

Colonial Courier

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Photo by Neleigh Rexroad



NHS members kick off Kindness Week by creating a banner without the letter "I," encouraging students to be a pillar of kindness. Aiden Ackerman, 11, participates in the Kindness Week Challenge.

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Hurley named RVA Youth Athlete of the Year

by Logan Buck

What is a great athlete made of? Some may argue it's athleticism, hard work or speed. According to the RVA Sports Awards criteria, a great athlete is well-rounded and makes a positive impact on and off the court.

Avery Hurley, 11, was one of four finalists from 2024 to represent the youth athletes of the Richmond area and was the only female in contention. On Feb. 8, Hurley joined six-time Olympic medalist Jackie-Joyner Kersee on stage as the single recipient of the award.

In the Tri-Cities area of Virginia, a young athlete is chosen annually for the Youth Athlete of the Year. The four finalists are described as people who exemplify all positive aspects of sports and have made a positive impact on the Richmond region.

"Avery has always been tough, and she is a loyal friend and teammate," said Mrs. Alison Hurley, mother of Hurley. "She isn't afraid to work hard when challenged."

Representing the CHHS girls' varsity volleyball team and Richmond Volleyball Club 16 Nationals,

Hurley attributes her growth to her friends and coaches, who have pushed her to be a better athlete, especially in times of difficulty.

"[I've been challenged by] mental blocks and the feeling you're not getting better," said Hurley. "I've had amazing coaches and teammates to help me through every struggle I've been through."

Throughout Hurley's decade of playing volleyball, she has accomplished many feats, including earning 1st team All-Region and

All-Academic, and winning this latest award.

"Most of the time, I spend time doing recovery or hanging out with friends and family," said Hurley. "I think it's important to have a balance."

Hurley's success comes with a balance between volleyball, socialization and recovery. Maintaining a balance keeps her skills sharp and ready to play, which Mrs. Hurley enjoys seeing.

"She puts in almost two extra hours a week

of practice," said Mrs. Hurley. "It's fun watching her hard work pay off."

Hurley is the first athlete at CHHS to win an award of this scale while Mr. Gerald Carsley, activities director, has worked at the school.

"I think it was a great award for her to win," said Mr. Carsley. "The RVA Sports awards are looked at as big awards, so I appreciate Coach Martin for nominating her, and her winning was tremendous."

As Hurley continues to grow, Coach Antonia

Photo courtesy of Alison Hurley



Hurley joins Jackie-Joyner Kersee on stage to receive the RVA Youth Athlete of the Year Award.

Martin, girls' varsity volleyball coach, is excited for next season.

"The thing that is so exciting about Avery next year is that you never know what she's going to do," said Coach Martin. "She is an elusive setter because she can set, dump or hit on the second contact herself. She is highly competitive and really likes to out-guess her opponents, so it is

always enjoyable to watch her play."

Like most athletes, Hurley also has her own superstitions before each game or play to ensure her success.

"Before I serve, I have the same routine every time, and I always pray before every game and practice," said Hurley.

Through many different teams and teammates, Hurley is grateful for those who

have been a part of her volleyball journey.

"Overall, I have been blessed to have the most amazing teammates, both high school and club," said Hurley.

As Hurley continues her volleyball career, challenges are inevitable; however, challenges can be overcome with the right mindset and determination.

"Avery has always dealt with setbacks well," said Mrs. Hurley. "She will always do what is best for her even if it doesn't feel good in the moment. It might take her some time to get it figured out, but she always ends up doing the right thing even if it is hard. I respect that about her."

Photo courtesy of Alison Hurley



Hurley represents CHHS and Richmond Volleyball Club at the RVA Sports Awards.

Wheeler named December Senior of the Month

by Madelyn Elmore

Declan Wheeler, 12, is someone who always tries to do his best. This work ethic is just one of the reasons why he was named December Senior of the Month.

"Not only in golf but also in the classroom, he's very conscientious," said Mr. Brian Seely, Algebra 2 teacher and golf coach. "He wants to do well."

Wheeler has always - not just now in high school - been someone who makes every effort without complaining.

"Declan does not enjoy sitting in a classroom, and he never has, but he never complains about having to come to school," said Mrs. Darby Wheeler, counselor and Declan's mom. "He

always does his best, and for someone who does not enjoy being here in a classroom setting, it shows a lot about his character -- that he does his best, anyways."

Wheeler has a well-rounded high school experience: he plays both varsity soccer and golf. Not only is he an athlete, but also he is involved with NHS and Beta. Of these activities, the most rewarding has been soccer.

"Soccer is such an amazing team sport, and you really get to build a bond with your teammates," said Wheeler. "Then, the physical activity really keeps you in shape."

In soccer, Wheeler plays defense but can also be moved to midfield when needed. One of his favorite

Photo courtesy of Darby Wheeler



Wheeler plans to finish the precision machining program at Brightpoint Community College.

memories is when he scored a goal from the middle of the field in his 10th grade JV season.

Not only is Wheeler a skilled player, but also he is a reliable one.

"I recall a particularly intense game played in very warm conditions," said Mr. Yousef Jabri, boys' soccer coach. "Declan was giving it his all and was visibly exhausted, his face red from exertion. I decided to substitute him out and asked how he was doing. Although he clearly needed the break, he told me he would never ask to be subbed out because he wanted to keep pushing for the team. His

willingness to sacrifice for the good of the team is remarkable and speaks volumes about his character. I'm truly grateful to coach players like him."

One of the things Wheeler will not miss from high school is waking up early. Despite this, his biggest obstacle was lack of time.

"My biggest challenge is just lack of time in between school, work, sports, just being a normal person and having friends," said Wheeler. "A lot of it was looking up stuff and researching how to manage my time."

The advice he would leave for the upcoming freshmen is to get their schoolwork done

Photo courtesy of Darby Wheeler



Wheeler's favorite soccer memory is scoring a goal from mid-field.

early and not procrastinate because he has struggled with that.

Everyone believes in Wheeler's future. Mrs. Wheeler believes that her son will go far in life due to his ability to figure things out on his own; his coach agrees.

"Declan is the ideal student-athlete you would want in your program," said Mr. Jabri. "He is kind, hardworking, respectful, and gives everything he has to whatever he's doing. His parents should be extremely proud — they've raised a fine young man with a bright future ahead. I have no doubt he will go on to be a successful and upstanding citizen after finishing school."

After high school, Wheeler plans on continuing his work

in the precision machinery program at Brightpoint. He has already begun his track to receiving his certificate and does not have much left to complete. Then after that, he will look for a job and begin to figure out life. This plan, however, is recent.

"He definitely switched gears this year," said Mrs. Wheeler. "He had always said he wanted to be an engineer even though I tried to talk him into marine biology because he loves the ocean so much. We even went and visited Tech, and he's gone to ODU to visit, but he took the precision machining class at Brightpoint, and he loves it."

Despite graduating so soon, Wheeler feels okay with it.

"I'm a little nervous," said Wheeler, "but I think in the

long run, I've done what I've wanted to in high school."

During his time in high school, Wheeler would use "growth" to describe his changes.

"I've grown a lot physically," said Wheeler, "but mentally I've grown to realize I can work a lot of stuff out in my head, but I need to write it out, like on a calendar or something."

Wheeler did not only have himself to rely on for this mental growth. He looked up to Mr. Seely and Mr. David Flickinger, physics teacher, to give him advice that he can take through life. He also had Mrs. Wheeler in the counseling office; however, she tried to stand back and be "Mom" rather than a counselor. Even though she

stands back, she is always there for when he has questions.

Wheeler has a strong support system that can help carry him not just here at school but once he graduates as well.

"I haven't really talked with teachers except inside their classes, but there are a few that I did talk to more than others," said Wheeler. "Last semester, Mrs. Major was really helpful not only in explaining course content but also in answering other questions that I had about topics outside of class. I would also like to continue golfing with Mr. Seely and Mr. Crinkley."

Photo courtesy of Darby Wheeler



"He practices with the same intensity in practice as he does in the game," said Mr. Jabri.

Campbell named Senior of the Month

Photo courtesy of Joslyn Campbell



Campbell has not yet decided where she would like to attend college, but she would like to major in business.

by Noah Patsel

"I really didn't believe it, but then I was like, okay, I'm in a way getting recognized for who I am for once," said Joslyn Campbell, 12.

When Campbell received the news that she was January Senior of the Month, she was surprised, but her teachers were not.

"I remember feeling that like, oh, that makes sense," said Mr. Zachary Conley, band director. "I don't know exactly how she does in her other classes, but, I mean, if my class is an

indication, I'm sure she's a rock star in everything else she's doing at the high school."

Campbell was drum-line leader during this past marching band season, and she won a first place award with the drumline. Campbell has taken over many leadership positions in her time at the high school.

"I can totally attribute that to her leadership in the way that she can keep them under control and keep their heads up high and keep them all

just like gelled and moving in the group," said Mr. Conley.

Campbell's style of leadership led her to think about university, where she would consider going into business or management. Campbell has not yet made a decision on where she wants to go to college but has a few in mind.

"I have applied to a few schools," said Campbell. "I've applied to ODU, Florida Tech and U Tampa."

Going to college is a big step that some people are nervous about. Campbell is one of those people.

"I feel like I'm ready for a new step, but I'm also kind of nervous because I don't know what the future is going to be like and all that," said Campbell.

Even though Campbell is scared about the future, she still is looking forward to something down the road for her.

"I feel like knowing that there is something at the end for me, like, pushing towards a better place and a better me," said Campbell.

Campbell has faced many challenges in her time at the high school.

"I feel like I had a lot of trouble in my sophomore, junior year with people," said Campbell. "It was just like a lot of like people like dogging on me for stuff, and I feel like the friends that I had really like got me through that."

Campbell always tries to look out for her underclassmen to make sure that they have a better experience than she did. Her advice to freshmen is to surround themselves with the right people and to put themselves first sometimes.

"So, it's just she's just that good of a role model and is totally willing to step into that almost teacher position whenever she needs or even wants to," said Mr. Conley.

Campbell has a funny and playful side to her, as well. According to Mr. Conley, she does a great job of being able to have fun and work.

"She was taking a break to eat something, but then they started a song that she really wanted to play, so there's a picture of her playing her snare drum with a biscuit in her mouth," said Mr. Conley.

Chapman wins Virginia Association for Teaching, Learning and Leading Award

by Leaha Restom

Given her history with winning awards, it is no surprise she won the Virginia Association for Teaching, Learning, and Leading award, but considering it's Ms. Shawna Chapman's first-year as a cosmetology teacher at CHHS, it is shocking.

"I was on the way back here with the students from the field trip when I received the email telling me that I won the award," said Ms. Chapman. "Of course, I'm looking for it in my email, you know, but I wasn't really expecting, like I said, out of the whole state of Virginia to be nominated for that."

VATLL recognizes and appreciates the amazing teachers who lead and impact students throughout the commonwealth. The award reminds teachers how they are helping to change and impact the newer generations.

She received the award on Feb. 7 with other teachers of Virginia at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts during an awards ceremony.

Even though she is in just her first year of teaching, she was nominated for the award by Mr. John Thomas, CTE director.

"Ms. Chapman has been a tremendous asset to our CTE family," said Mr. Thomas. "She has come aboard and energized our cosmetology classes and expanded the experiences of the students in her classroom."

Ms. Chapman has made a great impression on her students, especially Zoi McKenzie, 11, Cosmetology 2 student.

"Ms. Chapman was a great nominee for the impact award because she greatly impacts her students," said McKenzie, 11. "This year is her

Photo courtesy of Shawna Chapman



Ms. Shawna Chapman, first-year cosmetology teacher, received the Virginia Association for Teaching, Learning and Leading Award in February at a ceremony at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

first teaching at CHHS. She has already proved to her students that she is someone they can depend on."

As a first-year teacher, Ms. Chapman appreciates the support she has received.

"The support here has been unmatched! The staff at all levels is al-

ways willing to help and support in any way possible," said Ms. Chapman. "I've never seen anything like it! It makes you want to do more for your village, so to speak. I am a Colonial for life."

Juniors, seniors should start college search early

by Addison Tant

Preparing for college can be one of the hardest parts about being a junior or senior in high school. Being able to research colleges before senior year can benefit college-bound students.

“Seeing their excitement when they get accepted into their first choice and it works out financially to go there is my favorite part about helping students prepare for college,” said Mrs. Mary Vaughan, college and career specialist, who guides students through the college-search process.

Researching colleges that students might want to go to can help them prepare a little better. Being able to look at colleges online

and narrowing it down to a few schools they would like to go look at in person can also help.

During the fall of their senior year, college-bound students need to apply for financial aid. Ms. Lisa Herbert, Great Aspirations Scholarship Program (GRASP) representative, is available to help students through the process of completing their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) application.

“I coordinate students' meetings with Ms. Herbert from GRASP,” said Mrs. Vaughan. “She is here one day a week to assist them in completing their FAFSA.”

Not only does Mrs. Vaughan work with students about college, but

Photo by Leaha Restom



Mrs. Mary Vaughan assists juniors and seniors with their college and financial aid applications.

also she assists students with military and employment decisions.

There are times Mrs. Vaughan helps students complete applications for colleges and scholarships. She also provides some students with their transcripts.

Another service that Mrs. Vaughan coordinates is college admissions representatives' visits so that the stu-

dents can learn more about the different colleges.

“When a former student reaches out and thanks you for the help you gave them and then stays in touch with you after graduation is rewarding,” said Mrs. Vaughan, who attended John Tyler Community College, which is now called Brightpoint.

Girls break wrestling stereotypes

by Neleigh Rexroad

Girls wrestling is the fastest growing female sport in the country right now, according to news.com. Mekayla Runyan, 10, is one of only two females who wrestles for CHHS in this male-dominated sport.

She started wrestling because she believed "it would be fun for [her] free time."

Runyan believes other factors than gender create challenges in this sport.

"There are not many disadvantages with gender," said Runyan. "It's more your weight and personal experiences that make it harder or easier."

"Honestly, the only difference between me and the boys is me going into a different locker room," said Runyan.

Photo by Neleigh Rexroad

Runyan. "We all do the same things with no exceptions."

It takes a lot of dedication and training to be able to wrestle.

"I do a lot of cardio, but you get used to it within a week," said Runyan.

Being one of two females on the team, Runyan had to develop her confidence.

"You should definitely do it even if you think you are unable to," said Runyan. "If you put your mind to it, you are going to get there."

Runyan shares her wrestling experience with Evalyn Lopez, 9, another female on the team.

Runyan believes that "it's not much of a special bond but more of a friendship bond."

"I chose to start wrestling because my brother used to wrestle,"

Photo by Neleigh Rexroad



Mekayla Runyan, 10, was one of two female wrestlers on this year's wrestling team. She started wrestling to do something productive during her free time.

said Lopez.

"Even though it is a very hard and painful sport, stick with it," said Lopez. "It's important to be consistent and show up to every practice so that you can show the dudes that you are just as good as them, if not better."

Mr. Wade Thayer, wrestling coach, has been coaching wrestling for nine years. He has coached many girls over the years.

"I wish more girls would come out so we could have an all-girls team," said Coach Thayer.

Coach Thayer believes he coaches both male and female wrestlers in a similar way.

"I don't treat the girls



Evalyn Lopez, 9, was one of the two female wrestlers on the wrestling team. She started wrestling because her brother used to wrestle.

Opinion: TikTok should be banned

by Julianna Sheridan

TikTok has very quickly become one of the most popular social media platforms. Recently it has been going through an ongoing debate on whether or not this is a safe app for American citizens to be using.

TikTok has faced intense security bans in multiple countries, such as Afghanistan, Australia, Belgium and Canada. The reasoning behind all of the countries banning TikTok is because TikTok is run by a Chinese company called ByteDance.

Many believe that this app is a potential threat to privacy. It has been

argued that TikTok has access to large amounts of personal data, including assets, locations, browsing histories and biometric information, which could very easily be misused.

While TikTok has many rules against harmful content being posted, these rules are not being enforced effectively. The biggest concerns are misinformation being spread, harmful content being posted and predatory behavior toward their younger users.

TikTok has a feature that many either love or hate. The TikTok Shop is a big part of the app. This is another leading

factor of the potential TikTok banning in the US: our government is worried that TikTok takes away revenue from local businesses and content creators.

Another significant reason TikTok might be getting banned is because of the negative effect it has on users' mental health, specifically teenagers' mental health. The app is designed to keep users engaged for multiple hours at a time; this has led to many becoming addicted to the app.

In the past, studies have shown that excessive social media use can contribute to anxiety and depression and

reduce attention spans, mostly in younger users.

While TikTok is a great source of entertainment and a place to show off creativity, it has many cons that may even outweigh the pros; therefore, given TikTok's threat to data and its toll on mental health, it may just be a necessary precaution to keep individuals safe and protect national interests by banning TikTok in the U.S.

Opinion: TikTok should not be banned

by Lamoni Jordan

Teenagers and young adults nowadays share and interact with what they enjoy on TikTok. Many people think TikTok is an enclosed space where they can voice their opinions and emotions.

The announcement that TikTok may be banned, along with a 12-hour shutdown recently, confused many influencers and viewers.

Numerous influencers shared videos on their networks explaining why they believed TikTok should remain open.

The U.S. federal government has been concerned that TikTok, which is Chinese-owned, may be presenting a security risk. Data privacy concerns, foreign influence, misinformation, cybersecurity risks, U.S. military and

government bans, and ongoing legal and political actions shown on the platform all contribute to the government's review of TikTok being such a high-security risk, according to CNN.com.

Many teens have turned to TikTok as a source of entertainment and use it as an information source. Since its launch in 2016, TikTok has fundamentally

changed how people produce, consume and share information.

"Most of the reasons the government banned it were based on accusations, not proof," said Rand Paul, Republican Senator of Kentucky, according to cbsnews.com.

Many have started using TikTok to seek information and tips.

TikTok has grown to be a global commercial

force for businesses, marketers and content producers. This economic situation supports millions of different employees globally, particularly for young people who want to start careers in technology or social media.

Chipotle, Guess, the National Basketball Association (NBA), The Washington Post and Gymshark are the top five brands that took off a lot from TikTok, ac-

cording to Nogood.io.

According to PBS.org, several nations, including Denmark, France, India and New Zealand, have taken action against TikTok, ranging from legal actions to complete bans.

The platform's ban emphasizes an increasing conflict between digital rights and national security concerns. Others believe such restrictions create an example of limiting access to the in-

ternet while governments enforce restrictions point to possible data privacy dangers.

The ban has significant consequences for millions of users, content creators and companies that depend on the network. The legal and political conflicts surrounding TikTok will have a lasting effect on international tech regulations and future social media platform regulation.

While data privacy and security concerns must be addressed, banning TikTok would be excessive and overlook its cultural, economic and social value.

Instead of temporarily banning TikTok, governments should consider balanced measures that protect consumers while keeping the platform's benefits.

Photo courtesy of Google.com

