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TJ TODAY

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filling in the gaps

*With the start
of an unusual school year, the Jefferson
community works together to address
social and emotional health concerns*

ABSTRACT

Doing the grapevine, sophomore Jack Klopson laughs with his teammates during socially distanced sports practices. The start of the official sports seasons have been postponed and condensed to less than three months. “I think Track and Cross Country practices have gone well so far. They have felt a bit different due to all of the COVID procedures,” Klopson said. “Not being able to run off campus and always maintaining 10 feet of distance between others feels like the opposite of the norm I was used to, but it’s nice to be able to train again with the team.” Photo by Ananya Bagai

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GUT GEMACHT!



1. Moderator Falk Töpfer welcomes the global participants to the 2020 International German Olympics, hosted virtually for the first time, at the Goethe-Institut in Dresden, Germany. Despite being unable to meet and compete in-person, Ebssa enjoyed the friendly, diverse atmosphere in the competition. "[It was] such a cool space; I'll never get to meet all these amazing people at the same time like this again," Ebssa said. **PHOTO//** Goethe-Institut/Andreas Dahn **2.** Along with reading and listening tests, Ebssa participates in an interview

with judges to test her German conversational skills. The competition also incorporated other events for students to express their German speaking abilities, such as presentations and skits. **PHOTO//** Goethe-Institut/Andreas Dahn **3.** Smiling and posing with souvenirs from the competition, Ebssa is holding a balloon with the German phrase for "To be there," the 2020 IDO's motto. "I really liked [the motto] and tried applying it, because life is about being there and living in the moment," Ebssa said. **PHOTO//** Amanti Ebssa

getting by Connie Ryu **GERMAN** GOLD

Eban Ebssa wins gold at the virtual 2020 International German Olympics

"HERZLICHE GLÜCKWÜNSCHE!"

Those were the congratulations Jefferson senior Eban Ebssa received for being the first place winner of the 2020 International German Olympics (IDO). Ebssa was one of two students who represented the United States and competed with over 120 others before winning the gold prize in the A2 language level.

Ebssa passed the national round in Chicago last December through various events that tested German listening and reading comprehension and assigned a presentation where she performed a skit. However, due to the pandemic, the international competition with students from more than 60 countries was held virtually.

Inevitably, the host of the IDO, the Goethe-Institut, had to adjust its events to fit the competition to be Zoom-friendly. Despite being disappointed, Ebssa agreed that the virtual format of the competition was still effective in its own way.

"[The virtual format] actually opened up opportunities to more creative assignments...and I really appreciated the outlets that the Goethe-Institut gave us," Ebssa said.

Completely surprised to receive the gold prize, Ebssa mentioned that the only thought she had in mind while competing was to just enjoy the amazing experience and make the most of it.

"I didn't care too much about the competition itself," Ebssa said. "It was cool to even be able to participate in it, which ties to the competition's motto that translates to 'To be there' in English."

Besides the events themselves being affected by the new online format, another major aspect of the competition - the interactions between the competitors - was transformed. Although she was unable to physically meet the others, Ebssa spoke about the new friendships she made as one of her favorite takeaways from the event.

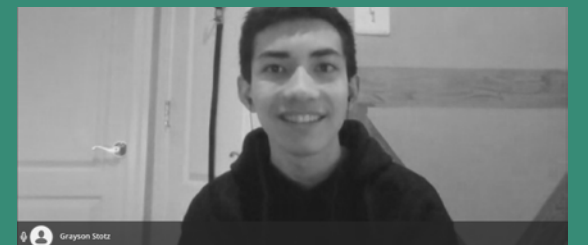
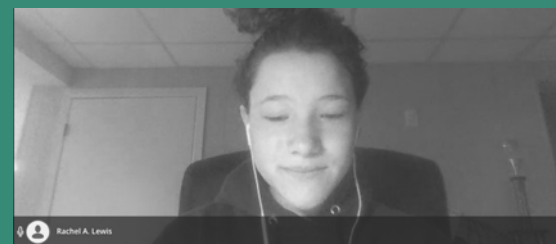
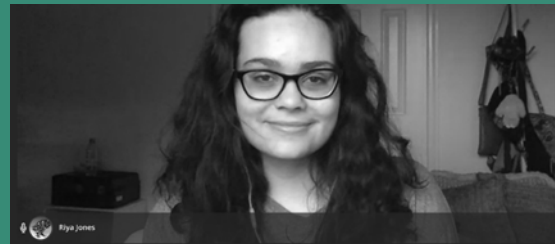
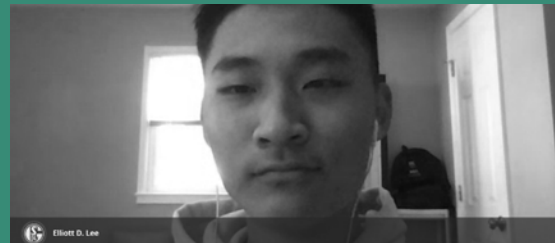
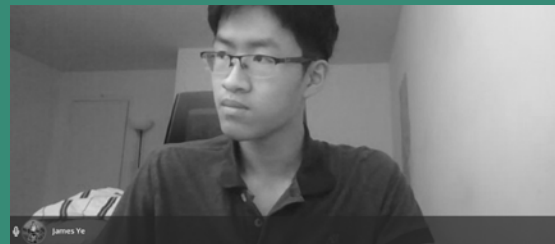
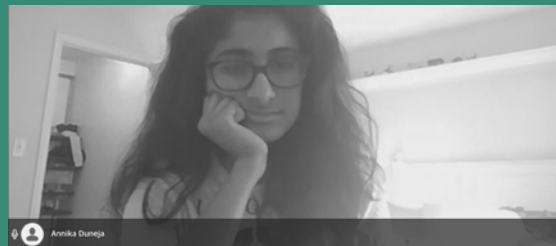
"It was really nice [to get to know everyone] because there's no one that I can speak to in German [right now] with no class going on," Ebssa said. "Having a community of people who are also super passionate about the language was special."

These new relationships allowed her to build a strong network of friends all around the globe. Interestingly, although they all came from diverse backgrounds and cultures, Ebssa discovered similarities between the teenagers.

"[When video calling] we just talked about general topics, and this made me realize [that] people around the world are actually really similar," Ebssa said. "We talked about our schools, what we do for fun, our pets, music tastes, or show tastes, and other stuff we [normally] talk about here [in the US] too."

Besides these everyday pastimes, Ebssa continues to connect with her competitors through a shared interest in German culture and language, something she'll continue to hold onto.

"It was super cool to connect individuals around the entire earth by a love for one thing, and [for us] that's the German language," Ebssa said. "I honestly can't even call it a memory because it's still happening and we still share it."



between the lines

by Stuti Gupta, Sonia Kanchan & Pratika Katiyar

*When it comes to online learning,
addressing social and emotional health
sometimes gets lost in the chaos*

With all the tabs open on our laptops, we too often forget about the tabs open in our minds.

Virtual school has had different effects on students, teachers, and administrators. In addition to noticeable physical effects, such as screen fatigue, distance learning can also create gaps in the social and emotional health of school communities.

Adjusting to the virtual setting takes a lot of patience and flexibility,

but students with learning disabilities and mental health problems have to take extra steps towards ensuring success. For teachers and administrators, distance learning can interrupt work-life balance, or even lead to a complete change in curriculum planning.

Students and staff are working towards bridging these gaps to make their online learning experiences as “normal” as possible.



blurred between teacher and student

With online learning, history teacher Sofia Qamar fills the role of teacher and student. As a teacher, she finds difficulties with building connections and the increased time needed for lesson planning execution. As the mother of second grader, Isaiah, with Down syndrome, and kindergart-

ner Asim, she finds a more hectic lifestyle blurring the lines between work and personal life.

"I won't lie, every single day, the answer is different," Qamar said on whether she plans on sending her kids back to in-person schooling.

Her fluctuation lies in the benefits of in-person learning compared to the increased risk of COVID-19.

"They are resurveying in October; it speaks volumes about FCPS. They see what's happening outside and what the community is asking for, and they respond and react based off of that," Qamar said in appreciation, despite the difficulties.

She emphasizes it is a situation we can not control.

"Be forgiving of your kid," Qamar said. "Be forgiving of the teachers that are teaching them because they're in the same situation that you're in."

complicated connections



"It's not going to be what it was."

It's this understanding of online school which has served Multivariable Calculus and Complex Analysis teacher Dr. Jonathan Osborne well - though not without bumps in the road.

"It's the interaction between the students and the interaction between the teacher and the students that I've been struggling with," Osbourne said.

Though the use of breakout groups, polls, and short instructional videos helps him keep up with his students, Osborne notes the increased teacher workload.

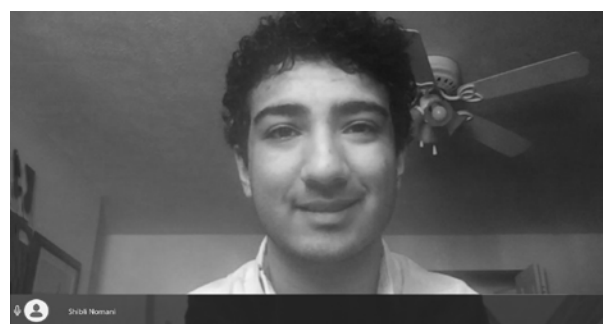
"I used to be able to grade a homework quiz for a class of 30 in 10 minutes. It takes significantly longer than that to load the PDFs in Blackboard," Osborne said.

Regardless of his frustrations with technology, Osborne underscores the multitude of tools available to make the best of online learning.

doodles and distractions

Dealing with ADHD, for senior Shibli Nomani, has been a significant part of the online learning experience.

"Being on my laptop every day, rather than in a classroom makes it much easier



to be distracted," Nomani said. "It's really easy to just go check your messages and check posts in the middle of class and that has definitely been a struggle."

A chronic condition, ADHD symptoms include hyperactivity, impulsivity, and limited attention. Though Nomani notes that kids who have not been diagnosed with ADHD may also experience similar distractions, he appreciates the efforts made by teachers.

"I feel like my teachers have been pretty engaging and I haven't had a chance to be too distracted like that. All the classes I'm taking this year are very interesting and are

ones I enjoy," Nomani said.

Although he's had trouble with teachers posting assignments on separate platforms, such as Blackboard and Google Classroom, Nomani's found that keeping a checklist and updating a notebook after each class has been helpful.

"I'll write down any assignments I hear, and then once the school day is over, I just go through Blackboard and [Google] Classroom," Nomani said.

Assignments aren't the only thing that go into Nomani's notebook.

"I can just be doing a doodle while I'm paying attention," Nomani said. "It helps me focus more."

strong by struggles

"Society tends to say that people that struggle with mental health issues are weaker. It is immensely difficult to be constantly worrying about something; you are strong enough to not only handle it, but to be you, and not just be that disorder."

Sophomore Hannah Friedan is diagnosed with anxiety, depression, OCD, ADHD, and PTSD.

"Although sometimes social interaction can be very exhausting for me because of my anxiety, it's just as exhausting not having those things because now I have to think about how I keep these relationships," Friedan said.

Along with the social aspect of a virtual environment comes the learning aspect.

"I tend to focus on something that's moving or tangible. It's very hard for me to focus on a video that is on a screen. In class I can focus on the whiteboard and I can focus on the

teacher doing stuff on the whiteboard, but it is very difficult for me to focus on the teacher on the whiteboard on the computer," Friedan said.

While she acknowledges Jefferson is trying their hardest given the circumstances, she has recommendations concerning mental health.

"One of my big things with TJ mental health is that they do talk a lot about stress and ways to relieve stress, but giving little sets of things does not always help. If I see those things and I try them and they don't work, it makes me feel like I'm doing something wrong, which makes my self doubt and my anxiety a lot worse," Friedan said.

"I think it's good to bring awareness to it, but I think that it also needs to be talked about in that sometimes it just does suck and there's no one solution for everyone."



With nearly 1.38 billion children impacted by school closures, most return online. Though there are many unfilled gaps in data because it is an ongoing situation, e-learning is predicted to affect the market, learning, and mental health.

learning and the market
With the expansion of e-learning, worldwide e-learning market projections show that in 2025, it will be worth \$325 billion. Online learning is shown to increase retention rates from 8%-10% to 25%-60% and decrease time required to learn to 40%-60% compared to in-person learning because students are able to learn at their own pace. However, because learning varies between kids, the effectiveness of online learning differs as well. A preliminary study shows students will have only a 70% learning gain in English and 50% learning gain in math after online learning. It is suggested that K-12 students could lose one year of full-time work due to these learning losses.

mental health
A study in the "Journal of Abnormal Psychology" underscores similar increasing trends between 12-17 year olds and 18-25 year olds from 2009 to 2018 for percent of people having experienced any five of the nine Major Depressive Episode (MDE) symptoms. Data from the U.S. Census Bureau highlights 18-29 year-olds as having the highest percentage of people reporting indicators of anxiety and depression during the pandemic. While there is no data concerning adolescents during the pandemic, the similarly increasing trends for ages 12-17 and 18-25 explained earlier may indicate that the adolescent age range would show similar rates during the pandemic.

doubling down on data



1. Data taken from the Centers for Disease control and Prevention (CDC) 2. Data taken from the Centers for Disease control and Prevention (CDC) 3. Data taken from the Centers for Disease control and Prevention (CDC) 4. Data taken from an analysis by the Brookings Institution's Michael Hansen and Diana Quintero 5. Data taken from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics data 6. Data taken from Oregon-based non-profit NWEA 7. Data taken from McKinsey & Company 8. Data taken from the Research Institute of America 9. Data taken from Market Research.

WEIGHING the MERITS

The new admissions proposal put forth by FCPS has generated mixed reviews among members of the Jefferson community
by Aidan Harbison



1. Standing among bright signs, freshman Jackie Carson addresses the crowd that has gathered just outside of Jefferson to protest against the new proposal. "I harbor this outrage because it is fundamentally un-American - the system which Brabrand and Qarni have proposed is against the fundamentals of the American dream," Carson said. PHOTO// Antonio Martin

2. One of Jefferson's most fierce student advocates for more representative diversity, Dinan Elsyad holds up one side of a Black Lives Matter flag as part of the TJ Alumni Action Group's "Redefining Merit-thon" in support of the new proposal. "A school without diversity might produce a student body that is academically strong, but those same students will go on to face the world lacking one very important thing - cultural and racial tolerance," Elsyad said. PHOTO// Makya Little

STOP LOTTERY. STOP ROBBERY." "LOTTERY CHEATS EVERYONE." "INDIVIDUAL MERIT, NOT GROUP IDENTITY."

These messages, in glaring capital letters, dotted the signs of members of the Jefferson community who gathered on Sept. 20 to protest the recent proposal made to transform the current Jefferson admissions process. Organized by Coalition for TJ, a group of "parents, students, alumni advocating for diversity and excellence at [Jefferson]," the protesters strongly disagreed with the implementation of a lottery system, which they believed was at odds with the emphasis on merit and student excellency with which Jefferson is often associated.

THE PROPOSAL

After proposing a merit-based lottery system in late September, Superintendent Scott Brabrand introduced a hybrid merit lottery proposal on Oct. 6, which allows 20 percent of the incoming class to be determined solely based on a holistic review, while the rest of the class would be chosen through a merit lottery. The school board unanimously agreed to remove testing, the application fee, and increase the size of the incoming class on Oct. 6. However, there is no consensus on how the admissions process will work. The proposal was prompted by a report required by the Commonwealth about initiatives to increase diversity in Governor Schools across Virginia, including Jefferson, and by concerns about diversity voiced by current students and alumni alike.

CONFLICTING VIEWS

As one of the few low-income students at Jefferson, senior Gurleen Kaur felt like not enough support was given in the past admission cycles to underrepresented and underprivileged students.

"For me, in addition to the direct impacts of being low-income, I had major confidence issues. I didn't know anyone like me who was successful," Kaur said. "I wasn't even planning on pursuing advanced classes in high school because I thought I was too stupid, so you can imagine how ridiculous I felt while applying to the number one high school in the nation."

Junior Andrea Silva believes that the lottery selection process is the biggest issue with the proposed admissions process.

"I don't believe admissions [to Jefferson] should be based on equal chance for all who apply. Otherwise, it discredits those who are really qualified to get in - that would be unfair to them," Silva said.

Instead, Silva believes in encouraging more underrepresented students to apply and become a part of the admissions cycle.

"I think the current admissions of underrepresented minorities reflects the number of minorities applying to TJ, and that needs to increase. We need to encourage people within the rest of the county that are minorities to apply, because if not enough of them are applying then not enough of them are going to get in," Silva said.

Frustration with the proposal has led to a student-written letter addressed to FCPS to retract the proposal and a petition by the Coalition for TJ to the same effect has garnered more than 2800 signatures as of Sept. 29. Junior Michael Fatemi, one of the organizers and writers of the letter, believed that while the admissions proposal could help increase diversity, it would not be the result that was necessarily intended.

"I think by creating a merit lottery we are introducing a kind of synthetic diversity - but it's not actually helping [the applicants] prepare for TJ. And since these students might not be as well prepared for TJ, there might not be enough students that will be interested in some of the unique higher level classes here, which would have to be terminated. I know that TJ is very distinguished for those classes, so that might change how people look at TJ," Fatemi said.

In response to those who believe that Jefferson's reputation and rank would suffer as a result of the merit lottery system being implemented, Jefferson principal Dr. Ann Bonitatibus refuted that a shift in the core demographics at Jefferson would cause such a change.

"When there are those who contend that somehow the quality of the student that is coming to TJ will decrease because of a shift in demographics - I do not accept that statement," Bonitatibus said. "There is an assumption that certain children coming from certain demographics, who may have not had certain opportunities, are somehow less than or not as prepared as other students. And I want to make sure it is not a narrative that persists in our community."

WHAT'S NEXT?

The school board has requested to review a holistic admissions proposal, in addition to the already released merit lottery and hybrid merit lottery proposal. Superintendent Brabrand will discuss the admissions review process during the School Board Work Session on Nov. 17. All changes will be implemented for the current admissions cycle to determine the Jefferson class of 2025.

For the most recent updates to the admissions proposal, please visit tjTODAY.org

THREE ADMISSIONS PERSPECTIVES

Stakeholder organizations from Jefferson share their views on the proposal



Anant Das
Treasurer, TJ Alumni Action Group

"Perfection is the enemy of progress. We need to do something now, and then work on making it better. I think a merit lottery makes sense."



Gurleen Kaur
Student Diversity Initiative

"I think a merit lottery is the best way to even the playing field. While the major flaw is that everything is left up to chance, this is also the major strength because it gives everyone an equal chance of admission."



Asra Nomani
Founder, Coalition for TJ

"I am 100% opposed to the lottery system put forward. We have an incredible school with incredible diversity. You can't just pull names out of a hat to determine who's going to go to TJ."



The Locker

Your Virtual School Assistant

Sign Up

by Annika Duneja

BRINGING LOCKERS BACK TO JEFFERSON

Jefferson juniors Ron Nachum, Shrey Gupta, and Nick Britto's website *thelocker.io* helps students keep on track during online school



Shrey Gupta, 11

Cubbies are out, The Locker is in. At least that's what three juniors, Ron Nachum, Nick Britto, and Shrey Gupta decided when they came up with a solution to the organizational woes of online school. Ironically, at a school with no lockers, their website, *thelocker.io*, helps students keep organized with all their classes and assignments. "One night I was thinking about how much of a mess online school was in the spring and I remembered that one of the main problems I had personally was I was

always late to classes because I always lost the links. I just woke up the next morning with the idea to put everything in one place," Britto said. Using that idea as a starting point, the three got to work immediately, working tirelessly to create the final product. "We had several meetings to first lay out the basic features we wanted for the site before starting to build the application because although we knew it would help others, not having the appropriate features on release could steer



Nick Britto, 11

people away," Gupta said. The process of building the site came with difficulties as they weighed the possibilities of what they could include in the website while still ensuring security for its users and anticipating its large scale. "About halfway through, when realizing the potential scale of the application, we decided to scrap most of our code in favor of a more secure and larger database, as well as better procedures to ensure everyone's information is safe and they can have the best experience," Nachum said. About three weeks after they began their work, the site was

sent out to a few of their friends to test out and see if it worked. After making a few tweaks, their first version of The Locker was ready for use by the first day of school.

"The website stores lots of information about classes, including the BBCU classroom link, other associated links, time for classes each week (updated from ION), time for office hours, and more. We also offer a virtual planner which links assignments to classes to help keep everything organized," Nachum said.

From the time of its release, the site has only grown in popularity as students began hearing about it over Facebook and through their friends.

"We had hoped the platform would become big before releasing but we weren't expecting the overwhelming support from the TJ community. This is not only due to their thanks, but feature requests that have made the site better for all users. After release we quickly accumulated users and now have over 500 and over 2300 classes added," Gupta said.

Even outside of Jefferson, The Locker has made an impact on students' learning experiences.

"I even heard from some of my former teachers who heard of the site from their kids and have had teachers reach out and tell me how helpful it was," Britto said. "We're also looking to integrate other commonly used distance learning platforms such as Google Meets and Zoom so that people outside FCPS can

also use The Locker."

By creating The Locker, Nachum, Britto, and Gupta have done their best in trying to help our lives be a little less confusing in a time where every aspect of our lives has needed adjustment.

"With the pandemic making life so different and difficult compared to our normal, there's always room for innovation to make things just a little bit easier. To me and many others, The Locker serves at least partially as the structured school environment that was missing, and if we help even one student do better then we've fulfilled our goal," Nachum said.



Ron Nachum, 11

The Neurobiology Lab lies empty as school and classes have moved into an online environment. Although the physical experience of using advanced technology and conducting research is gone, students and teachers have found ways to make the most of what they have. "Being online has definitely been a struggle, but know that all of the students and teachers are going through the same thing and trying to work it out together has made it easier," senior Vikram Raghu said.

PHOTO//Erinn Harris



RE- SHAPING RESEARCH

by Nathan Mo

Senior labs adapt to the virtual environment

Toying around with Arduinos in the Robotics lab. Inspecting organic compounds in the Chemistry Analysis lab. Analyzing samples in the DNA lab. This is what you would normally see in TJ's bustling senior research labs.

However, with the start of the school year moving online, seniors have found themselves adapting to a new environment, where centrifuges and 3D printers have been replaced by video demonstrations and virtual softwares. While the transition has taken away many of the hands-on aspects of working in a lab, teachers and students alike have found ways to make the experience feel as normal as possible

SHIFTING GEARS

Senior Julia Kao-Sowa, a student in the Biotechnology and Life Sciences lab, says that although the transition to having her lab done online was difficult, her teacher has made the experience much smoother.

"Dr. Burnett has still been teaching us about the equipment that we have at TJ and she's given us a virtual lab tour," Kao-Sowa said. "She's been really good about keeping [the students] informed about the experiments and what things would normally be like."

Despite a more limited environment, the emphasis on lab-based work has not declined.

Also in the Biotechnology and Life Sciences lab, senior Muhurto Rahman feels that the level of depth in the online lab has remained nearly identical to what it would be in-person.

"Our lab notebooks maintain the same rigor and depth of lab notebooks as if they were an actual lab, which a lot of the time can be more important than the actual lab," Rahman said.

CHANGING PLANS

Although students are not able to physically conduct their own projects, each lab has found its own way to allow students to get as much experience as possible. The Biotechnology lab has created a system where students will play as large a role as possible in the planning and execution of their projects.

"We're all writing proposals for our projects, and then the teachers choose a few of those proposals, and they themselves will carry out the experiments. Students will be able to follow along through videos made by the teachers," Kao-Sowa said.

Similarly, the Robotics lab has created a system which ensures that students know the ins and outs of designing while also giving them the most control over their projects as possible.

"Since we don't have access to the equipment, after designing everything online, [the student's] job is to come up with a set of instructions on how to construct everything and send it to our teachers, who print the components, laser-cut different parts, and assemble the whole robot," senior Vikram Raghu said.

"If we want to test anything like our code, we send it to them, they'll upload it [to the robots], and send the results back."

However, labs have also faced their own share of problems

while transitioning into an online environment Raghu says the timeline for the completion of the Robotics lab's senior projects has been severely pushed back, but acknowledges the benefits to doing so.

"We've been doing a few smaller projects unrelated to our senior research projects so that they'll [the teachers] be more acquainted with us and the system when it does come time to complete our senior research," Raghu said. "I think it'll be better in the long term since our teachers will have worked out any bumps in the road before-hand instead of trying to address problems while also working on our main projects."

MISSING OUT

Rahman says that what he misses the most about being physically present in the lab is being able to interact with others, both peers and mentors.

"I miss the aspect of being able to socialize with my lab members. In person I could see how far behind I am by talking to other students, and also know how long certain processes take," Rahman said. "It's also a lot easier to get immediate feedback from the teacher when you mess up, and of course it's a lot easier to communicate with your lab partner in-person than online."

While Kao-Sowa wishes that she could've conducted her research in-person, she also recognizes that the experience itself can still be rewarding.

"It's hard because senior research is one of the special aspects of TJ so I was looking forward to it," Kao-Sowa said. "But I try to make the best of what I have, so I've been trying to focus on what I can learn rather than what I'm missing out on."

FINDING NEW

With many in-person internships being cancelled, students were able to gain experience despite working remotely.

OPPORTUNITIES



**Housekeeping
Payment Solutions**
Caroline Chen, 11

"I liked that I was able to work with people from both coasts, which wouldn't have been possible before. Since I was working on mobile app development, I'd be working online anyway, and I was still able to learn a lot."



**BU School of
Psychology**
Varshini Subramanian, 11

"I had weekly calls with my advisor and we talked about school and politics freely which made the work a lot less stressful and it's allowed me to enjoy my research more."

Making a COMEBACK

Sports return with new safety procedures
by Christina Lu



Staying six feet apart, three members of Jefferson's Girls Basketball Team move through their warm-up routine. One of the unique challenges this season is balancing communication and safety by practicing social distancing and still getting the most out of workouts.

Sports don't look like sports anymore. Last year at this time, students were cheering on the sidelines as the football team scored yet another touchdown. This year, the football season hasn't started yet. In fact, it won't be starting until Feb. 4.

With the Virginia High School League's (VHSL) 2020-21 athletics schedule, sports seasons have been postponed and condensed to less than three months, in the order of winter, fall, and spring. But TJ's athletic fields aren't completely empty - under VHSL's Phase 3 guidelines, outdoor workouts with health screenings, physical distancing, and limited equipment use are allowed. Adjusting to these regulations has proven to be a challenge for coaches.

COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS

"Whenever we use equipment we have to be very cognizant of how frequently we disinfect. We have a screening process in place that typically we wouldn't have during normal practices." Football Head Coach Aaron Raffle said.

For Head Athletic Trainer Heather Murphy, these guidelines have shifted the focus of her job from treating injuries to administrative work.

"I'm not actually seeing patients right now, which is a big change for me. So I've had to put on different hats. Ms. Taylor and I are in charge of the pre screening process. So we're meeting the student athletes at their cars, administering the survey, taking their temperature," Murphy said.

These black and white protocols contrast with the grey world of athletic training that Murphy is accustomed to.

"We're used to being in charge of the healthcare of our student athletes, and right now we just don't have any decision making ability because we're just following the protocols," Murphy said.

PRACTICES IN THE PRESENT

Despite the countless changes to sports over the past few months, TJ has readily embraced the new normal. Football started strength and conditioning in June, during VHSL's Phase 2, when no equipment was allowed.



JV football head coach Brian Sotero sprays practice footballs with disinfectant at the end of a Green Day practice on Oct. 6. "There are a lot of restrictions on us... it's a bit of a learning curve for all coaches," varsity football head coach Aaron Raffle said.



Senior Sabareesh Sundaraj does a push-up at a safe distance away from fellow teammates. He and other members of the football team attended a late afternoon Green Day practice on Oct. 6. "We started [workouts] in June, with some strength and conditioning practices outside," varsity football head coach Aaron Raffle said.

"Now we have a Phase Three return to activities. And that gives us a little more leeway - we can use footballs now and we can use blocking dummies," Raffle said.

The football team has had higher participation than expected, welcoming many new freshmen and sophomores.

"I attribute that to people being kept in their houses for the past several months and just looking for a chance to get out. So participation is much better than anticipated, and we're very happy about that," Raffle said.

Boys Basketball, on the other hand, will not be hosting Phase 3 activities. As an indoor winter sport, Boys Basketball Head Coach Mark Gray-Mendes believes athletes can accomplish more on their own, where they have the freedom to go to outdoor basketball courts.

"We don't have any outdoor courts at TJ. Given that we can't do anything inside, if you want to be able to use a basketball hoop to practice basketball, you can't do anything on our campus. And we're not allowed to hold team activities off campus. So that limits what we're able to do," Gray-Mendes said.

He also acknowledges that students would be commuting from all over Northern Virginia.

"Rather than making them drive all the way over to TJ to do activities that are limited in their scope, that time is going to be much better spent taking care of the homework or doing some of the activities that we're going to be able to put out for them," Gray-Mendes said.

As an alternative to in-person practices, workouts will be released to the basketball team to do on their own. Although Gray-Mendes believes this is the most effective training they can given the situation, he misses the energy of the team.

"We TJ folk have a tendency sometimes to sort of be inwardly focused and focused on what we do. And basketball and team sports in general, I think give the kids an opportunity to really cheer for each other in a way that the regular grind of the academic day doesn't allow them to do," Gray-Mendes said. "So I think that's one of the biggest things that I miss about all of this is just watching them root for each other and watching them be a part of something that's bigger than themselves.

UNCERTAIN FUTURE

As for the future, recent VHSL updates have made Murphy optimistic.

"We went from out of season conditioning Phase Two, which meant you couldn't use any equipment, and we've now moved to Phase Three Stage One where we've started to introduce equipment. And I think it was so positive that the VHSL moved up the start times by one week. So we're still on track, hopefully, to start our sports season December seventh," Murphy said.

Given the uncertainty of the future, however, Gray-Mendes emphasizes that he doesn't want kids making decisions based on their predictions, but rather just making the best decision for themselves at that moment.

"What goes on with respect to the decisions that are made, or the way the numbers keep changing day in and day out, those are things that are outside of our control," Gray-Mendes said. "All we can do is try to be the best version of ourselves and work towards getting to a good place, moving forward."

**BLACK
LIVES
MATTER.**

Save

USPS

**WHAT'S
GOING ON
IN YEMEN?**

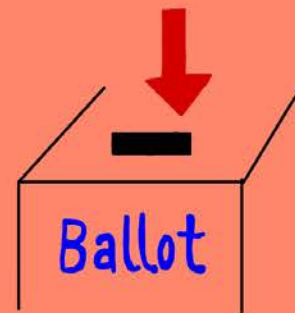


CALIFORNIA



wildfires

how to
be an
ally.



**No
Justice.**

Let's talk
about...



VOTE



**NOTORIOUS
RBG**

COVID-19 and YOU



Healthcare for all

Signs of
ANXIETY

ILLUSTRATION // Pratika Katiyar

an **aesthetic** REVOLUTION

Instagram infographics may be more harmful than helpful without fact checks or calls to action

a step-by-step model for allyship. #BLM. Register to vote. The list goes on.

Since the start of the pandemic and the onset of racial justice protests, Instagram has become saturated with slideshow-esque posts that use aesthetic graphics to explain complex issues. These infographics often end up going viral with constant resharing and reposting, which isn't necessarily a good thing. As much as Instagram slideshows can appeal to users, it can also facilitate the spread of misinformation.

the downfalls

It's difficult to distinguish whether posts are factual or not, and once something is out there, it becomes increasingly harder to control or tackle the spread of misinformation. Oftentimes, users believe the posts are already fact-checked, or they are sent a post from a friend who they deem a credible source themselves. The sensational headlines and aesthetic graphics further contribute to allowing users to believe that something is reliable, even if no adequate sources are provided with the post.

Instagram activism has also led to the coining of the term "slacktivism," which essentially means using social media to support political or social change, often characterized as involving little effort and commitment. A key example of slacktivism was on June 2, 2020, or Blackout Tuesday, a day used to mourn, observe, and promote change in wake of George Floyd's death. Nevertheless, the constant stream of black squares using the Black

Lives Matter hashtag caused the true message to be diluted. In fact, Black Lives Matter advocate and organizer Kenidra Woods took to Twitter to state "We know that's it no intent to harm but to be frank, this essentially does harm the message."

Diluting the importance of complex issues not only desensitizes them, but normalizes them. Slideshow type posts tend to oversimplify details and too often lack nuance, which leads to further polarization on issues or causes users to feel guilty or triggered. Additionally, opinions are often mixed in with facts and the reporting no longer remains objective, creating confusion among users about whether a post is meant to inform or persuade.

a step towards change

This doesn't mean that all infographics on Instagram are purposeless. Posts that provide calls to action such as petitions or ways to volunteer can help mobilize users to act upon important policy changes. Younger generations also feel more informed and engaged about issues crucial to their future, such as climate change. The aesthetic helps attract those who would otherwise be disinterested and the posts are easily shareable.

Overall, the newest slideshow-esque posts taking Instagram by storm are not as effective as they seem. If these posts provided more resources and ways to act upon important issues, and if creators, users, and Instagram fact-checked each infographic, they might be a better way to encourage change.



Drawing By Rachel Kwon

Is Coronavirus Infecting the Common App?

The 2020-2021 Common App will feature a new question regarding the impact of COVID-19 on students

College applications are stressful for everyone. Students have a 650 word personal essay to write as well as the supplementary essays that come with each school. This year, CommonApp has added an optional 250 word writing question to the Additional Information section: How have you been impacted by the COVID-19 crisis? I believe that while this addition may add to our large workload, it is a necessary adaptation to the changing times.

Although everyone has been affected by the virus, some have been more than others. According to the United States Census, 50% of those with an

income of less than \$25,000 report having slight to no confidence in their ability to pay the next month's mortgage or rent, while only 8.4% of those with an income of \$100,000 or more reported the same. Those who are disproportionately impacted by the pandemic likely have special circumstances that change their ability to attend and do well in school. While one could argue that this could be discussed in the existing Additional Information question, I believe that there are exclusive impacts of the pandemic that warrants its own section. For example, some students may have to spend time taking

care of their siblings, had their parents lose their jobs, or had a family member or themselves contract the virus.

It is important to note that you should only fill out this section if you have been affected uniquely by the pandemic. Every student has experienced difficulties with standardized testing and online school. When deciding whether to answer this question, ask yourself, "Has the pandemic had a significant effect on me as a person and/or as a student? Has it largely impacted my health, financial well being, performance, or my outlook on life?"



Zia Sun
Social Media
Manager



Drawing By Michelle Linnylin

Trust Your Tech

Recent hacker threats towards FCPS beg the question – what's the best path for individuals to better their own information?



Aafreen Ali
Team Leader

Imagine having a bodyguard who followed you everywhere. Are they protecting you or obstructing your privacy? They're protecting you. Now reimagine this situation, but with cybersecurity tools like password managers guarding your sensitive information. I believe your protection remains the same.

Quality cybersecurity products offer features like secure password generators and two-factor authentication. Many can also sync your information across devices; for example, Apple Keychain shares passwords across iDevices. These features save time too; just one click lets you access credit cards or passwords. In today's COVID-stricken society, this can expedite processes like shopping and limit interaction between people.

If you forget a password, these tools have your back. We all know

the hassle of the "Forgot password?" button, and as someone with numerous accounts online, I feel that pain often. With password management tools, though, the passwords you need will be there for only you to find.

This technology is helpful, but it comes with a caveat- privacy. What will these services do with your information? However, reading their user agreements (even if they're boring) helps you select tools and understand how your data will be used. You can also use a password storing feature native to your device; owning that device should already make you okay with their privacy policies.

In light of MAZE's recent hacking of FCPS, security is more important than ever. In the end, the benefits of using cybersecurity tools outweigh the low-probability risks. Overall, choosing good features can make your life easier, but it's important to research and find the most secure tools for you.

Nonprofits Are Not For Self-Profit

A recent surge in nonprofits at TJ raises questions on the motives behind their creation



Annika Duneja
Online
Editor-in-Chief

"Hi! My friends and I have decided to start a new nonprofit organization. To help women in STEM. To help children learn to code. To tutor kids on math and science. To give me one more thing to put on my college applications. Fill out

this google form to join us!"

A hundred Facebook posts just like this filled my feed this summer, asking for volunteers and signups to work on one of a handful of issues that 50 different people decided were closest to their heart. Apparently, since the start of quarantine, students sitting at home have decided to make it their favorite pastime to get a group of their friends together and say they are going to change the world.

Almost immediately, people begin questioning these students' motives, saying it was done only to spice up college applications. Others say that it doesn't matter whether they are trying to help themselves as long as it is making an impact.

The question is, is change really being made? Or do these nonprofits die as quickly as they are produced? Plenty of people make promises that theirs will really make a difference. Unfortunately, the ghost town of Instagram accounts of projects abandoned tells a different story.

So does this mean we write off all nonprofits as a ploy to gain another line on an application? No. Some students really have started projects that have helped people and made a difference. They have grown their audiences, increased outreach, and accomplished their goals. Of course we should be trying to help women in STEM, teach children how to code, and tutor kids on new subjects. If someone chooses to create a nonprofit, however, they have to be willing to follow through with it.

PANDEMIC VIBES

PANDEMIC VIBES

PANDEMIC VIBES

THE BEST OF COVID MUSIC

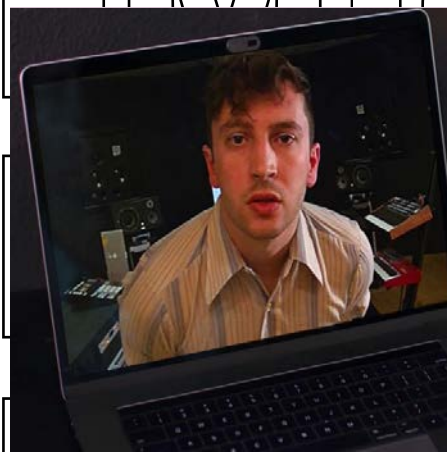
The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has us stuck inside all day. Luckily there's some new music to brighten our moods

by Aafreen Ali & Rachel Lewis



HOLY

Justin Bieber released "Holy", feat. Chance the Rapper, on September 18. The lyrics are peppered with Christian motifs, like "running to the altar", matching the song's theme of love as "holy". However, it's easy to listen to, tied together with a simple bass drum beat. Bieber's singing is smooth and medium pitched, avoiding his polarizing high notes.



LEVEL OF CONCERN

Twenty One Pilot's newest single, "Level of Concern", is mellow electropop that's perfect for fall. Tyler Joseph's vocals are backed by synthesized beats, electric guitar, and Josh Dun's drums. Verses like "be my little quarantine" and "panic on the brain, world has gone insane" referencing the ongoing pandemic surround a catchy chorus.



F2020

Avenue Beat, a pop trio of Gen-Zs, quietly released the chorus of "F2020" on TikTok in late June. It went viral, attracting six million views within 48 hours. The melody consists of a soft drum beat and quiet keyboard notes that complement the trio's light, vocals. Avenue Beat knows most people also feel "lonely, anxious, and mad". Their brutal honesty is key to the song's draw.

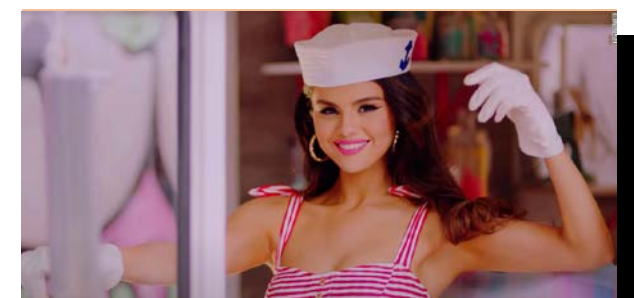


DYNAMITE

BTS released their first English-language song, "Dynamite" on Aug. 21. The K-pop group's versatile vocals cover a wide pitch range, accompanied by bright brass and piano. "Dynamite" lives up to its name, imbued with a cheerful, confident energy and lyrics like "bring the fire" and "shining through the city".

CARDIGAN

"cardigan" is the primary single from Taylor Swift's newest album, "folklore", which was released on July 24, 2020. Its steady beat is provided by a slightly electric-sounding drum, often with accompanying piano notes. Taylor Swift sings confidently at a consistently medium volume and pitch. Fans of Taylor Swift might be surprised by the mellow energy of "cardigan", but they're sure to come back to it again and again.



ICE CREAM

BLACKPINK and Selena Gomez teamed up for the energetic end-of-summer single "Ice Cream." The music video, released on August 28, broke YouTube's record for fastest ten million views. A masterful combination of bubblegum pop and trap music, "Ice Cream" features a variety of vocals and a peppy beat.

*Who's to say dead
men don't tell tales?*

DICK JOHNSON IS DEAD

by Max Vetter



PHOTO//IMDb

Dick Johnson is dead. Long live Dick Johnson. What makes dementia so terrifying to me is that such an incredible loss of memory and basic cognitive faculties makes it so that you aren't the one who eventually dies. By the time your body stops functioning, "you" won't have been there for upwards of months, maybe even years. In Kirsten Johnson's new feature, "Dick Johnson Is Dead," you don't see that. Johnson's new film is an emotionally complex and celebratory documentary, which serves both as a love letter to and an immortalization of her father, the titular Dick Johnson. It twists and turns through contradictory emotions with a delicacy you rarely see in documentary filmmaking, and will leave you feeling either triumphant or deeply melancholic by the end.

The premise of the film is incredibly unique. In order to preserve the legacy of her father, who she believes is near the end of his life, Kirsten Johnson decides

to film a multitude of scenes where her father dies of a horrible accident. It seems quite macabre at first, but seeing these absurd scenarios preceded and followed by their creation is hilarious and surprisingly wholesome. Though, the side of the film plays alongside a deeply saddening story of losing a loved one to mental illness. This isn't the first time Johnson's tackled this theme. Her previous film, "Camera Person" (2016), addresses how Johnson's mother succumbed to dementia, though it's presented as more of a memory than a present reality. The tragedy of "Dick Johnson Is Dead" is that Kirsten and Dick both know what it's like to lose someone to dementia, and now that they're dealing with it

again, they know the horrible things in store for them.

But that's not the point of the movie. Yes, both Kirsten and the audience know that Dick will succumb to dementia, and eventually death, but not now. What Johnson manages to do with this documentary is create a version of her father that won't die, so that for as long as this film exists, so does Dick Johnson. So the camera rolls, and Dick's life goes on. Kirsten keeps living life with him, but with the knowledge of what is to come, they embrace it. They tie up loose ends with old friends, they let themselves eat chocolate cake, and they embrace the inherent comedy of being alive. Yes, there are sad moments, but that's not why

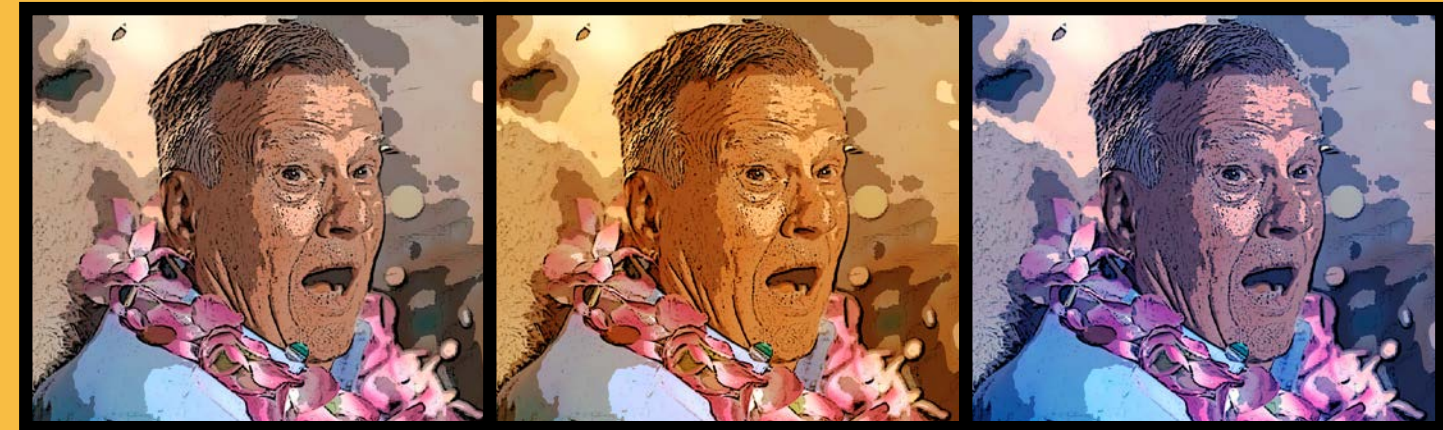
we're all here.

I applaud Ms. Johnson for the work she had to put into this film. She had to document droves of moments in a journey which at times must have been incredibly upsetting for her. The amount of empathy Johnson seems to have for all of her subjects is incredibly clear whenever you see one of her films. She's incredibly good at capturing moments which drive home a very specific emotion, and the amount of foresight needed to know what would work for the narrative is incredibly impressive. But again, she doesn't just capture doom and gloom, but also wonderful moments of life! In one scene she'll confront her father about how he can't drive anymore, but in another, she'll

capture the undiluted joy of her children baking him a cake, all with an emotional cohesion which is the mark of truly great editing.

"Dick Johnson Is Dead" is a whirlwind of emotion. It'll make you laugh, it could make you cry, but no matter what, you will be moved. Documentarians like Kirsten Johnson are so essential, because they can capture the human experience with simultaneous clarity and compassion, and this is her best work yet. Sure, maybe the music isn't as good as it could be. Sure, maybe Johnson's narration isn't always perfect. But that doesn't matter. You have to see it. You can find it streaming on Netflix.

PHOTO//IMDb



A young man with dark hair and glasses is lifting a barbell with weights. He is wearing a black t-shirt with a blue graphic of a person in a dynamic pose. The background shows green trees and a brick building.

STRONGER THAN YESTERDAY

The body and the mind are connected in a way. **When you're physically in shape, you can stay more focused** and you can stay consistent with everything else like academics.

I had open heart surgery when I was younger, so I am not really good at breathing or a lot of the high-intense exercises. So, **I tend to weight lift because it doesn't rely on my heart.**

I have always been a bit shy like going to the swimming pool when I was younger. I usually wore a bathing shirt, because I had a scar on my heart from the heart surgery. But now, **I feel more confident in my physique as lifting has helped me get bigger.**

PHOTO by Sean Nguyen
REPORTING by Sean Nguyen

WHAT I'VE LEARNED

Sophomore
Sam Gown