It is a learning experience, even for the hosts.



Photo courtesy of Skylar Trainum

"I'm making mistakes already ... That's what life's about — you gotta screw it up to learn. Though that's always easiest to tell others than it is to believe yourself," said Trainum.

The club plans to meet again next month — meetings are announced through email, with recipes for that month's project included.

They have also expressed that

they are open to recipe suggestions, and are looking into including vegetarian and vegan substitutes with their recipes.

As for future recipes, the club already has some ideas.

"I hope to make a black forest cake someday," said Trainum. "Though that may be a little ambitious."

For those interested in relaxing, socializing, and learning more about German food and culture, the German Baking Club presents an excellent opportunity.

For more information on the German Baking Club, email Club President Skylar Trainum at grt2014@email.vccs.edu or Vice President Sadie Harper at sh251202@email.vccs.edu.

Tacos Gomez: Authentic Mexican Street Food

Isiah Cowan, staff writer

As we move into the new year, there is no secret that many communities around the country are experiencing an unprecedented amount of change. One thing that hasn't changed in the Charlottesville community is Tacos Gomez's glowing presence.

This past weekend, I ordered from Tacos Gomez's to-go service and came away from the experience pleased with the quality of the customer service and the freshness of the ingredients, as well as the price.

The staff gave a friendly greeting and took my order, which was ready within 6-8 minutes. By the time I had sat in my car and listened to one song on Spotify, my order was steaming and ready to go.

Tacos Gomez sets itself apart from the competition due to their diverse range of food options and the authentic feel that is associated with street food.

The most common order, Four Tacos for \$10, is a great value for the price when you consider the freshly made ingredients as well.

Tacos Gomez operates from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. servicing the local Charlottesville community 7 days a week.

Tacos Gomez resides at the foothills of the Pantops district in Charlottesville (1348 Long St.). Unlike traditional restaurants, what makes Tacos Gomez's unique is the fact that they operate out of a stationary food truck. Their street-food identity is precisely what defines the unique experience of dining with Tacos Gomez.

While customers await the arrival of their food, it is commonplace to witness back-and-forth banter from a diverse cast of patrons where discussions range from politics, to the weather, or

even the latest UVA sports result — often in several different languages. While the customers wait in hopes for a good meal, the area outside of the food-truck functions as an ecosystem for both diversity and a cultural exchange of conversation as customers from all walks of Charlottesville share their stories. I found this to be a particularly comforting element of the Tacos Gomez experience.

This past weekend, I ordered the Four Tacos deal and opted for Al Pastor (Pork), Chorizo (Beef), Carne Asada (Steak), and Lengua (Cow Tongue) for a grand total of only \$10.

In my opinion, the protein options were extremely lean and tender, the tortillas were cooked to perfection: both soft and crunchy, and the fresh cut cilantro & onions functioned to balance the overall texture of the meal adding elements of both crunchiness and zest

bite after bite. Both lime and sauce options were added, although the tacos were adequately seasoned to begin with.

Overall, I give Tacos Gomez five stars. The Tacos Gomez restaurant is a thorough interpretation of what real family-owned authentic Mexican food is supposed to taste like. The food, which has always been good, is guaranteed to be complimented by extraordinary customer service.

What also makes Tacos Gomez extremely unique is that while waiting on your order, it is standard to reason a nod, smile, or engage in a friendly back-and-forth with a diverse set of community members; all in this little crevice of a parking-lot East of Downtown Charlottesville.

You can contact Tacos Gomez by calling 434-953-5408, via Instagram (@tacos_gomez) or on Facebook.com



Photo courtesy of Miguel Gomez

Shining a Light on Black Artists from Virginia

Danny Talbert, staff writer

For a small city, Charlottesville has many different places for art and music to be shared, from local to international artists. Some staples are The Jefferson Theater, IX Art Park, and the McGuffey Art Center, to name a few. The center, which is located just north of the downtown mall, has been in operation since 1975, making it one of the oldest artist-run art cooperatives.

The current art exhibit is titled “Water: The Agony and Ecstasy of the Black Experience,” and is being shown until March 28, 2021. The purpose of the exhibit is to “take viewers through a journey, using water as a metaphor of the Black experience. Water serves as a never-ending stream connecting all Black lives together,” the McGuffey Art Center states. It showcases 25 Black artists from Virginia and includes paintings, illustrations, poems, and other art pieces. All of the work is for sale ranging from \$20-\$5000 with the art center only taking 10%

commission and the rest going to the artist.

One of my favorite pieces was done by Tronja Anglero, a beautiful and striking acrylic painting titled, “I am the honored and the scorned,” that stood out to me as soon as I saw it. Vivid detail and colors used caused me to admire the artwork for a considerable amount of time. Anglero’s work has been showcased in many exhibitions throughout New York, Virginia, and the D.C. area, and is showing two pieces in this exhibit.

If you cannot go in person, you can still check out the full exhibit at <https://www.mcguffeyartcenter.com>. The website offers high-quality pictures of the art. Users also have the ability to support the artists by purchasing whichever pieces you like. The hours for the McGuffey Art Center is open Wednesday through Sunday from 1-5 p.m. and the entry fee is free. Due to COVID-19 protocol, the center requires masks, socially distanced observation, and a maximum of only 10 visitors in the building at a time.

Paul McCartney Innovates in *McCartney III*

Max Walpole, assistant editor

If I’m being entirely honest, when I first queued up *McCartney III*, I did not know what to expect. I knew that in his heyday with The Beatles, McCartney did some spectacular work. And I knew that in recent years McCartney had released a series of solo albums, although I had not listened to them. I found myself wondering if, after all these years, could McCartney still produce good content? I had my doubts. In this case, I’m very happy to be proven wrong.

Of course, any album made by a former member of The Beatles is inevitably going to be compared to the extensive Beatles discography. Songs like “Find My Way” and “Pretty Boys” contain guitar rhythms and vocal melodies that will sound familiar to many Beatles fans, but these more conventional tracks are a minority on *McCartney III*.

In lieu of revisiting the established sound of The Beatles, McCartney proves his musical versatility by updating his sound with slick, polished production and drawing on a variety of

sources to create something wholly unique. The steady drum beat on the track “Deep Deep Feeling” is almost Phil Collins-esque. The dynamic and energetic track “Slidin’” is reminiscent of the English post-punk revival band Arctic Monkeys. The mellow, acoustic guitar driven song “The Kiss Of Venus” is evocative of the solo work of fellow Beatles members John Lennon and George Harrison.

What is most striking about this album is its tone. Amidst the chaos of 2020, *McCartney III* has a uniquely light and optimistic mood. It harkens back to the optimistic teen rock atmosphere of the 1960’s that groups like The Beach Boys and The Beatles thrived in, but in more mature, refined ways. In that sense, while *McCartney III* is undeniably a fun slice of escapism, it still has enough substance and depth to feel like you’re hearing something new.

McCartney III is available for listening on Spotify, Apple Music, and other music streaming services. CD, vinyl and cassette editions are available to purchase on Amazon, other digital retailers, and retail stores.

Safety begins Streaming on Disney+

Danny Talbert, staff writer

Safety is based on the true story of Clemson freshman Ray McElrathbe. During the 2006 season, Ray was forced to hide his brother in his room and take care of him due to his mother battling drug addiction.

The inspiring story follows how he balanced football, school, and taking care of his little brother Fahmarr with the help of his teammates and friends.

The first thing I noticed is that the gameplay in the movie is the most realistic TV or movie football I've ever seen. The plays and hits look real, the summer camp, their team meetings, and their daily schedules all felt like what life would be like for a college football player.

The coolest thing Disney did to make it feel realistic was film the game scenes during the halftime of the 2019 Clemson vs. Charlotte game in front of a packed Death Valley.

My favorite thing about this scene is that they at times switch to the first-person view through the players eyes as they play, putting you right

into the action.

Another thing that stood out is how great the soundtrack is in *Safety*. Outkast; Whitney Houston; Earth, Wind & Fire; and Lauryn Hill are just some of the artists that make up one of Disney's best soundtracks since Guardians of the Galaxy.

There are moments in the movie that remind you that it is from Disney. One being the feud between an upperclassman linebacker and Ray. It feels a little forced and cliché, but it's not the only thing they created to spice things up. The love interest in the movie is also fictional, but since it is a movie, that's forgivable.

One thing that is annoying is that they credit a fictional character for writing an article that gets Ray's story national attention, not the actual sports reporter Larry Williams of The Charleston Post and Courier newspaper.

With those being my only complaints, I did really enjoy watching *Safety*. The movie is filled with many heartwarming and inspiring moments and is a must-watch for any football or Disney movie lover. I give it an 8.7/10



Photo courtesy of Disney+

All Eyes are on Diana in Season 4 of *The Crown*

Zhaire Roberson, staff writer

Season Four of *The Crown* is filled with "soapy" drama and one climactic moment after another, receiving a score of 97% from Rotten Tomatoes. There are 10 episodes this season and each episode is about 52 minutes in length.

This season takes a deep dive into the early days of Diana and Prince Charles' relationship, and because a bright light is shone on Lady Diana's struggles with her eating disorder, the beginning of many episodes in season four display trigger warnings. *The Crown* is rated TV-MA, meaning it is for mature audiences.

Cast members and fan favorites from season three, Olivia Colman, Helena Bonham Carter, Josh O'Connor, Erin Doherty, and Tobias Menzies, all return and appear in season four. This season, viewers are introduced to two prominent female figures in Britain's history, Lady Diana Spencer and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. The two women are played by Emma Corrin and Gillian Anderson.

Jackie K. Cooper, a top critic at Rotten Tomatoes, praised the seasons leading characters to the Huffington Post. "The saga continues with outstanding performances by the entire cast," he said, "but especially from Emma Corrin, Josh O'Connor and Gillian Anderson."

The portrayals of Diana, Charles, and Thatcher by Corrin, O'Connor, and Anderson helped the series immensely. The storylines surrounding the life and political shortcomings of the "Iron Lady" Margaret Thatcher gave *The Crown* a new sense of direction. Corrin and O'Connor's depictions of their complex characters were spot on. The actors allowed the audience to see how the royal couple may have acted towards one another in their private time. From Charles's jealousy to Diana's loneliness and crumbling self-esteem the audience can understand why, nearly 25 years after their divorce, the couple's marriage came to an unsuspected and bitter halt.

By adding the dynamic of Charles and Diana's ultimately tragic and tangled relationship to this season, the creators of the show created a more thrilling plot. This season the series had binge-worthy energy that it lacked in the previous season. Throughout season four, viewers will notice that the cast's performance overall was more unified and the storylines and plot were much more complex and thought out.

Overall, this season of *The Crown* was full of drama and seemed incredibly realistic. Season four is unlike any other season to date, since it was not centered around Queen Elizabeth's marriage.

The series in its entirety is worth watching, but if learning more about the early days of Queen Elizabeth's reign does not seem thrilling, then one could consider just watching seasons three and four since they are set in later periods (the '70s and '80s). Season Five is scheduled to air on Netflix between late 2021 and early 2022.



Photo courtesy of Netflix

First Netflix Action Movie of 2021 Falls Short

Jessica Coyle, staff writer

At the beginning of 2021, the streaming platform Netflix said they would release at least one new movie per week on their platform. One of the first movies to be released was *Outside the Wire*, starring Anthony Mackie and Damson Idris.

Outside the Wire takes place in Ukraine in the midst of war. Lieutenant Harp (Idris), a disgraced drone pilot, is forced to face his decisions after he's paired with Captain Leo (Mackie), a bio-engineered soldier. The premise of the movie is that only Harp and one superior know that Leo is not human, while the two soldiers make their way through "the gauntlet" for information against their enemy. This enemy happens to be a Russian, named Koval, who wants the codes for nuclear weapons to destroy the U.S.

The beginning of the movie started well. There was a lot of build up, and the moment when the main character, Harp, realizes who and what his captain is sets up suspense for the pair to see action. But the realities of being a robot, or bio-engineered soldier, aren't outlined that well. At multiple points in the movie Leo points to the fact that he "feels more" than humans do. He even goes as far as to claim that maybe humans don't feel enough. But it's never shown exactly how different Leo is, placing emphasis on how he's supposed to be the same as a normal man.

One thing I thought they did well was the portrayal of Captain Leo and his abilities. He's persuasive and leads Harp and others into intense standoffs and dangerous situations. The plot thickens when Leo reveals to Harp that they weren't randomly partnered and that Leo chose him specifically. After this is revealed, it's easy to see Leo's character twisting reality for Harp, making it hard for him to say no. I think the "better than human" aspect of Leo's character was done well. It also played into his main function, inspiring peace and trust. Leo convinces Harp to go rogue and cut out his tracker, and they go after Koval and the codes themselves. This seems to clash with the storyline as it has already been presented. Harp was stoic and strong when it came to procedure. Having already been in trouble, Harp knew he could not fail or disobey orders again. Yet, with little effort, Leo convinces him to go along with him.

This leads to the plot twist in the movie, which was not entirely unexpected, but it still made sense. Spoiler alert for anyone who wants to watch the movie themselves. After a failed attack on Koval, Leo reveals that the tracker pulled from his back was actually a fail-safe, keeping him from disobeying orders unless in extreme situations. Leo tricked Harp into giving him what he wanted: freedom. The two men fail to kill Koval but Leo manages to get the codes he needs. But Harp doesn't catch up fast enough mentally and is dumped, realizing Leo was working for Koval too late.

With little explanation, it's just accepted that Leo was working for the Russians the entire time and he too wants to destroy the U.S. with nuclear weapons. This is somewhat confusing considering how in depth Leo's character goes while explaining why he looks the way he does and what his function is. Leo is supposed to inspire negotiation; his face is meant to be safe and trustworthy internationally. He is an American soldier and a peacemaker, but all of a sudden, it's thrown out and he's now determined to take control of the nuclear weapons himself. Harp eventually makes it back to command to tell his superiors, explaining that he is the reason they can't track or control Leo anymore.

Overall, *Outside the Wire* was a fun watch, but it felt like they couldn't keep a theme. Emphasis was put on Captain Leo's abilities, but we didn't get to see all that many of them, as the movie was focused on Harp. The deeper meaning behind the movie is also somewhat confusing and not well portrayed, as you don't really have a sense of what's going to happen until it happens. The bio-engineered character was a captivating concept and could have gone a lot further, but you don't get to see all that much of what Leo is actually doing or what he was doing before Harp. After finishing the film, it really came down to who could blow up who first. The ending note was meant to be thought provoking, and it was, just not so much in relation to the movie. But with a star-studded cast, this movie stands out. I also think they left room if they wanted to do another movie or show adaptation, Netflix could expand on a lot and I would watch it.

Read the full, unabridged article on piedmontforum.com.

Classifieds

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