

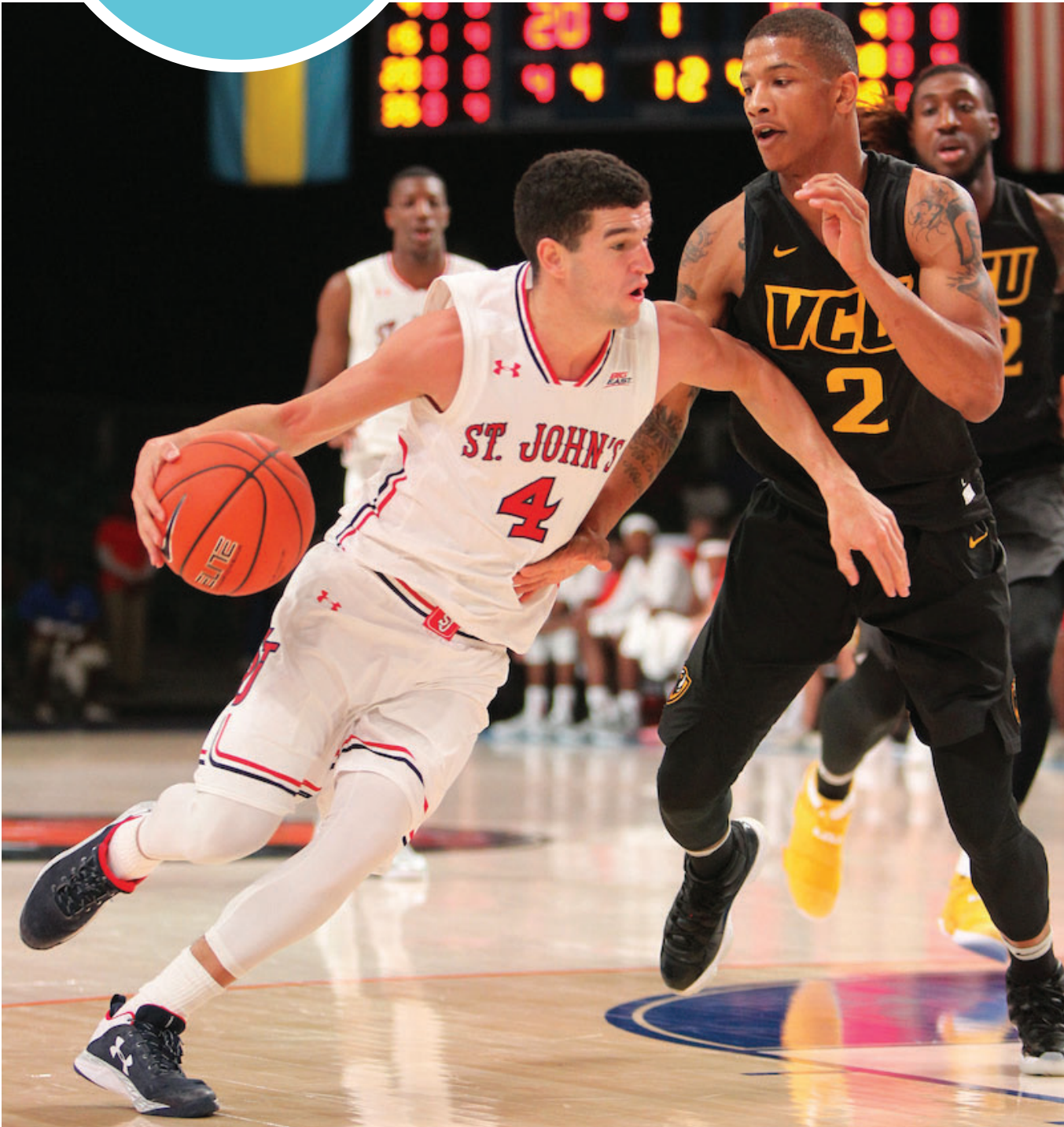
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The Rams placed fifth overall in the Battle 4 Atlantis Tournament after defeating LSU and St. John's.

Ballin’ in the Bahamas

Men’s basketball boosts resume with pair of out-of-conference wins

SOPHIA BELLETTI
Sports Editor

Will Wade and the VCU men’s basketball team returned home from the Bahamas over Thanksgiving weekend with a little sun, two victories and a restored sense of confidence.

VCU edged out Louisiana State University 85-74 on Friday to win the final game of the Battle 4 Atlantis Tournament and place fifth overall, just two days after the Rams blew a 36-28 halftime lead in the opening-round to the eventual tournament winner, No. 20 Baylor University.

LSU

Junior forward Justin Tillman scored a season-high 17 points to secure the fifth-seed in Friday’s game against LSU.

The 6-foot-7 rim protector missed two straight games due to a left foot injury before traveling to the Bahamas. Tillman saw limited minutes against Baylor, but cranked up his game day-by-day.

In 26 minutes of action, Tillman finished 8-of-9 from the floor while also pulling down eight rebounds.

“I had to get back into the game and just start picking it up, game by game,” Tillman said.

Senior guard JeQuan Lewis also had a strong game for the Rams, leading both teams in points with 19 total and including the 1,000th point of his collegiate career.

Lewis poured in 14 of his 19 points in the second half as VCU built a 19-point lead. The Rams pushed a 40-33 halftime lead into double-digits about five minutes into the second half and kept LSU out of arm’s reach the rest of the game.

“I think we got off to a better start the second half,” Wade said. “By the first media (timeout) we’d expanded the lead by just a point but we hadn’t given any ground like we had in the Baylor game.”

Lewis’ final bucket — off a steal with 22 seconds remaining — earned him his 1,000th career point. The Dixon, Tennessee native finished with a season-high of nine assists, five rebounds and three steals.

Redshirt-freshman guard Samir Doughty added a season-high 12 points and seven rebounds in 27 minutes on the floor.

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News

McAuliffe declares opioid crisis a public health emergency

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY JULIE TRIPP

The State Health Commissioner also issued a standing order which allows any Virginian access to Naloxone, an opiate-overdose antidote used in emergency situations.

SARAH KING
Executive Editor

Governor Terry McAuliffe declared the Virginia opioid addiction crisis a Public Health Emergency on Nov. 21 following an announcement from State Health Commissioner Marissa Levine.

Opioid overdoses – nearly 880 total – accounted for more than 90 percent of the state’s drug deaths last year. Prescription pain medications claimed more than 4,000 Virginians’ lives, while heroin took nearly 1,400 from 2007 to 2015, according to the Virginia Department of Health’s annual report.

“We cannot stand by while these drugs harm our communities and our economy,” McAuliffe said. “That is why I support Dr. Levine’s decision to declare a public health emergency, to heighten awareness of this issue, provide a framework for further actions to fight it, and to save Virginians’ lives.”

In the first half of 2016, the total number of fatal drug overdoses in Virginia increased 35 percent, when compared to the same time period in 2015. By the end of 2016, the numbers of fatal opioid overdose deaths are expected to increase by 77 percent compared to five years ago.

In addition to declaring the overdose rate a Public Health Emergency, Levine issued a standing order which allows any Virginian to obtain the drug Naloxone, which can be used to treat narcotic overdoses in emergency situations.

“Too many Virginia families have lost someone to opioid addiction,” Levine said. “These actions today will not diminish their loss, but we owe it to them and each other to work together, watch out for each other and continue to

combat the seriousness of this crisis.”

The standing order removes previous barriers to accessing Naloxone by serving as a prescription written for the general public, opposed to a specific individual.

“My team and I worked with a bipartisan coalition to expand Naloxone availability because we knew it could save lives and prevent the tragedy and heartbreak that too many Virginia families already know,” said Attorney General Mark Herring.

In Richmond, heroin overdoses jumped from five fatalities in 2010 to 38 in 2015. According to tentative data from the Virginia Department of Health, from January through July 2016 there are 14 recorded deaths attributed to heroin overdoses.

“Richmond is on track to experience more than twice the number of heroin-related overdoses this year as compared to last year,” said Richmond Police Capt. Michael Zohab in a September statement announcing a coalition of local groups working to mitigate the problem.

More than a dozen local organizations are working together through the Recovery Coalition to address the state, and city-wide, crisis. VCU’s Health System, Department of Psychology, Institute for Women’s Health, Rams in Recovery program and the C. Kenneth and Dianne Wright Center for Clinical and Translational Research are all stakeholders, as well as emergency responders and recovery-focused non-profit organizations.

McAuliffe’s Public Health Emergency declaration is also in light of officials’ concern regarding evidence of a concentration of Carfentanil, a synthetic opioid used to sedate animals such as

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Spectrum



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CRIME LOG

(All data obtained from the VCU PD daily incident log)

Monday, Nov. 21:

- Simple Assault
Ackell Residence Hall 1100 W. Broad St.
Pending
- Harassment/Threats
801 W. Franklin St.
Pending
- Shoplifting
ABC 1217 W. Broad St.
Reported by Outside Agency
- Simple Assault - Domestic
900 W. Marshall St.
Reported by Outside Agency
- Simple Assault
1106 W. Main St.
Reported by Outside Agency
- Simple Assault
1106 W. Grace St.
Reported by Outside Agency
- Shoplifting
ABC 1217 W. Broad St.
Reported by Outside Agency

Tuesday, Nov. 22:

- Alcohol Violation
Rhoads Residence Hall 710 W. Franklin St.
Closed. CBA
- Destruction of Property - Private
Henry St. Deck 201 N. Henry St.
Pending 1
- All Other Offenses/Recovered Stolen Property
1100 W. Broad St.
Pending
- Robbery
Residence
1014 W. Clay St.
Reported by Outside Agency
- Trespassing
511 W. Grace St.
Reported by Outside Agency
- Trespassing/All Other Offenses
518 W. Grace St.
Reported by Outside Agency
- Hit and Run
300 W. Cary St.
Reported by Outside Agency

Reporting suspicious or emergency situations to the VCU PD can help solve crimes, provide emergency assistance and help deter criminal activity.

Download the VCU LiveSafe mobile phone app to report crimes anonymously.

To contact the VCU PD call (804) 828-1196.

For an on-campus emergency call (804) 828-1234.

For an off-campus emergency call 911.

Opioid crisis declared a public health emergency

A standing order now allows any Virginian to access Naxolone, an emergency overdose-antidote.



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY JULE TRIPP

By the end of 2016, the numbers of fatal opioid overdose deaths are expected to increase by 77 percent compared to five years ago.

— continued from page 1

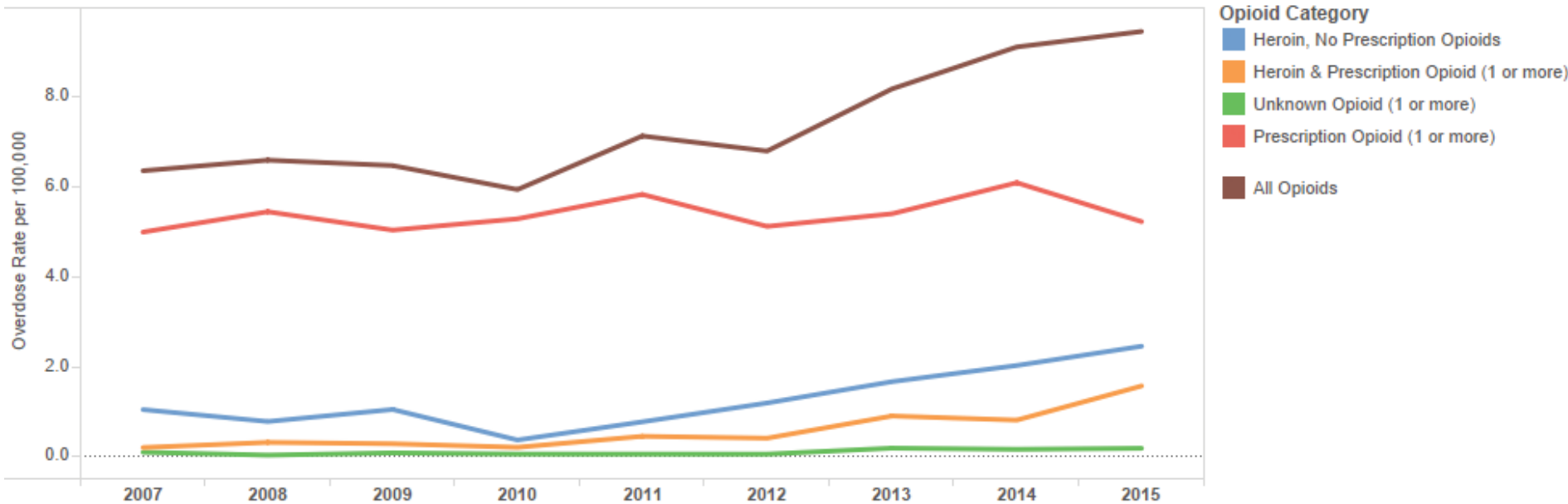
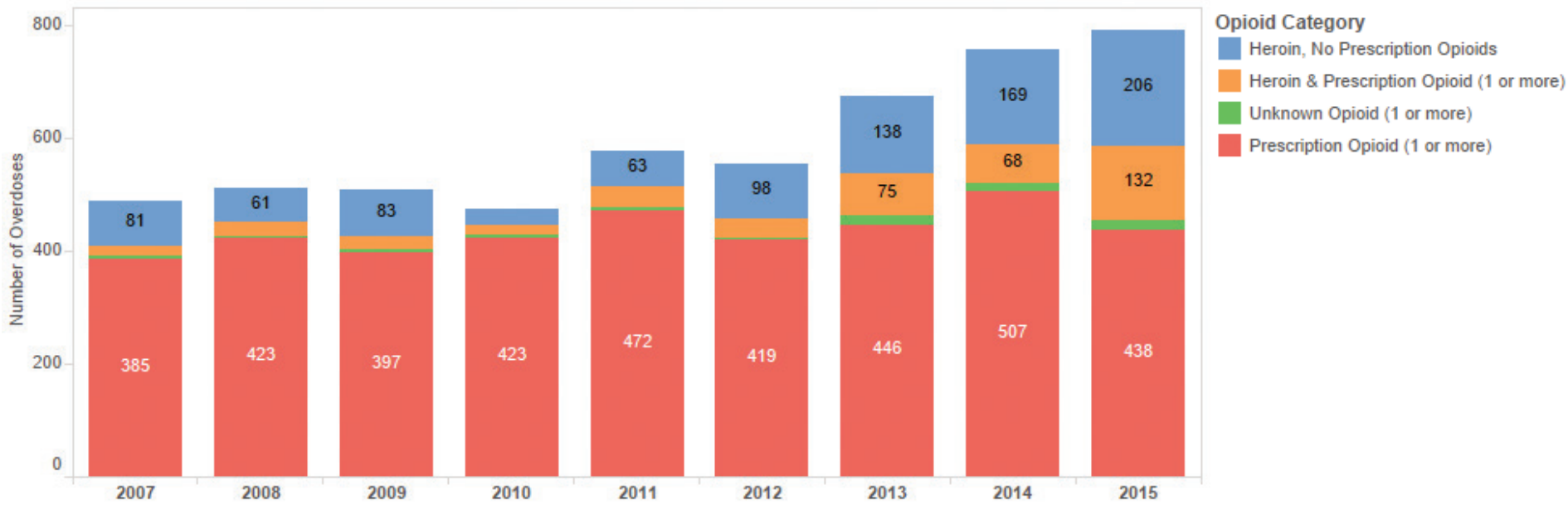
elephants, in certain parts of Virginia — primarily in the Tidewater region. “As we see the nature of drug addiction shift, from prescription opioids to heroin and synthetic fentanyl, we must be vigilant and ready to respond quickly,” said Secretary of Health and Human Resources Bill Hazel. In Richmond, fentanyl only accounted for eight total overdose deaths between 2007 and 2013, but that number spiked sharply in 2014, when fentanyl was responsible for 11 deaths

in the city that year. Sixteen Richmond overdose fatalities were solely attributed to fentanyl in 2015. According to the Virginia Department of Health, the total number of fatal fentanyl-related drug overdoses have sharply increased since 2012 which coincides with the increase in fatal heroin overdoses. By 2016, most fatal fentanyl-related overdoses were due to illicitly produced fentanyl and not pharmaceutically produced fentanyl, according to the VDH. “For far too long, stigmas have plagued addiction struggles,” said Jack

Barber, the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health’s interim commissioner. “By declaring a public health emergency, the Commonwealth of Virginia is bringing the opioid epidemic to the forefront of public discussion.” In September 2015, the Center for Disease Control dedicated funds to 16 states with the highest increases in overdose deaths, including Virginia. Of the 12 states with statistically significant increases in opioid overdoses from 2013 to 2014, Virginia ranked ninth with a 14.7 percent change over the course of a year.

Nationally, more people overdosed fatally from opioid abuse in 2014 than any other year on record. In response, the CDC dedicated funding through the “Prevention for States” program in September 2015. The CDC plans to give selected states annual awards between \$750,000 and \$1 million to advance prevention measures through 2019. “It is important that all Virginians learn how to recognize the signs of addiction and be able to help those struggling with addiction to seek care,” Barber said.

INFOGRAPHICS PROVIDED BY VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH



Gov. McAuliffe released the following guidelines helping those who may struggle with addiction:

1) Know the signs:

Signs of recent opioid use include pinpoint pupils, sleepiness, “nodding” and scratching. Common signs of addiction include constant money problems; arrests; track marks and infections from needle use; lying about drug use; irritability and, when drugs can’t be obtained, physical withdrawal symptoms such as shaking, dilated pupils, nausea, diarrhea and vomiting.

2) Talk to your loved ones:

If you suspect that your friend or family member is struggling with addiction and substance use, talk with them. The state’s new website VaAware (<http://vaaware.com/treatment-recovery/>) offers resources on how to best discuss addiction with someone you love.

3) Properly dispose of medications:

If you have unused, expired or unwanted medications and

need a way to safely dispose of them, you can now get a drug disposal bag from your Local Health Department.

The bags allow for you to safely deactivate and dispose of medications in the privacy of your own home. Additionally, you may return unwanted prescription drugs for destruction to one of the authorized pharmacies listed at www.dhp.virginia.gov/pharmacy/destructionsites.asp.

4) Obtain Naloxone:

If someone in your life is struggling with opioid addiction, visit your local pharmacist to obtain Naloxone and keep it on hand for possible overdose emergencies. Naloxone is a medication that can reverse an overdose that is caused by an opioid drug.

When administered during an overdose, naloxone blocks the effects of opioids on the brain and restores breathing within

two to eight minutes. Naloxone has been used safely by medical professionals for more than 40 years and has only one function: to reverse the effects of opioids on the brain and respiratory system in order to prevent death.

Family members and friends can access this medication by obtaining a prescription from their family doctor or by visiting a participating pharmacy that can dispense the drug using the standing order issued by the State Health Commissioner.

5) Learn more:

More information on Naloxone can be found at www.getnaloxonenow.org. DBHDS offers Opioid Overdose and Naloxone Education (OONE) to professionals, stakeholders and others through their REVIVE! program. Learn more about REVIVE! at www.dbhds.virginia.gov/individuals-and-families/substance-abuse/revive.

Mayor-elect Levar Stoney announces transition committee



VCU President Michael Rao and Police Chief John Venuti are among the 41 names the campaign announced last week.

MAURA MAZUROWSKI
Online Editor

Two members of the VCU administration will assist in guiding mayor-elect Levar Stoney as he transitions into office.

President Michael Rao and Police Chief John Venuti are both members of the 41-person transition team Stoney announced on Nov. 23. Other members of the team include state delegates, university presidents, county supervisors, business leaders and local professionals.

“On the campaign, Levar committed to bringing the public, private and nonprofit sectors together to get things done,” said Stoney spokesman Matt Corridoni in an email. “You’re already seeing that happen based on the individuals he has selected to join this committee, with the different sectors they represent and their breadth and depth of experience.”

According to Thad Williamson, an associate professor at the University of Richmond and the director of the transition committee, the 41-person team is broken down into three subcommittees to help advise Stoney in different areas.

One subcommittee will focus on how Stoney will both organize his office and prepare to take on the job of being mayor of Richmond, Williamson said. Another subcommittee will determine how various campaign promises Stoney made can be translated into an “actionable plan” within the first 100 days and up to the first 18 months of being in office. The third will review all the agencies of city government to

determine how they can be improved.

Rao became the fifth president of VCU and the VCU Health System in 2009. MCV is the largest employer in the Richmond area with approximately 20,000 employees, and the sixth largest in Virginia. Prior to coming to VCU, Rao president of Mission College, chancellor of Montana State University-Northern and president of Central Michigan University.

Venuti has been chief of the VCU Police Department since February 2010. VCU PD is one of the largest university police departments in the country with more than 200 security personnel and an accredited training academy.

The transition team is also comprised of both Democratic and Republican state lawmakers, including Del. Christopher K. Peace (R-Hanover) and Del. Delores L. McQuinn (D - Richmond).

Another team member is Richmond Councilman and Stoney’s former opponent for mayor Jonathan Baliles (1st District - West End). Baliles dropped his mayoral bid in late October and announced he was endorsing Stoney earlier this month.

“My endorsement of Levar Stoney for mayor comes down to my belief that he best represents the next generation of leadership for our city that will work collaboratively with others to make the best decisions,” Baliles said in a statement.

The full transition team met once last weekend and is likely meet one more time next month. Most work will be done within the subcommittees.

Transition Committee Co-chairs:

Tiffany Jana (TMI Consulting)
Bill Leighty (Former Chief of Staff, Govs. Mark Warner and Tim Kaine)

Transition Director:

Dr. Thad Williamson (University of Richmond)

Transition Committee Members:

Bob Adams, HD Advisors
Dr. Danny Avula, Richmond City Health District
Laura Bateman, Bateman Consulting
Hon. Jonathan Baliles, Richmond City Council (1st District)
Rev. Yvonne Bibbs, Sixth Baptist Church, Richmond
Hon. Jeff Bourne, Chair of Richmond School Board (3rd District)
Marland Buckner, MB² Solutions, LLC
Rev. Ben Campbell, Richmond Hill (retired)
Melvin Carter, Virginia Department of Fire Programs
Andrew Clark, Home Building Association of Richmond
Eva Colen, 50 CAN: 50-State Campaign for Achievement Now
President Ronald Crutcher, University of Richmond
Tanya Gonzalez, Sacred Heart Center
Ashley Hall, Capital Region Collaborative
Eva T. Hardy, Dominion (retired)
Adam Harrell, Harrell & Chambliss, LLP
Greta Harris, Better Housing Coalition
Kelly Harris-Braxton, Virginia First Cities
Sec. Anne Holton, former Secretary of Education, Commonwealth of Virginia
Hon. Birdie Hairston Jamison, retired Judge, General District Court, City of Richmond
Damon Jiggetts, Peter Paul Development Center
President Joseph Johnson, Virginia Union University
Hon. Delores McQuinn, Virginia House of Delegates (70th District)
Jennifer Mullen, Roth Doner Jackson, PLC
William Murray, former Legislative Director, Gov. Tim Kaine, and Dominion
Rupa Murthy, YWCA
Hon. Rev. Tyrone Nelson, Chair, Henrico Board of Supervisors (Varina District)
Bill Pantele, past City Council President (2nd District)
Hon. Christopher Peace, Virginia House of Delegates (97th District)
President Michael Rao, Virginia Commonwealth University
Abby Farris Rogers, YMCA
John Sherman, Scott & Stringfellow (retired)
Lisa Speller-Davis, Humana
Jay Stegmaier, Chesterfield County Administrator (retired)
Ronald Tillett, Raymond James & Associates
Chief John Venuti, Virginia Commonwealth University
Dr. Thelma Watson, Senior Connections
Sam Young, Astyra Corporation

Peter Buckley named Dean of Medicine, VP for Medical Affairs

MARY LEE CLARK
Staff Writer

Peter Buckley will replace Jerry Strauss as the Dean of the School of Medicine, effective January 17.

According to University Relations, Buckley will also serve as Executive Vice President for Medical Affairs.

Marsha Rappley, the Vice President for Health Sciences, sent members of the VCU community an email last Monday with details of Buckley’s biography, which includes a stint at Augusta University in Georgia, where Buckley currently serves as dean of the Medical College of Georgia as well as its Vice President for Medical Affairs and Integration.

Buckley is also a professor at the Medical College of Georgia where he teaches psychiatry, pharmacology and radiology.

Buckley said he is impressed with the accomplishments of the VCU Health and it’s students, and is excited to join the university as a dean.

“The medical school just recently had

an extremely successful re-accreditation,” Buckley said. “That provides the opportunity to continue and enhance the degree of innovation in the medical student training program as well as build on things like interprofessional learning.”

Buckley said that the re-accreditation gives the univeristy “breathing space” so it can work on more innovative projects.

He said during his time as dean he would like to expand on areas that are already strengths at the VCU School of Medicine. Particularly in accessible clinical health care and interprofessional learning, where students can get hands on experience in various health care jobs. He said it is very important for students to get hands on training as well as participate in research.

Buckley said that he is extremely excited to be joining VCU and mentioned his enthusiasm for working with the staff at the Medical College such as Rappley, referring to her as a “renowned leader in academic medicine”.

“The reason that I am excited and feel fortunate to join VCU is that it is an ex-

tremely impressive momentum,” Buckley said. “President Rao has done an amazing job in putting together a stellar team of leadership.”

Buckley received his medical degree from the University College Dublin School of Medicine in Ireland, where he also completed a psychiatric residency training followed by a fellowship in schizophrenia research. He also earned a master’s by thesis from University College Dublin.

At the Medical College of Georgia, Buckley served as chair of the Department of Psychiatry before becoming dean.

Buckley has also served as interim CEO of the academic medical center and physicians practice plan, professor and vice chair of the psychiatry department at Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine, medical director of Wester Reserve Psychiatric Hospital, medical director for Northcoast Behavioral Healthcare System and co-director of the statewide community service product line at the Ohio Department of Mental Health.



Buckley will assume the position on Jan. 17.

University of Richmond updates Title IX practices

FADEL ALLASSAN
News Editor

The University of Richmond updated students on administrative efforts to improve reports of sexual assault last week.

U of R was under the national spotlight in September after the Huffington Post published senior CC Carreras’ personal account highlighting how the university mishandled her sexual assault case.

Days later, the Huffington Post posted another account, this time from junior Whitney Ralston, which chronicled similar events.

Last Tuesday, Uof R President Ronald Crutcher announced that the university established the Center for Sexual Assault Prevention and Response.

“The Center is designed to ensure that the University support resources are holistic and coordinated,” Crutcher stated in the email. “We have begun the search process for a dedicated counselor with expertise in counseling and supporting survivors of sexual violence and for the full-time education and prevention specialist.”

Crutcher also said U of R is working to bring an independent, confidential survivor advocate to the Center.

Crutcher said the process for investigating and responding to reports of sexual misconduct is now independent of the Coordinate Colleges.

Associate Dean Daniel Fabian and his wife, Associate Dean Kerry Albright-Fankhauser, will no longer handle Title IX cases, according to NBC12.

Fabian formerly served as the Deputy Title IX Coordinator for the men’s college while Albright-Fankhauser held the same position at the women’s college.

The new role of Deputy Title IX coordinator will be filled on an interim basis by Tracy Cassalia, Manager of Health Education and Wellness, while the University conducts a national search for the position.



Associate professor Ravi K. Perry lost to the RCDC chairman.

Minor elected Richmond NAACP president, VCU political science professor falls short

FADEL ALLASSAN
News Editor

Chairman of the Richmond City Democratic Committee (RCDC) James “J.J.” Minor was elected president of the Richmond chapter of the NAACP last Tuesday, according to the Richmond Free Press.

Minor, who is the son of Virginia delegate Delores McQuinn (D - 70th district), won the election with 61 percent of the vote.

VCU associate professor of political science Ravi K. Perry fell short in his bid to be president of the Richmond branch, along with current president Lynetta Thompson, who was seeking re-election for her second two-year term.

Perry currently serves as president of the National Association for Ethnic Studies, the oldest ethnic studies organization in the country, which moved its headquarters to Richmond in 2015.

The professor also serves on the board of Diversity Richmond. In February, he was engrossed in controversy after leading a presentation on white privilege at Glen Allen High School in Henrico.

The NAACP president-elect, Minor, recently angered members of the Richmond Democrats when he personally endorsed mayor-elect Levar Stoney before the RCDC voted on which mayoral candidate they would endorse. Former state delegate and mayoral hopeful Joe Morrissey criticized Minor’s decision at a public mayoral forum hosted by the RCDC in September.

“There’s going to be an endorsement from this venerable organization in two days. Not one of these candidates, including myself ... were interviewed,” Morrissey said. “The fix is in. My good friend, Levar, has already got that endorsement without any interview. How do you do that?”

In an interview with Richmond Magazine after the forum, Minor said Morrissey’s statement was false.

Days before the election, Minor and RCDC vice-chair Sandra Antoine were again under scrutiny. This time, criticisms surrounded a political action committee they had formed within the RCDC to endorse candidates for City Council and School Board, opposed to the ones the organization agreed to endorse.



sports

Stat of the Week:

Junior guard JeQuan Lewis led VCU in points against LSU with 19, which included the 1,000th point of his collegiate career.

VCU sinks LSU, St. John's in Battle 4 Atlantis Tourney



Senior guard Doug Brooks scored five straight points during a 16-7 VCU burst in the second half against LSU.

—continued from page 1

VCU's defense, often credited as one of the strongest in the country, forced 18 turnovers and converted 19 points off of them. The Black and Gold also collected 14 total steals, with junior guard Jonathan Williams, redshirt-senior guard/forward Jordan Burgess and Lewis all recording three a piece, respectively.

The Rams also committed a season-low of eight turnovers against the Tigers.

"We're thrilled to leave here two and one," Wade said. "We put a lot into that Baylor game and we came up short, and we rallied, and to come up with two wins and hopefully this is something we can build on for the rest of this season. It was a great experience for us."

St. John's

Williams made it known he is a force to be reckoned with against St. John's. The Richmond native scored a career-high 22 points and dished out six assists to lift VCU past St. John's University 75-69 on Thanksgiving day.

Williams' sweet spot from around the elbow and powerful drives to the basket saved VCU on several possessions. The starting guard snapped late ties twice, first with 5:31 left with a short jumper,

then with a layup with 3:59 remaining to push the Rams in front for good at 67-65.

St. John's Shamorie Ponds drew the Red Storm within 69-67 with two free throws, but Williams knocked down both ends of a 1-and-1 with 2:02 remaining, giving the Rams a four-point lead. Lewis and redshirt-senior forward Mo Alie-Cox secured the win with a pair of free throws in the final minute.

"I'm really proud of Johnny," Wade said. "He's one of our hardest workers, if not our hardest worker, and to see all that rewarded today (is nice). When I leave the office late at night, he's in their shooting free throws and he stepped up there and banged in that 1-and-1."

Williams hit on 8-of-15 attempts from the field and knocked down 6-of-7 free throws, committing just one turnover.

"We all came together as a team and was like, 'The most energized team is going to win,'" Williams said.

Williams' drive gave VCU a 67-65 lead, then Lewis had a driving score of his own. Lewis and Alie-Cox went 4-4 at the foul line in the last 13 seconds to help seal the win on a night when both teams blew double-digit leads — St. John's by 13 in the first half, VCU by 11 with about 14 minutes left.

Lewis and Alie-Cox added 15 points each for the Rams.

"We'd been preparing for that for a while, we put a ton into that game," Wade said. "It was a little bit of a gut-punch when we had the lead in the second half and couldn't close it out. So I'm really proud of the way our guys responded."

Baylor

Lewis scored the first eight points for VCU to contribute to a game-high 21 points, but a hot hand from Lewis wasn't enough for VCU to pull off the upset over Baylor University Wednesday.

Baylor drew first blood, taking an early 6-0 lead in the game, but VCU controlled the next 18 minutes. The Rams shot 14-of-24 in the first half and forced 11 turnovers on the way to an 8-point lead.

After trailing 36-28 at halftime, Baylor refused to go down without a fight, catching up to the Rams in the final 10 minutes after straggling behind, to win the first game of the tournament 71-63.

VCU dominated in the first half — outshooting the Bears 58 percent compared to Baylor's 43 percent. Lewis led the team in points at the half with 11.

VCU grabbed a halftime lead behind strong play by Williams and senior forward Ahmed Hamdy. The inside-out duo combined for 19 first-half points for VCU.

Hamdy finished with a season-high 14

points and shot 55 percent against the Bears while Williams turned a series of acrobatic floaters and hard drives into 12 points. He was 6-of-9 from the floor.

A 3-pointer from the left wing by Al Freeman with 4:33 left to play would be the final punch to keep the Rams from coming back. A 7-2 Baylor run gave the Bears the lead for good at 58-53. The Rams kept the Bears on their toes, but Baylor guard Manu Lecomte was 8-of-8 from the charity stripe in the final 1:36.

Lewis went 5-for-10 from behind the arc in 39 minutes of play, and recorded 5 assists and 3 steals.

"It was a good game, I think we played really well for about 25 minutes," Wade said. "It got away from us there the last 15 minutes. They really got us on the glass with offensive rebounds with Motley. They're a really good team and we weren't able to dictate the action for a full 40 minutes," Wade said.

Baylor outrebounded VCU 34-26.

Up next, VCU will host Princeton on Tuesday, Nov. 29 at 7 p.m. at the Stuart C. Siegel Center. The Tigers are 2-2 on the season.

Men's basketball secures highly anticipated 2017 recruits

NICK VERSAW
Contributing Writer

Four highly-touted high school seniors signed National Letters of Intent to attend VCU in 2017, coach Will Wade announced last week.

The four-man class is currently ranked No. 19 nationally by ESPN and includes two ESPN top-100 recruits — guard Lavar Batts and forward Mayan Kiir, as well as four-star forward Sean Mobley and three-star center Marcus Santos-Silva

Wade said he's pleased with the versatility and length of the new recruiting class, which will be freshman in his third season as VCU's head man.

"(Our staff) did a good job of getting guys who do a number of different things," Wade said. "We went out and got the guys that fit the best together for our program long term."



(Lavar Batts) is what you'd think for a VCU point guard.

Will Wade

Batts, ESPN's 99th-ranked talent and consensus four-star recruit, is the top-ranked player out of North Carolina for 2017, according to 247Sports. During his junior campaign, the 6-foot-2 guard led J.M. Robinson High School to a AAA State Championship, averaging 20.7 points, five assists, 3.4 rebounds and 2.4 steals on the year.

"Lavar is a tremendous competitor," Wade said. "He's extremely quick, guards the ball and is a blur in the open court. He's what you'd think for a VCU point guard."

Kiir, the other top-100 recruit, is a 6-foot-9 forward and the Rams' most recent commit. Born in Australia to South Sudanese parents, Kiir moved to the United States prior to his junior year of high school to join other Australians at Florida's Victory Rock Preparatory. As a junior, Kiir averaged 12.2 points, 9.7 rebounds and 1.6 blocks-per-game.

Wade said he looks forward to working with Kiir to help the raw athletic forward reach his full potential as a player.

"Mayan is a player with tremendous upside," Wade said. "He's terrific defensively and on the glass, and his offense is underrated. He's got good range. But he's tremendous on the offensive and defensive glass, taking charges, that kind of stuff. He's going to be a special player for us."

Mobley, a 6-foot-9, 220-pound big man out of Florida's Montverde Academy, is the third ESPN four-star recruit to sign on for 2017. As a junior, Mobley led his team to a 26-2 record and a spot in the semifinals of the Dick's Sporting Goods High School Nationals.

Wade said Mobley's versatility will be an asset for the Rams and his ability to play any spot down low will help ease the potential loss of seniors Mo Alie-Cox and Ahmed Hamdy.

"(Mobley) can play multiple positions, is versatile, passes well, shoots well, rebounds well, he has tremendous feel for the game," Wade said. "One thing we noticed is that he always makes the right play. He has a college-ready body, and he comes from a tremendous high school program that will have him ready day one."

Although Marcus Santos-Silva is the only of VCU's 2017 recruits not to be named a four-star player by ESPN, the 6-foot-7, 265-pound forward is rated as the No. 3 player in the state of Vermont by 247Sports.

Wade said he looks forward to having a player of Santos-Silva's size on the roster and said he believes Santos-Silva's tenacious work ethic will be a valuable addition for the Black and Gold.

"He's got really good feet and hands and a really good feel for the game," Wade said. "We love the fact that he's a self-made player. He's worked really hard these last few years, and we know with that work ethic, he'll be successful here."

Jaguars hand Rams second loss

NICK VERSAW
Contributing Writer

Purdue University Indianapolis handed the Rams their second home loss of the season last Tuesday, in a closely contested match that ended 71-62 in overtime.

Senior guard and team captain Keira Robinson was once again the standout performer for the Rams, filling out the stat sheet with 19 points, three assists, two steals and a block.

Sophomore forward Sandra Skinner and junior forward Curteona Brelove also made sizeable contributions on the boards, hauling in six rebounds apiece and scoring nine and 11 points, respectively.

While Skinner was the benefactor of efficient shooting, going 4-for-5 from the field, it was ultimately VCU's sub-standard shooting clip that allowed the Jaguars to pull ahead.

The Rams shot under 34 percent from the field to the Jaguars 40.7 percent, and IUPUI also held a significant advantage from beyond the arc, shooting a 44 percent clip from three to VCU's paltry 26.8 percent.

The Rams struggled coming out of the gates Tuesday, as the visiting Jaguars held the lead for the first 9:51 seconds of action. IUPUI had an 11-8 advantage with 1:22 remaining in the first quarter

when VCU sparked a 7-0 run to take a 15-11 lead heading into the second quarter.

The second period was likewise back and forth. With 5:04 remaining in the period, the Jaguars' Caitlyn Tolen tied up the game with a layup, but the Rams closed out the quarter on a 6-0 run and went into halftime with a 24-18 advantage.

In the third quarter, the Jaguars slowly began chipping away piece-by-piece at the Rams' lead. VCU held a three-point advantage heading into what would be a thrilling fourth quarter of play.

During the final period of regulation, the lead changed hands seven times as both teams fought to pull ahead of their opponent. IUPUI's Danielle Lawrence scored five straight points to put the visitors up three with just 21 seconds left on the clock.

With less than five seconds remaining in regulation, Robinson let loose from beyond the arc and drained a crucial three to make things all square and force overtime.

Unfortunately for the Rams, IUPUI started off the overtime period with the hot hand.

The Jaguars nailed three consecutive shots from deep behind the arc to take an early nine-point advantage in the first two minutes of overtime. That would be the difference in the end, and IUPUI closed out overtime with the 71-62 victory.



Sebiior guard Kiera Robinson had a team-high 19 points against IUPUI, 11 of which came in the second half.

THE PRESS BOX

The Game and The Playoff

ZACH JOACHIM
Sports Editor

As Buckeyes wide receiver Curtis Samuel scampered through a convoy of blockers and into the endzone to give No. 2 Ohio State University a heart-stopping victory over their bitter rival, No. 3 University of Michigan, on Saturday — fans across the nation were left asking a too-familiar question: Why does our college football playoff system suck, and how can we fix it?

The highly anticipated contest, dubbed simply “The Game,” pitted the Buckeyes and Wolverines against one another in what was essentially an elimination game. Despite both sides’ lofty national rankings, the loser of the matchup would presumably be left on the outside looking in on the playoff picture.

Only four teams, selected by a committee, are allowed a chance to compete for a national title. This system replaced the Bowl College Series in 2014 much to the delight of fans, yet, the same controversy surrounding inclusion rears its ugly head this time of year every season.

Inevitably, one faction or another feels left out. The inception of the playoff was intended to serve as a remedy for schools who did not feel they got a fair shake, but this era has seen more criticism of the selection process than the BCS era ever did.

Watching Samuel hit his hole and explode past Michigan defenders and Ohio State blockers alike put the matter in perspective over the weekend. The play put an end to one of the most memorable football games of our generation — and to the 10-2 Wolverine’s playoff hopes.

Ohio State, despite finishing the regular season 11-1, will not play in the Big Ten championship game. Penn State University and the University of Wisconsin, both 10-2 and nationally ranked in the top ten, will meet in Indiana next week to decide who earns that honor.

That meeting between the Badgers and Nit-tany Lions deserves to have the same ramifications as “The Game,” that is to say, the winner should earn a spot in the playoff. In all likelihood however, that will not be the case, because Ohio State has already virtually earned one of the four spots and it would be an anomaly for one conference to secure two births.

Hence, the champion of what has been arguably the best and certainly the deepest conference in the country this year will not get a chance to compete for a national title. This is asinine and everybody knows it.

Until the NCAA establishes a hard-line criteria for schools to meet in order for them to make the playoff, a handful of fan bases will feel robbed every year and negative conversations concerning the selection process will subdue the fanfare of bowl season.

Stanford University head coach David Shaw was a prominent voice in the conversation surrounding the ongoing controversy last season after his Cardinals won the Pac-12 Conference before being “snubbed” by the committee and going on to win the Rose Bowl.

“I just think four teams is too little, regardless of our situation” Shaw said. “With enough evidence of how the seasons end, I think eventually it runs into an eight or six-team playoff with two teams with a bye. However it works, I think at some point we’re going to change it.”

Shaw’s stance is echoed by many in the col-

lege football landscape, and an expanded play-off is viewed as an inevitability — it’s not if, but when. Atlantic Coast Conference commissioner John Swofford, however, indicated the timetable may not be what fans are hoping for.

“I don’t want to say never,” Swofford said, “but I don’t think we’ll see it during the remaining years of the contract.”

That contract goes through 2025, so — in other words — 10 more years of controversy and calamity stare the college football universe in the face.

In expanding the playoff, the NCAA has the opportunity to treat a national audience to 10-12 more games every year with the same sublime win-or-go-home tension as “The Game” while simultaneously quelling the negative media firestorm that has become synonymous with the selection process.

Right now, we could be entering the football equivalent of March Madness. An expanded playoff field would render many rivalry week contests and conference championships the ramifications of elimination games just like Michigan-Ohio State.

Imagine the beauty of the national championship being decided by the players and on the field over the course of a month and a half of football as opposed to by “experts” in a board room behind closed doors.

In this reality, fan bases across the country would get a chance to feel the divine agony and ecstasy experienced by Michigan and Ohio State fans, respectively, this past weekend.

But no, we get to have an annual argument that nobody really disagrees on for another 10 years.



Zach is a junior pursuing a dual degree in print journalism and English. A proud Norfolk-ian, he enjoys long walks on the beach, English literature of the romantic period and anything pertaining to Harry Potter or baseball. Zach an avid Red Sox and Patriots fan who can usually be found working at the Student Media Center or running along the James.

Women's basketball stays hot during San Juan Shootout



Sophomore guard Katherine Strong recorded seven points and shot 50 percent during VCU’s win over American University.

ADRIAN WILSON
Contributing Writer

The VCU women’s basketball team left Daytona Beach, Florida 2-0, extending their overall record to 4-2. VCU beat American University 68-62 Thursday and Villanova University 68-66 Friday in the San Juan Shootout Tournament.

Villanova

After nine lead changes, coach Beth O’Boyle and the Rams finished on top against the Wildcats in a close 68-66 VCU win.

Redshirt-senior guard GG Goodhope led the way for the Rams, pouring in 16 points while dishing out four assists en route to a VCU victory.

The Wildcats pounced early — thanks to excellent perimeter shooting, Nova was able to build a 10 point lead by the end of the first quarter.

The Wildcats made four 3-pointers in the first 10 minutes while the Rams struggled to connect from behind the arc. Villanova shot 53 percent from the floor compared to VCU’s 39 percent.

After entering the second quarter down 25-15,

VCU’s deficit grew as wide as 12 points. A Goodhope field goal in the last seven minutes sparked a 12-2 VCU run — the Rams entered the locker room down 34-32.

O’Boyle and her girls carried their momentum into the third quarter, capturing their first lead since early in the first period. A jump shot by Goodhope put the Rams up 40-38 with 6:52 remaining.

The Rams’ lead grew as large as seven points with 1:35 left in the third, however, VCU didn’t stay ahead for long. A 3-pointer and some timely free throws by Villanova made up a 7-0 Wildcat run in the last 1:17 of the quarter. The Wildcats tied the game at 55-55.

The game went back and forth several times in the last quarter, but a string of solid free throws by Goodhope and senior guard Keira Robinson in the final seconds iced the game for the Rams.

VCU held a 39-29 edge in rebounds and a 15-9 advantage in points off turnovers. Sophomore forward Bri Gibson had nine points and a team-high 11 rebounds.

“It was a tremendous team effort against a very good Villanova team,” O’Boyle said. “Villanova has the ability to really score from the outside and I thought our team executed our game plan well and made made some big plays down the stretch.”

American

The Black and Gold kicked off the tournament with a 68-62 win over American on Thanksgiving day.

VCU’s backcourt carried them. Robinson and graduate guard Mooriah Rowser led the Rams with 18 and 13 points, respectively. Gibson also had a standout performance in the victory, contributing 10 points and eight rebounds of her own.

The Rams and Eagles kept each other within arms’ reach the first 7:30 of the game, as neither team was able to push their advantage to more than four points. With 2:13 left in the first quarter, VCU nursed a 12-11 lead before going on a 7-0 run to end the quarter. The run featured three American turnovers and the game’s first 3-pointer courtesy of sophomore guard Katherine Strong.

American started the second quarter at a fast pace, rolling off eight quick points of their own and only allotting VCU two. The Eagles narrowed the score 21-19 and gained the momentum they needed to briefly take a 26-25 lead. Throughout the quarter, both teams remained neck and neck and finished the half tied 30-30.

American kept VCU on its heels in the second

half. The Eagles went on a run out of the locker room with back-to-back 3-pointers. Down 38-31, VCU responded with a team effort — six different Rams contributed points during a 16-6 run. The Rams captured the lead and entered the final quarter up 47-44.

American opened the final quarter on a 6-2 run to retake the lead. However, a couple of timely field goals from Rowser stymied the Eagles’ momentum. From there, VCU’s lead expanded to nine points at the 3:26 mark after numerous turnovers and missed shots by AU’s offense — the Rams never looked back.

Clutch free throw shooting by Robinson and senior guard Ashley Pegram captured the game for VCU in the final minutes.

“The team showed great composure down the stretch to earn a hard-fought win,” O’Boyle said.

The Rams outrebounded the Eagles 40-29 and were able to garner 19 second chance points compared to American’s seven. Robinson lead the team in points with 18 while Goodhope lead in assists with six.

The Rams return home to the Siegel Center Wednesday. Tip-off is set for noon against Iona College.



spectrum

Fact of the week:
The only spacecraft to pass Neptune was the Voyager 2 in 1989.

Strange Matter hosts RRFP fundraiser

The Richmond Reproductive Freedom Project is a non-profit dedicated to increasing access to abortion services

TYLER HAMMEL
Contributing Writer

Venue, restaurant and bar Strange Matter opened its doors on Nov. 22 for a punk show to benefit the Richmond Reproductive Freedom Project (RRFP), a non-profit volunteer run organization that helps fight for reproductive justice and provide financial aid for people in need of abortions.

The event was put together by Strange Matter employee Chris Hensley, who had heard about RRFP's grass root funding events and decided to fill a hole in the venue's schedule with a benefit in the wake of a nasty election cycle.

"We had this gap in the schedule and it was right after the election which left a lot of people, especially in city, feeling pretty bleak about the incoming president. So some friends and I decided to throw a benefit," Hensley said.

Cumulatively, the benefit raised more than \$800 and was attended by 125 people, a larger turnout than Hensley or Strange Matter had initially expected.

Ha Tran, a volunteer who has been with RRFP since 2013, said abortion services have a large variation in cost and can range from as little as \$200 to as much as \$10,000.

RRFP helped 235 people during fiscal year 2015 by providing

a variety of services in addition to helping finance abortion procedures.

These services include ultrasounds, counseling, lodging, transportation and referrals to organizations that help people who already have children.

"People can fundraise pretty much anyway they want," Tran said. "Pretty much 100 percent of our funding comes from grassroots funding, so things like that are really important to us and show that the community really cares."

RRFP helps people from all across the state and often people from Maryland and North Carolina who come to Virginia due to strict laws in their states.

As a non-profit, RRFP's funding comes from donations and fundraisers. Tran said fundraising comes in various forms, whether it's friends asking friends for donations, house shows or craft shows, dinners or clothing drives.

"We (thought) it would be a nice little thing," Hensley said about organizing the benefit show at Strange Matter. "People could get together, watch some bands and support a good cause in the face of impending doom."

Hensley said he booked four bands for the show: Nosebleed, Memory Loss, Sinister Purpose and Bad Magic.

Bad Magic guitarist/vocalist



The Richmond Reproductive Freedom Project offers support and financial aid for those in need an abortion, and transportation to and from healthcare facilities.

PHOTO BY GRACE ZIRBUD

Julie Karr said she volunteered to play the show because of the all the good RRFP does for those in need via financial and counseling support.

"The way they (RRFP) frame reproductive access and reproductive decision-making is really something that's based off privilege and disprivilege," Karr said. "This is a decision that can have long term financial effects on people and I like how they frame it."

Karr said she has performed in benefits for RRFP before, at Strange Matter and elsewhere.

She cited reproductive rights as an important issue to her, particularly in wake of the recent election cycle.

"It just seems like lately, with the election of Donald Trump, there's this 'oh shit' push where everyone is trying to get their ducks in a row and are getting the funds that they can now," said Karr. "That way we can all be as prepared as we can for what I think we all see as a pretty tense four years ahead of us."

RRFP also participates in the annual "Bowl-A-Thon" fundraiser from February through April, and is coordinated by the National Network of Abortion Funds.

There will be an interest meeting for prospective RRFP volunteers on Sunday, Dec. 11.

Registration via Facebook is required to attend.

Donations to RRFP can be made through their website at rrfp.nationbuilder.com/monthly_funder

“Pretty much 100 percent of our funding comes from grassroots funding, so things like that are really important to us and show that the community really cares.”

Ha Tran, RRFP volunteer



ILLUSTRATION BY CARSON MCNAMARA

Local journalists tell their stories

GEORGIA GEEN
Contributing Writer

Richmond-based journalists convened at nonprofit artspace Gallery5 for a Secretly Y'all: Headlines, a storytelling event based around their experiences in the industry on Nov. 21.

With most events falling every other month, Secretly Y'all relies on raw storytelling, unprompted by notes, to deliver a message to the audience. The \$5 door fee for their events is donated to a Richmond-based charity or project.

This lineup, entitled "Headlines," focused on past experiences of local journalists and their insight into the tasks that

remain ahead in the profession.

"I'm starting to feel that the most important stories I will do, and that all of us will do, are ahead," said Richmond Times-Dispatch Metro Columnist, Michael Paul Williams, when alluding to the uncertainty of the modern political climate.

While taking a hiatus from writing columns, Williams said he attempted a large-scale examination of Richmond Public Schools, which included shadowing several students. He said it ultimately fell through due to issues with consent forms and other "roadblocks" set by the district.

In a Times-Dispatch piece,

Williams reflected on how successes with similar projects in surrounding schools contrasted with his own experience, attributing the termination to the current political climate, among other factors.

Williams said that as a journalist, "you get real cynical about the capacity of people to do good," but that the experience of covering the Armstrong High School Choir's 2012 plight to compete in New York City gave him needed optimism. The group received over \$20,000 in donations over a weeklong period.

Taking the stage back a few decades, Harry Kollatz of Richmond Magazine recalled

the events that transpired at the dawn of his journalistic career. Former Style Weekly Reporter Chris Dovi detailed his experiences covering former Richmond Mayor Douglas Wilder's attempted eviction of the school board offices from the City Hall building in 2007.

"There was something in the air on Sept. 22," Dovi said.

When Katy Evans took the stage, she added a few personal anecdotes to begin.

"When I told my mother I would be telling a story to a room of mostly strangers, she laughed outloud," Evans said.

As a relatively new Metro Enterprise and Investigative reporter for the Times-Dispatch, Evans expressed sentiments similar to those of Williams.

In early fall of this year, Evans said she wrote a piece detailing the cover-up of information related to the death of an individual in the custody of Hampton Roads Regional Jail.

"No one wanted to talk about it," Evans said. "Like most good stories I write, this thing made me mad."

Williams echoed support for Evans in an anecdote of his own talk: "(Evans) gets mad about the right things," he said.

Williams said this characteristic is essential for journalists.

"There was at least one moment where I let my guard down and became a human first and a reporter second," Evans said.

Editor of GayRVA and web editor for RVA Magazine Brad Kutner concluded the lineup with narratives on his experience working for the prior publication. Kutner focused his points in the light of the election, recalling his personal emotions when he saw red filling the electoral map. Kutner said LGBTQ gun club membership spiked after the election.

Kutner also discussed the issue of reporting on LGBTQ news in "Trump's America."

"One of the most important things that we're going to do as journalists is tell the stories of people," Kutner said.

A mixed-bill collaboration with the Cosmonaut Collective

TYLER HAMMEL
Contributing Writer

Cosmonaut Collaborations, the brainchild of Solar Tantrums member Eric Kalata, hosted their first Strange Matter show last Wednesday, Nov. 23.

Kalata formed Cosmonaut Collective as a means of booking shows more easily and Strange Matter marked the collective's third show, and the first show to feature a mixed bill.

"I wanted to be taken a bit more serious because if you can't tell I'm not very old," Kalata said. "So I came up with a name and Cosmonaut Collaborations sounded catchy and fun and added that to my name when I sent emails out to venues. I'd sent emails out to venues before but they had never responded to me as quickly before I added the name."

Kalata also thought creating a name would benefit his friends as well, helping to streamline them and better release their art, zines and music. Kalata started small with a house show on Oct. 1 and after that proved to be a success decided to expand his bookings, first to The Camel and then to Strange Matter.

There are currently two acts that fall under the Cosmonaut banner - Kalata's group The Solar Tantrums and Driftveil--though Kalata routinely works with other acts, such as The Talkies, John Luter and D'Co, DJ'ANGLIR and Onomatopoeia, all of whom played at the show this past week. Kalata hopes to expand the collaboration's roster and is also working on a video series.

"I just decided to get acts I knew were loud and fun," Kalata said. "I don't care if it's an all punk show or whatever, I just want to book bands that I want to see."

Instead of continuing with a one-genre show Kalata decided to book a mixed bill, contacting shoegaze, psychedelic, electronic and hip-hop performers. Though an interesting way to create line-up Kalata said he isn't sure he'll always follow this format in the future.

"I don't know if every show will be this diverse, but I don't want to limit myself," Kalata said. "I'm gonna start surprising people like that. You can't guarantee that if you put a punk band with a rapper the punk bands are going to stay for every rapper. But you don't know what you're going to love until it's right there in front of you."

Jake Shinn and Taylor Donovan of The Talkies, who played the show, have been performing in Richmond for about a year and said this was one of the most diverse shows they'd played, even in a city that thrives on specialization.

"Richmond has such a diverse population of music it's kind of easy to find very niche genres of bands who just play together," Donovan said. "But with a mixed bill I think a lot more people get exposed to new music they otherwise would never hear."

"It doesn't happen a lot, but it's always fun to play with a bunch of different types of acts," Shinn said.

According to Shinn, the problem with a mixed bill show is that people come and go a lot during sets presumably because they're less into some of the performers than others. This sentiment was echoed by John Luter, a hip-hop artist who performed with D'Co at the Cosmonaut show.

"Unfortunately a lot of people who came to see me didn't get there early enough to see the other bands who are very talented," Luter said. "When I went on last we had about 30 to 40 people who showed up just for us which was bittersweet because I would have liked to see a crowd show up for them too."

The next Cosmonaut Collaboration show will be held on Dec. 16th at DIY venue The Observatory.

SuRJ Thanksgiving roleplay:



LIA TABACKMAN
Contributing Writer

Every fourth Thursday in November, families and communities across the country gather to share turkey, gravy, a plethora of desserts and a full serving of aggressive political discourse.

The Richmond chapter of Showing Up For Racial Justice (SuRJ) held a hybrid part-seminar-part-roleplay event at the Richmond Unitarian Universalist Congregation last week to help Richmonders create relevant, helpful dialogue with potentially racist relatives at their dinner tables this holiday season.

Since its creation in 2009, SuRJ has worked across the country to create educated allies and break the silence surrounding racial justice in the United States. Through a growing network of organizations, SuRG organizes and educates white people to act for racial justice with “both passion and accountability.”

“By drawing our white families and communities in, we can educate them to take responsibility for racial justice and challenge the scapegoating of white people living in rural towns,” said SuRJ volunteer and event coordinator Alex Sparrow.

Sparrow said Thanksgiving is an opportunity to utilize personal connections to engage in deeper discussion.

“Our goal is to tap into the ‘moveable middle’ and find ways to move them towards a more racially just mindset, in this case, during Thanksgiving,” Sparrow said.

According to Sparrow, the moveable middle are those who “may not be neo-Nazis, but who aren’t actively showing up to advocate for racial justice.”

In identifying the moveable middle, SuRJ utilizes a “spectrum of allies” to represent the various mindsets that white people hold when talking about racial justice. From “active allies” on the left, “neutral” in the middle and “active opposition” on the right, the scale helps allies in visualizing where to begin the conversation with their relatives.

By educating active allies on how to have discussions with active opposition- as well as everyone in between – Sparrow said SuRJ aims to cultivate racial justice through a trickle-down model of education.

“We’re focused not just on educating active-opposes, but also those who may already consider themselves to be progressive,” said SuRJ volunteer and event coordinator Christina Carlotti Kolb. “We must ask the question of how to get someone from just putting on a safety pin for support to actually showing up and protesting and working for positive change.”

SuRJ has developed a variety of tips for engaging in conversation without attacking or ostracizing those who hold opposing or misconstrued opinions. From remembering to avoid complex jargon to avoiding stereotyping and shaming, SuRJ hopes to teach people to educate through creating a culture of mutual empathy, understanding and respect.

“Conversations with Trump supporters aren’t about winning or being right, they’re about changing hearts and minds,” volunteer Ted Lewis said.

Lewis said asking family questions like, “how can we want to build a wall when our ancestors themselves were immigrants?” can help put oppressors back into the shoes of the oppressed.

SuRJ further recommends avoiding overtly academic phrases when

turkey, mashed potatoes and educating your racist relatives

trying to educate people. Lewis said phrases like “white privilege” and “systemic oppression” probably won’t register with rural white families who have spent their lives living in poverty.

Instead, SuRJ encourages allies to step away from their social justice word bank and instead use metaphors to get their points across.

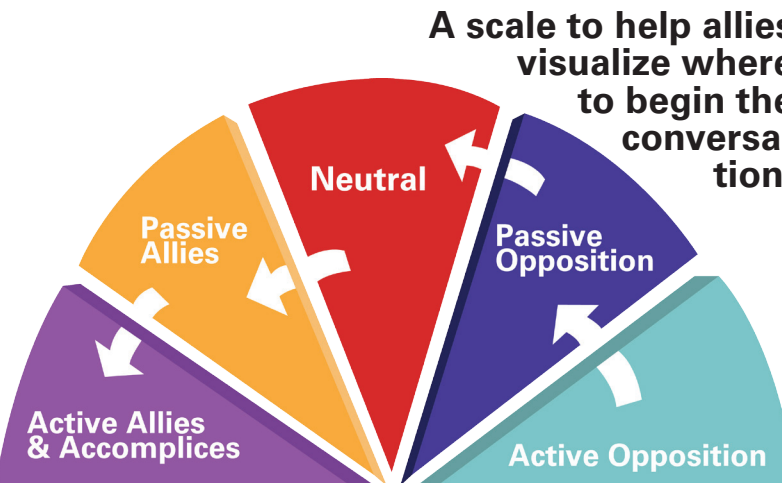
The Band-Aid anecdote is one tear-free way that the concept of white privilege can be introduced into conversation.

“When a white person goes to buy a Band-Aid, the trademark ‘flesh’ color will almost certainly match the color of their skin,” Lewis said.

“When Band-Aid created their product, they had a certain flesh color in mind as the ‘norm.’ This doesn’t mean that Band-Aid was trying to be racist, but it does show that being white in this country comes with perks and privileges that will often times be unnoticed and underappreciated.”

By pointing out these privileges and facilitating authentic conversation, Lewis said SuRJ hopes to break through misconceptions about racism and power dynamics and replace them with a more nuanced understanding of racial dynamics in America.

“We are in a specific moment where the moveable middle is needed more now than ever before,” Lewis said. “So really push to try to have that uncomfortable moment. If it works and it goes well, then try it again with another person. And if it doesn’t go well, guess what – try it again with another person.”



Mary J. Blige, Maxwell ring in Thanksgiving weekend at the Coliseum

MUKTARU JALLOH
Staff Writer

R&B legends Maxwell and Mary J. Blige opened the holiday season with their “King and Queens of Hearts Tour” stop at the Richmond Coliseum on Nov. 10.

The arena was filled near capacity with die hard fans of the famed singers. With separate sets, each singer brought their unique qualities to the stage that has made them music luminaries for over twenty years.

After opener Ro James’ half hour set, the “Queen of Hip-Hop Soul” graced the stage, to resounding applause from the crowd. During the course of her 25-year-long music career, Blige has used her music to reason and cope with her life struggles and triumphs.

Blige’s Thanksgiving-eve set further added to this discourse. In the midst of a very public divorce from her longtime husband Kendu Isaacs, Blige’s set opened with a short video showing news headlines of the divorce.

She then proceeded to perform her 2007 hit, “Just Fine,” assuring her fans that through the drama, she’d get through it.

After, Blige took the old heads back, performing a medley of nostalgic 1990’s hits, “You Bring Me Joy,” “Love Is All We Need,” “Real Love,” “Be Happy,” “Mary Dance” and crowd favorite “Love No Limit (remix).”

She then slowed the show down to talk to her fans, sitting near the front row.

“Fellas I love you too, but I am a woman,” Blige said. “I speak to the women!”

For decades, Blige’s music has been a form of therapy for so many women throughout the world, providing a sense of understanding and support in their own experiences.

After talking to the crowd for a few minutes, Blige proceeded to sing “Share My World” from her 1997 album of the same name.

A brief intermission highlighted the individuals in her band, and Blige reappeared on stage wearing a signature look reminiscent of her videos from the “My Life” era of her career.

“Does anybody in here got that ‘My Life album?’ Blige said.

Undeniably her magnum opus and best selling album, Blige took time to bring fans back to 1994, by singing “My Life” and “I’m Goin’ Down,” which consequently left many fans in tears before she segued back into her current divorce.

“As you know, there’s a lot going on right now,” Blige said. “I’m going through some heavy shit.”

She told the crowd her new album, “Strength Of A Woman,” will be out before year’s end and sang the album’s single, “Thick of It,” a song that tackles the divorce.

Blige then performed more hits, including “No More Drama” and ended with a much lighter and celebratory song, “Family Fair.”

Maxwell followed her performance at 9:30 p.m. and opened with “Dancewithme.” The smooth R&B crooner from Brooklyn

serenaded the hearts of women in the crowd, sporting a three piece suit and clean-cut fade. While Maxwell isn’t the free-flowing-hair-wearing enigma fans were introduced to in 1997, he’s still got it.

Twenty years after his landmark debut, “Urban Hang Suite,” Maxwell returned in this year with his 2009 album “BLACKSUMMERS’night.”

Known for being somewhat of a recluse, he’s often taken many years off in between albums, making this tour feel momentous.

The show’s production matched this sentiment, with a full band, stage platform and large screen above.

The early portion of the show was dedicated to album cuts, performing “Everwanting: To Want You To Want,” “Bad Habits” and “Love You,” from his 2009 return project, “BLACKSUMMERS’night.”

Soon after, he went into the ballads that has brought him his

cult-like following, performing his cover of “This Woman’s Work.”

While performing the song with his signature falsetto, a backdrop of Prince, Muhammad Ali and protestors of the Black Lives Matter movement appeared on the screen.

Prince, who passed away this year, has often been described as Maxwell’s biggest influence and his set proved to be a dedication to him. He then went into a rendition of his song, “Lifetime” which also featured a cover of Prince’s ballad, “Adore,” leaving many in the crowd with tears in their eyes hearts full of purple.

After the Prince dedication, Maxwell proceeded to sing his new single, “Lake By The Ocean”, 1996’s “Til The Cops Come Knockin” and “Sumthin Sumthin,” with accompanying visuals on the screen.

Performing for about 90 minutes, Maxwell closed out hit set with his 1996 hit, “Ascension,” performing two versions, one paying homage to the DMV’s Go-Go with a live conga band.

After the crowd called for an encore, Maxwell returned on stage to close out the night with his 2009 hit, “Pretty Wings,” leaving fans with warm hearts ready for the holidays.



Mary J. Blige performed “Thick of It,” off her upcoming album “Strength of a Woman.”

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\$7 Cover

Artist’s Spotlight

Mally Black talks inspirations, new album

SIONA PETEROUS
Staff Writer

Twenty-one-year-old Richmond-based rapper, Kemal “Mally” Black, said he has been dropping rhymes for as long as he can remember, but it wasn’t until recently he became serious about it.

“Rapping was something I was always passionate about,” Black said. “I would just start spitting all the time whenever I was with anyone.”

Black is currently working on his upcoming album, “40 Mondaze,” set to release on Dec. 5.

Black said he has an extensive support system of friends which has been essential in his work and where he sees himself going in the new critical years.

“Honestly, it was the feedback that drew me in more,” Black said. “Having people tell me I was good gave me some confidence and made me think I should actually do this seriously.”

He said acknowledging his support base as crucial in character building needed to pursue music is a shift from the hyper-masculinity often bolstered in American culture at large, but especially seen in rap culture.

“To care about what others think of you is wack, but I get it,” Black said. “It can feel sometimes that as an artist there’s something I’m just not allowed to say or talk about it, but it’s my music at the end of the day.”

From the outside, Black said it may seem like he’s not be focused on promotion

and marketing, which isn’t a completely false assumption.

“I just recently decided that this what I’m going to do,” Black says, “I used to just drop my work for people to hear and now I’m taking the time to promote and brand myself cause I’m just starting to do this seriously.”

He said his most recently released work, “These Daze” features a range of beats and rhyming styles: from critical and introspective spoken-word esque tracks to muted synth beats with fast paced rhymes on tops.

He also has done work with other artists like Don Lebanon and works with a variety of beat makers.

ILLUSTRATION FROM SOUNDCLOUD

“40 Mondaze,” is set to release on Dec. 5.

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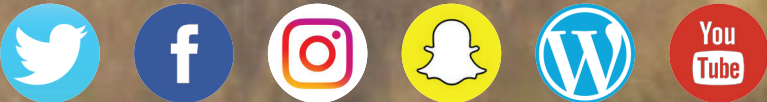
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opinion

Quote of the week:

“If we continue to believe in the power of the people and act accordingly, nothing can stop us.” —Eleanor Fialk



SRITEJA YEDHARA
Contributing Columnist

Almost immediately following the election Trump has adhered to the many racist and offensive views he campaigned on, despite a call for “unity” during his acceptance speech. This is perhaps most evident with his cabinet picks thus far.

The President’s cabinet is one of the most integral parts of the United States’ executive governing apparatus, which is why as President-elect Donald Trump began to name appointments, social media exploded with both anger and fear.

According to CNN, Trump has tapped Alabama Senator Jeff Sessions for Attorney General, South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley as U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. and Republican donor Betsy DeVos as Education Secretary. Perhaps most problematic, however, are his picks for chief strategist and chief of staff.

The chief strategist—a top advisor to the president—is unlike the other appointments because Congressional approval is not necessary. Trump chose Stephen Bannon for the position, which is coincidentally his most terrifying pick thus far.

Bannon, who served as CEO of the Trump campaign, is also the Executive Chairman of the alt-right website Breitbart News. Under Bannon’s leadership since 2012, Breitbart has published pieces that are anti-Muslim, anti-Mexican and anti-Women.

LGBTQ+ rights have also been entirely disregarded under Bannon’s leadership and has steamrolled a severely racist rhetoric, including many articles aimed at devaluing the Black Lives Matter movement and a headline reading: “Hoist it high and proud: The Confederate flag proclaims a glorious heritage.”

Throughout the campaign, Bannon’s site continued publishing the conservative conspiracy theories Breitbart has become famous for, including ones which seek to “expose” Black Lives Matter activist Shaun King as caucasian.

Other threads on Breitbart’s website include headlines such as “Birth Control Makes Women Unattractive and Crazy,” “Would you rather your child had feminism or cancer?” “Science proves it: Fat-shaming works,” “Gay rights have made us dumber, it’s time to get back in the closet” and “The solution to online ‘harassment’ is simple: Women should log off.”

Someone who publishes ideas demeaning people of color, and any person that is not a straight man, should not be advising the president of this incredibly diverse country. Bannon’s “news” website and rhetoric is inherently offensive, but it is also incredibly dangerous. Rhetoric of hatred and denomination do not help promote a country of peace or prosperity.

Alongside Bannon, Trump tapped Republican National Committee Chairman Reince Priebus for chief of staff. The position will hand this Republican a major role in the president’s everyday activities. The fact that Priebus and Bannon are being advertised almost as “co-equals,” is not something that helps a White House function properly, according to NPR, because a level of distinction between the Chief of Staff and Chief Strategist is necessary to keep political agendas on track.

Another troubling Trump cabinet pick includes Sessions of Alabama for Attorney General. Sessions has acted as a top aide to Trump throughout his campaign and on his national security

advisory committee. Sessions’ record shows that he has opposed almost every immigration bill that has come before the Senate in the last 20 years, and was instrumental to drafting much of Trump’s stance on immigration.

According to the Washington Post, Sessions has even fought legal immigration, and notoriously spoken-out against programs that help immigrants legally enter the United States. This directly contradicts everything this country stands for. This works against The American Dream.

The Post also reported that in 1986, a Senate committee denied Sessions for a federal judgeship after former colleagues testified he used the n-word and joked that the Ku Klux Klan was “okay” until he “learned that they smoked marijuana.”

Some other major positions have been announced in the last two weeks. Trump tapped Republican donor Betsy DeVos for Education Secretary. For years, DeVos has advocated for a system of “school choice,” where parents can choose whether to send their children to private, public or charter schools.

Though on the surface the idea of “school choice” seems like a beneficial idea, it will further disenfranchise communities of impoverished students attending public school systems, which are already in dire need of more attention from the Department of Education.

Perhaps most importantly, are who Trump is considering for the position of Secretary of State. Both former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney and former New York City mayor Rudy Giuliani are currently vying for the position, and Trump’s choices for this prestigious position must similarly live up to the legacy of some of the greatest political minds in this country’s history.

On the campaign trail, Trump promised many foreign policy changes to his supporters, including a general withdrawal from the Chinese economy. Romney, who has opposed Trump on several issues, is the crux of intense controversy regarding a potential appointment to the Secretary of State position.

Romney’s loyalty to a Trump presidency is under fire, but based on the line-up for other cabinet positions Romney would be one of the least conservative, or independently wealthy, members of the cabinet.

The other contender, Giuliani, has been a long-time and loyal supporter of Trump, but has been so vocal about his gunning for the Secretaryship that at times even Trump has expressed frustration on the matter. During his political campaign, Giuliani made a name for himself for being pro-choice, somewhat pro-LGBTQ+ and an advocate for policing the internet.

Overall, the President-elect has presented a cabinet that is being defined by the Huffington Post as “the least experienced (cabinet) in modern history.” Quartz reports that Trump’s “cabinet of billionaires” is worth more than \$35 billion dollars, which is more than the GDP of 100 individual countries in the world.

As far as can be deducted through the President-elect’s decisions so far, the focus is on donors who have donated heavily to his campaign, and those who will further his right-winged policies.

Money should not be a top qualification for a seat on a president’s cabinet. It proves nothing more than the place at which a President’s interests lie: not in the welfare of the everyday people, but in his billionaire friends. This is not a hopeful start for the future of Trump’s presidency.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

ELEANOR FIALK
Opinion Editor

Those who know me well know I was nothing short of a trainwreck these past few post-election weeks. I don’t think anyone expected me to take the results to heart the way I did—and quite frankly, neither did I.

I sat at the bar with tears streaming down my face as I watched the only television actually covering the election results (the rest had ESPN college football on and I almost spit out my drink when I noticed). The entire venue, jam-packed with intoxicated college students and recent graduates, continued to nonchalantly sing karaoke as if this Tuesday was no different than any other.

(If you were wondering who in their right mind would go out on election night in the first place, I can assure you I had expected different results and a lighthearted night with friends—boy was I wrong).

Unable to handle any more of the Brave-New-World-dystopian-novel-esque atmosphere of election night in a Richmond bar surrounded by apathetic drunks, I headed home. Not only did I head home, but I also got in bed -- and I got in bed so well that I didn’t leave for days.

I found solace in the dark solitude of my bedroom for almost 72 hours as I slowly went through each of the five stages of

grief (and I sure nailed isolation, anger and depression right on the head). It felt like a relationship had crumbled in my hands, like I had been broken up with by a long-term significant other, and as dramatic as that sounds, that’s nearly what happened.

As a millennial born in the mid-1990s, I spent the fundamental years of developing my self-identity and political views with the ever-so-poised and intelligent Barack Obama in the white house.

I went through puberty, began middle school, experienced my first crush, learned how to drive, applied to college and moved away from home all during Obama’s two terms.

I was taught about Dred Scott v. Sandford and Plessy v. Ferguson with a black president in the oval office. I learned about the struggles of the women’s suffrage movement and the ratification of the 19th Amendment while the first lady held not only one Ivy League degree, but two.

I was shown what it meant to be a true leader; to chose love over fear and authenticity over deceit. I experienced the quiet power of transparent leadership and the positive impact of capturing the human essence while holding an authoritative position.

Relating to Obama was effortless. He laughed with us, cried with us and, most importantly, he served as the backbone of our

country and our source of encouragement during turbulent times.

As one of the virtually unparalleled orators of our era, Obama never failed to speak powerfully with both respect and sincerity.

Although I am saddened by the inevitable end to Obama’s inspiring eight years, as well as by the man our country voted to replace him, I refuse to lose hope.

With the transition of power steadily approaching, it is crucial now more than ever that we apply these same admirable qualities to our own lives. The national platform may no longer be as sophisticated nor respectful as it previously was, but that does not require for our individual lives to follow in the president-elect’s footsteps.

Be transparent. Act ethically and speak honestly. Allow others to trust you and trust them in return. Authority does not outweigh integrity.

Actively seek out unbiased and reputable news sources. Acquire a healthy dose of skepticism when dealing with all forms of the media. Inadvertently absorbing and passing along false or severely skewed information can only hurt you.

Be kind and open-minded. Attempt to understand those whose opinions differ from your own. Educate yourself on issues you know little about and refrain from arguments if you recognize your lack of knowl-

edge on the subject. Focus on learning rather than on conflict.

Participate in state and local government. Understand politicians’ platforms and vote in state and local elections. More often than not, these levels of government have a more substantial influence on your daily life than the federal government.

Support and donate to organizations that work to put your progressive views into action. If you are pro-choice, for example, consider donating to Planned Parenthood. The ability for these organizations to continue to exist and aid others depends solely on funding.

Be confident. Others may doubt you or your capabilities (or your American citizenship and demand you present your birth certificate), let them. You owe no explanation nor evidence. Your righteous actions will speak for themselves and prove said individuals wrong in the process.

Stand your ground and stay true to your morals. If you believe something is wrong, speak up. As South African social rights activist Desmond Tutu once said, “If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.”

We may be in for a long four years, but at least we’re together for the ride. If we continue to believe in the power of the people and act accordingly, nothing can stop us.



comics

Tips for the Train Traveler by Kelly Macrae



You're Not Special by Gareth Bentall

YOU'RE NOT SPECIAL



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