

# The River Hill Current



River Hill's student run, student read newspaper

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## Girls On the Court

*By: Molly Gray, Staff Writer*



As we settle into the New Year, Howard County winter sports are finally back on. After covid putting a pause on all winter sports, many students were disappointed they would not have a winter season.

Senior Erin Devine, captain of the girl's basketball team explained "I was very upset when covid got in the way of my senior season, I just hope we are able to finish the season." Luckily, Howard County was able to continue their winter sports, although changes have been made and visitors are only allowed to enter with sport passes. Each player gets 4 passes per game, and they can give it to their family and friends.

Now that sports are back on many students have said

now, more than ever, they are inspired to make this season count. With the fear of covid shutting down sports, senior Kate Conlon, captain of the cheer team says "Because we don't know how much time is left in the season, my goal is to make this season the best yet, I wanna practice harder and perform stronger."

The first basketball game was Wednesday 1/10 and all the teams were focused on preparing. The girl's basketball team has been putting the work in with hard workouts and long practices to get them in shape to perform for their first real game in nearly two years. Along with the girl's basketball team preparing for Wednesday, the cheer team also has a very important

role in the game.

The cheer team has the hard task of having to learn complicated cheers and stunts for basketball games weekly, although that's not their biggest concern. Kate Conlon goes on to talk about their cheer competition coming up. "Although basketball games are important, they are not our main focus, we have a competition on the 22nd and because we haven't been practicing, we will not have as much time to prepare" she goes on to say "That's when our team's focus and dedication comes into play."

With the end date of the winter season being undecided, River Hills girls basketball and cheer will be focused on having the best season they can before it may be too late.

# Columbia Labeled “Safest City in America” for Fourth Consecutive Year

By Korey Moore, Co-Editor-In-Chief

For the fourth year in a row, the city of Columbia, Maryland, has been ranked as the top city in the United States with regards to its safety.

Wallethub, a media outlet for personal finance and the organization that published these rankings, evaluated the safety of 180 cities nationwide on the basis of 44 indicators of safety. These measures include COVID-19 deaths per capita, assaults per capita, unemployment, and road quality, which comprise home and community safety, natural disaster safety, and financial safety.

Columbia was declared superior to all of the numerous other cities within the scope of evaluation, which included the mass of the nation’s major cities, in regards to the aforementioned indicators, for the fourth consecutive year. This is a statistic that speaks scores about the quality of life within the city.

Founded in 1967 by esteemed American developer James W. Rouse, the city of Columbia began as a planned community, designed to eliminate various forms of social tension, specifically racial, religious, and class prejudice, amid the American Civil Rights Move-

ment. It has since grown to become the second largest community in the state of Maryland, a thriving community central to the third-wealthiest county in the United States. Howard County Executive Calvin Ball said in a public statement on this accolade that he intends to continue this tradition of excellence, stating that he “will continue to make sure every community in Howard County is and feels as safe as it can be.”

As River Hill High School is within the vicinity of Columbia, its students take great pleasure from this ranking. Luke Rodell, when asked about his perspective on the matter, expressed that he believes that “it’s always felt very safe,” and that “I’ve never been in a situation where I’ve felt like I’m in some sort of danger.” Luke, a senior, said that he often goes to Columbia for the purposes of visiting the Mall in Columbia in addition to attending concerts at Merriweather Post Pavilion, both favorites for locals of the region, and has described such as a generally favorable community.

“My experiences with Columbia have been great,” senior Ryan Mathew commented. “The places I usually go are around the mall, Merriweather Post Pavilion, the library, which I would describe

as pretty well-off.”

Aditya Shankar, who, like many of his fellow seniors, frequents “the mall, HCC, and Merriweather Post Pavilion,” interestingly said that he views Columbia as being “based in a bubble,” constituting a sort of safe haven from areas in the region that are more “dangerous and sketchy.”

Gabriel Aliaga, also a senior, reflected these sentiments. “I know Columbia has won best city in the U.S. before, and so I feel like it would make sense, and a lot of people that I know feel secure [in the city].” When asked about community infrastructure, which has been a concern of lawmakers nationwide, he responded: “I always see our roads and buildings being updated when needed; I feel like they keep up to date with those types of things.”

As a whole, River Hill students take pride in the Columbia community, holding it to be safe in a variety of areas, and are thus honored by its recent accolade. They have strong faith that these conditions of safety will persist into the future, and that Columbia will continue to flourish as a center of American attention.



## Students’ Safety Amidst a Surge in Covid Cases at River Hill

By Claire Burnett, Features Editor

As the number of Covid cases rise at River Hill and across the country, the safety of students and staff is an urgent concern.

Before winter break, the number of students with covid at River Hill increased to as many as 20 on December 20th alone. After coming back from winter break and the extra snow days, River Hill seemed to be doing well, with 0 or 1 cases per day, until January 10th, when the number jumped to 10, along with 2 staff cases.

Despite the efforts made by the school to fight the spread of Covid, many students still do not feel comfortable being at school. Sophomore Sarah Le commented, “Honestly I don’t feel very safe at school. Even though they say everything is clean and sanitized, I don’t think there is any way to ensure the sanitation of every surface in every part of the school.”

To combat the spread of germs, the janitorial staff at River Hill have been busy with ensuring that surfaces in the school are sanitized. Additional safety measures

have been implemented such as mask wearing and outdoor seating being available during lunch.

At River Hill, students are required to wear masks and are encouraged to put their masks back on when they are not actively eating or drinking. Students’ opinions towards the mask mandate varies, with some believing that everyone should wear masks, while others believe that they should get the choice to not wear a mask.

Sophomore Elika Tofigh remarked “It’s been somewhat difficult to feel safe at school when people don’t wear their masks correctly and sometimes don’t even wear their masks at all. Not a massive amount of people, but enough to make me worry a little.” The CDC recommends that masks are worn covering the mouth and nose, with a secure fit to the face, but some students choose to wear their masks below their nose or mouth, making students like Elika feel uncomfortable.

Sarah agrees with Elika, stating “Not to mention that there is



no distancing at school whatsoever. As for the masks, I see almost all of my teachers take down their masks every class just to talk and I see students all the time with their masks just dangling on their necks.” During hybrid learning last spring, one-way hallways and social distancing were implemented, but that is not a realistic option this year given the large number of students.

Sarah continued, expressing “I’m mostly concerned in the halls and at lunch where I’m so close to so many other students and a lot of us aren’t wearing masks to eat and drink.” Although administrators sug-

gest that students wear their masks when they are done eating lunch, some students choose to keep their mask off for the entire lunch period.

Overall, Covid has become an increasing concern as the Omicron variant spreads across the country. To reassure students and reinforce the mask rules, administrators visited classes last week, reminded students to wear their masks, and answered any questions about the current situation.

Many students and staff can all agree that they don’t want to return to virtual learning, so Covid safety is currently a high priority.



# Misleading Midterms

By Sara Solimani, Staff Writer

After taking a year off from midterms and finals, students and teachers were expecting the return of the usual testing schedule. This was before the Board of Education released that midterms have been removed, causing finals to become 10% of a student's overall grade. This change raises the stakes since midterms and finals were originally both 5% of the final grade.

While there is joy from the loss of midterms, there is also some anxiety towards the more impactful final tests. Teachers are figuring out how to change their tests and prepare students, and students are bracing themselves for the even bigger assessment at the end of the year.

A lot of students are disappointed because they wanted some practice before taking their finals to prepare for college. Sophomore Alicia Antony shares, "We didn't

have finals and midterms for freshman year and now we don't have midterms for sophomore year so we don't actually have a lot of experience." Carolina Herrera also shares similar feelings as a sophomore, "I definitely think there's gonna be way more pressure because, as sophomores, we have not had even any finals or midterms at all. It's a big learning curve because we don't know how to study for a big test like that."

Teachers are sharing this concern with students, they are worried that students won't be able to put this experience into practice later on in life. Chemistry teacher, Mrs. Lui voiced her opinion that, "Whether it's going into college where your grade is based off of 2 or 3 tests or if you are going into a trade school and you have to do some sort of certification skill, you're losing that

sort of study skill for preparing for big tests that determines a lot of things."

With the abrupt shift, teachers are struggling to adjust their tests without the support of the Board of Education. Teachers will most likely sympathize with students and try to accommodate the preparation of the finals in favor of students as a result of the adjustment. In regards to this situation, Mrs. Lui says, "There is no guidance on what your finals are supposed to look like right now so that part is still up in the air. If it's supposed to be from the beginning of the school year, I would probably end up giving you more time to review because it's been such a long time since we've done the beginning of the year stuff."

Since the final is more pressure, students even say they preferred having midterms to

even out the effect on their grades. Supporting this notion, freshman Josephine Brannan comments, "I honestly would rather have a midterm and a final because the final is worth more and it's more stressful later." Though the pressure from the midterm is alleviated, there's an even more daunting test coming up at the end of the year. Alicia Antony contributes, "I think not having midterms is good because obviously I don't want to take a midterm, but at the same time we still have finals and it's worth more."

When it comes to taking these tests, it's safe to say that the disadvantages of getting rid of the midterms outweigh the advantages for both teachers and students. With this in mind, hopefully this issue is adjusted for the next school year.

# LGBTQIA: Welcomed or not?

By Elizabeth McMullan, Staff Writer

Most people would instantly answer yes to whether or not Howard County is accepting of the LGBTQ community, though the answer may not be as black and white as some may think it is.

Both sophomores Alexandra Johnson and Sienna Rader-Gowda agree that LGBTQ+ people are relatively accepted, but could be more so, with Alexandra saying "I feel like they should be accepted more", followed by Sienna going on with, "I feel that those who are LGBTQ+ are accepted into certain parts of the community without a problem. I believe that LGBTQ+ individuals are always accepted by most people, but certain people continue to isolate them, and unfairly discriminate." Explaining that while those in the LGBTQ community may be accepted in most places, they aren't everywhere. Some people may keep oppressing them.

Principal Mrs. Lidgard thinks that we should tell more people about policies regarding name changing on Canvas and Synergy, stating "I think we may need to advertise a little bit more about the policies we do have in place. I have been really pleased with the [name] masking policy that we currently have in place. I think there are some com-

munication things we need to do to make sure students know that that exists." She then went on to say, "Honestly we have some work to do with our staff, not just at River Hill but throughout the county to make sure all staff members are equally versed in the knowledge that they need to have in order to guide students cause we know students often don't necessarily go straight to student services or straight to administration, they often talk to their teachers first so we want everyone to have the same affirmation."

The three of them agree on the fact that there should be some kind of program to teach students and parents in the community such as the feelings and changes someone might make while they figure things out for themselves as terms like 'cis het'- someone who is straight and going with what gender they were assigned at birth as- are not well known, and most people do not know what it means. "I think they should learn about the different identities and what each of them mean. I think it would help to have a show for parents, since students learn from their parents who grew up in an era of discrimination against the LGBTQIA+ community," Sienna explained. During the pro-



gram, there could also be pointers and insight towards things like the name masking policy and the ability to show pronouns allowing students the opportunity to change their birth name to a chosen one with their chosen pronouns.

As of January 13, 2022, students in River Hill's Gender and Sexuality Alliance as well as the teacher sponsors are trying to get the school certified as a rainbow flag school- one that openly shows their support for LGBTQ+ students and tells others that they are accepting of the student body and staff no matter their identity. In order to do this,

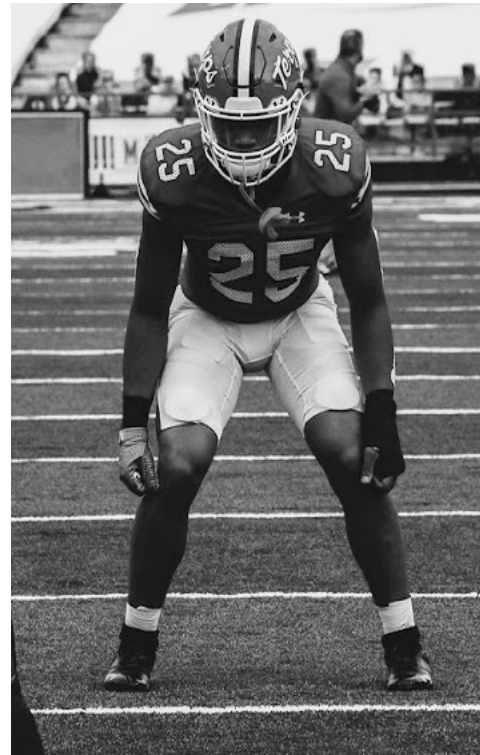
students and staff alike have to show their support for the community, whether it be through representation in teaching or something as simple as the pride progress flag sticker. GSA will most likely be looking into ways to help put the message out in later meetings.

In the end, we can look forward to better representation from the school as a whole, as well as newfound support from everyone ranging from staff to students to parents. Hopefully by 2024, River Hill, and by extension Howard County itself, will be an even more accepting community.



# Some of River Hill's Notable Graduates: Where Are They Now?

By Jason Benedek, Staff Writer



Over the years, River Hill has produced numerous gifted athletes. Some have even had the chance to take their talents to Division One schools. Chase McGeehan (UMD Track), Beau Brade (UMD Football), and Jack Burns (UMBC Lacrosse) are a few fortunate enough to do so. The Current caught up with these former Hawks to see how they are doing in their respective universities now.

At River Hill Jack Burns was a standout player. He was a four-year varsity starter, captain of the 2021 Hawks' squad, 2021 member of the All-County team, and leader of the Hawks to a 3A East Region II title in 2021, scoring 23 goals and seven assists. There was no doubt that he could go on to play college lacrosse.

Entering his freshman year at UMBC, Jack is looking to make an immediate impact on the lacrosse team. He has been training for months in preparation for the upcoming season.

"I placed a large emphasis on the weight room for my pre-season preparation. Coming in at age 18 and possibly playing against people that are 24-25 years old, I know that I need to prepare my body for that level of competition. I followed the plan of the team strength and conditioning coach and it was very helpful in putting on much needed muscle and increasing overall strength," he explained. He has also shifted focus towards living a healthy lifestyle so he can be in his best shape by the beginning of the season. Jack adds, "I used to just pick up a stick and start playing, but I now make sure to stretch and prepare my body for the workout to prevent injury. When putting so much stress on your body, it is crucial to recover, and focusing on consistently tracking my diet and hydration has helped me greatly throughout my preparation for the season."

In college lacrosse the competition for playing time is extremely fierce, especially as a Freshman. Unsure of where he stands in the team rankings, Jack explains that, "I am trying to temper my personal expectations and just focus on what I can do for the team. Really, my goal is to help the team in any way to

win an American East Championship to get into the NCAA tournament."

But with all this time spent towards working out and training, he is still in college to get a degree. Jack has managed to organize his college life so he can put in work towards his academic and athletic goals. "Balancing my athletic and academic careers is certainly no easy task, especially given the massive time commitment that comes with playing Division One sports. Fortunately, UMBC lacrosse places a large emphasis on staying on top of classes. Every week I have to complete 6 study hall hours and submit an academic plan for the week. This really helps me stay organized and the study hall hours force me to sit down and do what I have to do."

Jack is destined to do great things at UMBC whether it is on the field or in the classroom. UMBC's 11-game 2022 spring schedule begins on Saturday, Feb. 19 against Drexel.

From 2 solos and 1 assisted tackle his freshman year, to 10 solos, 4 assisted tackles and even recording his first career sack against Kent State his sophomore year, Beau Brade is quickly becoming an impact player on the University of Maryland football team.

Following his first career sack, Beau explains, "I was ecstatic. It's not every day when a defensive back gets a sack or tackle for loss. I give credit to my coaches and veteran players through the past 2 years for teaching me where to align and what the quarterback is looking at during the play." This sack is just the beginning of the greatness Beau will bring to Maryland's football program.

With Beau getting more and more playing time, he is becoming an immediate role player on the Maryland football team. With that being said, Beau's main focuses are on the team's goals instead of his own personal goals.

"We had a lot of great players and I believe that when I got the chance to be on the field the team played quite well. Tallying up a sack and multiple tackles throughout the season was cool, but I'm working to make an even larger impact for the team next season," stated Beau as he reflects on his past season.

Maryland's football season ended on a high note with a promising 54-10 Maryland victory in the Pinstripe Bowl against Virginia Tech. Beau shined in that game as well, recording 3 solo tackles and 1 assisted tackle. But now that the season is over, it's time for off season training. Beau and the rest of the team is now already putting in countless hours on the field and in the weight room in preparation for next season.

Beau's fellow Maryland defensive back Nick Cross recently declared for the 2022 NFL draft. Nick was one of the key teammates that has helped Beau develop as a football player. Beau explains that, "When it comes to Nick, he has helped me in a number of ways not just on the field, but in the film room too. Working with a player that takes the game seriously, wants to get to the next level, and loves winning is a very beneficial opportunity that not many have. As we became basically brothers he has shown me lessons taught by the game and information that only a certain caliber of players like him can see during games and watching films."

Maryland will definitely miss Nick Cross, but they don't have to worry because they have Beau Brade on the come up. There is no doubt Beau will be a leader for the University of Maryland's defense.

Chase McGeehan is another great athlete coming from River Hill and performing at the University of Maryland. But instead of getting it done on the football field, Chase absolutely flies on the track.

Chase dominated high school track & field and cross country. In his high school career, he was awarded First Team All-County, second team All-Metro, MPSSAA Indoor 2A State Champion in the 500m, outdoor track Team MVP, and cross country and outdoor track team captain. Coach Hugus was a huge part of Chase's success at River Hill.

Chase explains that, "River Hill track and field helped me develop as a runner by showing me how to stay consistent with my workout regimen and take care of my body. Coach Hugus really helped a lot with that, and having

college track experience himself allowed him to share some of his personal knowledge on the sport with his runners. You could really tell he loved what he was doing and could see its effect in the state of the distance program at River Hill."

Unfortunately, last season was cut short for Chase because of a hamstring injury during his first race of the season. Chase is looking to have a comeback year, but is also wanting to ease into the season because he's just now coming off of a calf injury.

When asked what his goals are for the 2022 college track & field season, Chase replied, "My personal goals are centered around my main event, the 800 meters, and are mostly position based. Ideally, the whole purpose of competing in the Big Ten is with the intention of competing at the Big Ten Championships in the spring season. Last winter I almost tore my hamstring after my first race of the indoor season and was never able to get healthy in time, so that is my main focus for this year."

With all the preparation going into the track season, Chase still has to perform well in his classes too. The University of Maryland puts a lot of emphasis on being student athletes. Chase is a finance major, and he already has an internship set up for the upcoming summer.

"Here at Maryland, the school provides free study halls and tutors for athletes in need of academic help which is something many take advantage of. I believe River Hill did a great job of preparing me for college as I have been able to excel in the classroom on my own. My efforts have been recognized, as I recently earned an offer from Deloitte, where I will be interning this summer," explains Chase.

Whether it is in the classroom or on the track, Chase McGeehan is amazing at what he does.

Jack Burns, Beau Brade, and Chase McGeehan are prime examples of the excellence that comes out of River Hill. They prove that with immense hard work and dedication, you can be among the best in the country at anything. We look forward to seeing them dominate at their sport and in school for years to come.



### Part-Time Employee, Full-Time Student

By: *Joey Pickus, Staff Writer*

As young people get older, they also get more responsibilities. At fourteen years old you can legally start working, according to the Maryland Department of Human Services. As a high schooler, there are a variety of different reasons as to why you would want to find a job, from having too much free time, to wanting to save up money for college, or maybe being forced into it by their parents.

To get a better understanding of what it is like to have a job while in school, Anne Whitney, a senior at River Hill and employee at the Columbia Gym, commented, “[I] completely love my job. I’m lifting here all the time, so being able to work in a place where I’m surrounded by like-minded people is really cool.” When asked about how she is able to find the right balance between

school, work, social life, and other activities she responded with, “It’s kinda hard at times because I’m trying to fit my social life, school, work, and exercise all in at one time but it honestly just takes good time management. I like to think I’m doing well so far.” Based on Anne’s answer it sounds like with more time and experience as an employee you will become better with your time management skills which are extremely important for every high school student to have.

Anne’s coworker, Jack David, agreed, explaining how “I have a great time working here due to basketball being one of my favorite hobbies. During breaks, I am able to get some shots up and connect with other basketball players. I also work with some of my friends like Anne and Ben as well as my mom.” Jack seemed to not have much of a problem with his balance as he elaborates, “With the gym being right next to the school and my schedule being reduced from work release, I am able to balance my life better.”

The Columbia Gym seems to be a

popular location for a job among River Hill students. River Hill students work at a diversity of other jobs, including working at restaurants like River Hill Grill or Chick-Fil-A, tutoring, and officiating youth sports.

Whether the student only works 1-2 days a week or only 1-2 hours a day it is still very impressive that they are able to manage that with the full-time job, school, along with having a social life, and sports as well as other extracurricular activities.



*Photographed By: Joey Pickus of Jack David*

### The Social Network (Movie Review)

By: *Molly Gawthrop, Staff Writer*

Mark Zuckerberg, pure genius or illain? A Harvard student with a talent for computer science and statistics, and a brilliant idea with lots of motivation, created The Facebook. But is a successful schoolwide website satisfying enough for a young and greedy college student? Coming across this movie on Netflix and knowing the impact of social media, I had to know the whole story...

Mark Zuckerberg (played by Jesse Eisenberg) has an idea to connect students online as a social networking tool. His close friend Eduardo (Andrew Garfield) becomes the designer of the website and has a large share in the company. After almost overnight success, Cameron and Tyler Winklevoss, twins coming from a wealthy family at Harvard, claim he stole their idea and in turn plot to sue him.

Mark is heavily involved with the website and is determined to expand its viewers to its maximum potential. After moving to Los Angeles, he becomes friends and ultimately business partners with Sean Parker who

gets rid of the “The” on Facebook and gives personal business advice to Mark in hopes of wedging his own spot on Facebook. This mindset adjustment causes Eduardo to be cut off completely and left with virtually nothing.

Released on October 1, 2010, the movie adaptation was written by Ben Mezrich of *The Social Network*, directed by David Fincher, and written by Aaron Sorkin. The book follows Facebook’s creation and extreme growth at a national scale.

Jesse Eisenberg, who also starred in *Get Real*, *Adventureland*, and *Zombieland*, is popularly known for his role in *The Social Network*. This role got him nominated for BAFTA, The Golden Globe, and the Academy Award for Best Actor. Eisenberg takes the audience through his thought process throughout the movie, seeing every calculation and emotion through his acting. He is able to depict Mark as conceited and selfish which makes the audience more enticed.

Mark Zuckerberg was not always an honorable main character, but I could not help rooting

for him and his success. Throughout the movie, Zuckerberg always seemed like he would jump at the next opportunity thrown his way and would drop everything to attain it, including those loyal to him.

Alongside Jesse Eisenberg, Andrew Garfield’s character, Eduardo, is seen as both friend and foe to Mark Zuckerberg after a bitter betrayal. Andrew Garfield is well-known for his role as Spiderman in *The Amazing Spider-Man* movies and more recently *Tick, Tick, Boom* (Filmed before *The Social Network*). After seeing the latest Spider-Man movie (*No-Way Home*), I was very excited to see Garfield in a new context. Andrew Garfield might not be the hero in this film, but he grabs the audience’s sympathy and convinces them to root for him. Other lead actors include Armie Hammer, Aaron Sorkin, and Justin Timberlake.

This movie gave me a glimpse into the “behind-the-scenes” of one of the largest social media platforms. I thought this movie was a great depiction of trust and success, and what

happens when an eager college student gets an opportunity but feels forced to leave his friends behind.

Zuckerberg was convinced that quitting school and moving across the country would be the key to his website’s success. The entire movie feels gloomy until Zuckerberg gets to LA to pursue his business. This could mean that his hope continues to grow and the lighting reflects his ambition. The overall tone of the movie reflects this feeling. In Boston, Zuckerberg was eager but never fully convinced of his own talent until he got validation from others.

The movie leads up to Eduardo’s lawsuit with lots of flashbacks at that point. Without this structure, I do not think the plot would have held its own.

My favorite scene in *The Social Network* was Eduardo’s monologue after finding out that Zuckerberg, his best friend, cut him off completely from the company. Andrew Garfield has the emotional depth to portray both betrayal and disbelief flawlessly.

### Comedian Bob

### Saget Passes

*By: Sicily Houk, Co-Editor in Chief*

On January 9th, 2022 the comedian and actor Robert Lane Saget, was found unresponsive in his hotel room. Many people who know Saget from the hit show Full House were very shocked and upset to hear of this news. Sophomore Shae Fraser remarked, "This is really surprising to hear. I liked watching him in Full House. It was a big part of my childhood."

Bob Saget was only sixty-five years old and this factors into the shock of his sudden death. Sophomore Deirdre Curtin said, "His death was shocking to hear about because he wasn't that old, he was only sixty-five. It's kinda sad." At a young age it is surprising that Saget died so suddenly. Senior Grace Palvako replied, "I was so sad when I heard about his death. It seems odd that he died relatively young too. I hope his family is doing okay. RIP." The cause of death is still not determined, although the Orange County police ruled out foul play or any substance abuse,

which makes his death at a young age odd, as Grace stated.

Full House was a very popular show in past years and still is watched by new generations to this day. Bob Saget was the beloved father figure that everyone loved to watch. The emotional connection to this childhood show makes it so much harder to truly believe the situation at hand. Junior Tobias Maluf-Mas stated, "I can't tell what I feel more. The shock that it's real news, or the sadness for someone I grew up watching having left us." Another Full House fan, junior Ashley Ayers said, "When I heard the news that Bob Saget passed away I immediately thought of his time on Full House. It genuinely saddened me to hear the news." It's clear that this death has affected many Full House fans here at River Hill in many ways.

While Full House was something Bob Saget is well known for amongst the students, his comedy career is another major thing he is remembered for. When asked what she remembered him for, junior Elanor Kim replied, "His comedy was unique in that he looked like such a wholesome guy, especially for his portrayal as Danny in Full House. But his sense of humor was dark and raunchy." Saget's

comedy career was still playing out when he passed. Just before his death he performed and even posted an announcement with later tour dates for 2022. Saget was known as a funny and genuine person by most students, Ayers remarked, "He was a funny character and just an all around funny guy in general."

Overall, it is never easy to see a famous comedian/actor pass away, especially when you may have grown up watching them every day. Bob Saget was well known by early and late generations as the loving father, Danny Tanner. Even when gone, though, his fans will always remember him.



*Robert Saget*

### Angels Network Opens Virtual Talent Show Auditions

*By: Maire Crooks, News Editor*

Angel's Network has opened their annual auditions for their Grassroots talent show this year- but with a twist. Although students are currently attending school in-person, the auditions are being held online to avoid the potential consequences of the recent rise in COVID-19 cases.

Auditions are virtual for two reasons: primarily to keep everyone safe, but also because "last year [Angel's Network] had a virtual talent show that was pretty successful, so [the club] thought that having virtual auditions this year as well would be a good idea," articulates Ayşegül Yıldız, Angel's Network historian.

"Our tradition is to donate all ticket sale proceeds to the local Grassroots Crisis Intervention Center," explains Rebecca Ni, a co-president of the club. "Grassroots supports

the homeless community in Columbia, as well as individuals in transitional housing of all ages... provid[ing] for a considerable number of young children and women in need of shelter, food, and more."

The sky's the limit for auditioning acts, as long as they are school-appropriate. "We welcome any act that we believe the River Hill community will find entertaining and enjoyable," Rebecca mentions.

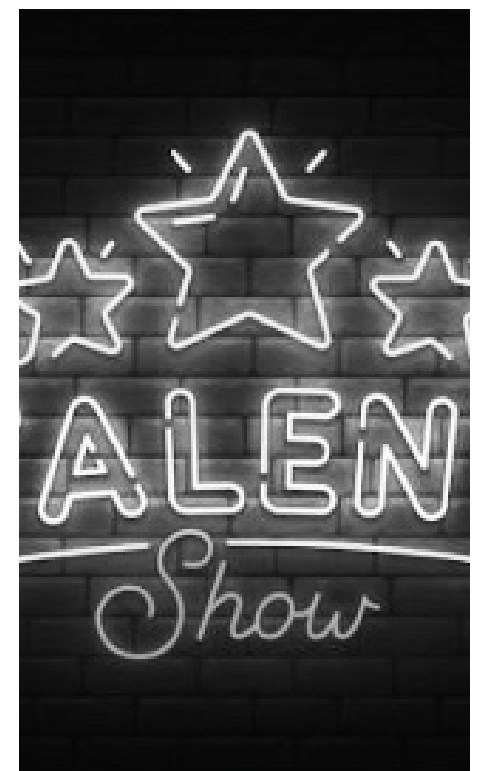
This is not Angel's Network's first rodeo; the club has been hosting the event for over 20 years. At the time of the interview, Rebecca shares, "We have not received any submissions yet... but we hope to receive as many auditions as we did last year." She believes that the talent show provides a unique opportunity during the pandemic "for

groups and individuals to perform for a large audience." Last year, the club held both the auditions and show virtually due to the pandemic, but still raised upwards of \$1,500 for Grassroots, and the talent show "typically raise[s] several thousands of dollars each year."

"We don't have a specific [fundraising] goal at this point because we don't know how many people we can fit in the auditorium due to the Coronavirus, or if we will have to make the talent show virtual," says Ayşegül. "Everything will kind of be dependent upon that, because the club needs "to know how many people [they] can let in the auditorium if it is going to be in-person."

Interested students can submit their video to the Angel's Network email and fill out an information form. Acts must

be kept to a maximum of three minutes, and, if selected, pay a small fee to perform. Accepted acts will meet regularly with Angel's Network to work on "timing... discuss how practicing is going, and how their preparation process is going," describes Ayşegül. Videos are due on January 31st.





## Sharing the Wealth on Mental Health

By: *Claire Fagan and  
Riley Gonzales, Staff  
Writers*

River Hill provides an array of mental health resources that are even more important this school year with COVID-19 adding extra stress to student life. Some students are wary when considering approaching these resources, and some don't know they exist at all, but there are a number of staff and students at the ready to help anyone who may need it.

River Hill offers in-school counseling for all students at any time during any school day, in addition to a psychologist, Mr. Cooper, who is at River Hill on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. River Hill also has a pupil personnel worker, Mr. Wade, who helps facilitate discussions between families and schools on issues of education. Counselors, including Mr. Ives (students with last names starting A-Da), Ms. Babe (Db-J), Ms. Pruet (K-M), Mr. Vangeli (N-Si), and Mr. Krouse (Sj-Z), can assist students with stress relating to school as well as help them handle their personal struggles. Individuals will receive advice on conflicts with family, friends, work, and anything else that goes on in their lives, and are allowed to leave class at any time if they need to talk to their counselor. Ms. Babe, a guidance counselor here at River Hill, expressed, "I think a lot of kids think that when they come and tell us something we're going to share it with their teachers or automatically have to call their parents. What kids should know is things do stay confidential with us as a counselor." Counselors are here to support the students at this school, not expose them or tear them down. Anything that a student wishes to remain private, aside from something that would harm themselves or someone else, will stay strictly between the counselor and the student.

Guidance counselors, psychologists, and a pupil personnel worker are part of this school in order to support students' mental health and their well-being in any and every way. Mr. Cooper, the psychologist, clarified, "School support staff, counselors, psychologists, and pupil personnel workers have an opportunity to observe

and work with students during the school day and can intervene in real time." Those who have daily struggles with their mental health are able to meet with their guidance counselors and the psychologist whenever they need them.

Counselors also put significant effort towards providing students with strategies that can be used individually so that they can find ways to help themselves. Ms. Babe explained, "If they're feeling anxiety or stress they need to come up with some ways to handle it in the classroom." Guidance counselors want students to be able to live and learn effectively, and seek to help them cope with whatever issues may be placing additional pressure on them.

Despite guidance counselors trying to help different students with their problems, some don't feel their efforts had positive impacts on them. Junior Marley Cosgrove commented, "I didn't feel like [school resources] helped me very much because I... was just told to try and go to a therapist, try to go to a psychologist, but there was no follow up. There was no making sure that I was able to get that help." Different strategies to improve mental health work well for different people. Although students may not always receive direct follow-up emails asking for updates, they are welcome to go back to guidance counselors for additional counseling if needed.

Marley also remarked that one concern she had about going to guidance counselors was that "they focus a lot on if they see you struggling academically, then they think something's wrong. That could always be an indicator, but it isn't always." Marley wishes that guidance counselors would focus more on what individuals need in their day-to-day lives rather than solely improve their academic performance. Academic struggles are important and a potential jumping-off point for counselors helping students, but they don't make up every problem they have.

Despite some students having negative experiences, Ms. Babe establishes, "I'm definitely seeing multiple students for various reasons. Sometimes it's friends, family, work-related, just personal issues that have nothing to do with academic stress." Ms. Babe affirms that guidance counselors care about every aspect of student's lives, beyond just academics.

Guidance counselors strive to ensure that every student is helped to the best of their ability with any and all of their problems. Staff put immense effort into improving the

well-being of students, but these supports can always be improved through follow-up counseling and/or referrals to a different professional.

Another way for the well-being of students to improve is through resources provided by guidance counselors to be used individually. Ms. Babe commented, "A lot of times when I talk with kids who are feeling stressed and anxious I'll give them some apps and things they can use because I think they're good calming resources." When a student visits the guidance counselor, they give out a resource card with a list of numbers to call if they need assistance with anything from finding a job to struggling with drug addiction to seeking mental health guidance.

It can be daunting to approach the school counselors or the psychologist, and many students are unsure of where to seek help for mental health. Thankfully, there are numerous resources available outside of the guidance office.

On the back of each student ID card is a list of numbers for mental health hotlines they can call as intervention if needed. In addition, there are also services provided by classmates here at River Hill. One of these is the Mindfulness Club, run by junior Jaelyn Hui. Mindfulness is the act of focusing awareness on the present moment, and Jaelyn began the club after she researched this and found that it has quite a few benefits on mental health.

"For my research, I found that mindfulness was able to decrease stress, even just using an app consistently once a day for 30 days," explained Jaelyn. "It was an 8-week intervention in one study... During the halfway point when they had a check-in there was already a significant difference that they were able to measure based on the survey they took."

This information was among the research Jaelyn did that proved the effectiveness of mindfulness in taking care of one's mental health. It is for this reason the club was founded.

When the club meets, they practice mindfulness exercises following books or videos. These videos are also posted on Canvas, available for people who can't attend the meetings or who want to revisit them on their own time. In addition, the club writes articles about mindfulness that focus on more specific topics, such as the relationship between sleep and school performance.

Even when the Mindfulness Club is not in session, their resources are available to use anytime. Another such resource is PsychMask, an on-

line mental health based platform. Junior Grace Huang, the co-leader of PsychMask, detailed, "We formed it at the beginning of the pandemic and it was geared to help alleviate some of the psychological issues students may face, like loneliness or feelings of depression."

The platform has a blog where articles about mental health are posted, explaining coping mechanisms such as journaling. PsychMask also provides a checklist for depression, and in 2021 they ran a survey about stress in student lives.

The results of the survey showed that only 12.5% of the participating students felt competent in coping with stress, leaving most unsure about how to tackle the intimidating act of taking care of one's mental health. This is why school mental health resources are vital, whether it be the guidance counselors or a student-led service. The same survey showed that 70.8% of students are more likely to seek help from a parent or friend rather than a guidance counselor or school psychologist, but these resources remain open to all.

The mental health of students at River Hill is tremendously important. Classmates are advocating for their mental health and helping others through organizations such as the Mindfulness Club and Psychmask. No one should ever feel ashamed for helping their own minds. As Ms. Babe stated, "If [students] need to check in, my door is always open. We're here to listen."

**Having family problems or need crisis counseling?**  
**MD Crisis Hotline**  
[www.grassrootscrisis.org](http://www.grassrootscrisis.org)  
 1-800-422-0009

**Mobile Crisis Team**  
[www.grassrootscrisis.org](http://www.grassrootscrisis.org)  
 410-531-6677

**Runaway 24 Hour Hotline**  
[www.1800runaway.org](http://www.1800runaway.org)  
 1-800-786-2929

**Need food or clothing?**  
**F.I.S.H. (Howard County)**  
[www.fishhowardcounty.com](http://www.fishhowardcounty.com)  
 410-954-8660

**Community Action Council**  
[www.cac-hc.org](http://www.cac-hc.org)  
 410-313-6440

**Thrift Shop**  
 Salvation Army 443-656-3376

**Food Bank**  
 410-313-6185

**Department of Social Services**  
[www.dhr.state.md.us/howard.htm](http://www.dhr.state.md.us/howard.htm)  
[hcwco.dss@maryland.gov](mailto:hcwco.dss@maryland.gov)  
 410-872-8700

*Teen Resource Cards*

# Back From Break Blues

By: Kathryn Roth, Staff Writer

After coming back from an extended winter break, students at River Hill are slowly adjusting back to the early morning, 6 hour school days. With two snow days creating a surprise lengthy break, most students were not too fond of coming back to school after having a stress-free week and a half.

Many students expressed their need for a break to sleep and have a moment to take a breath. Though school is a place of socialization and learning, after taking time off, going back to school is the last thing anyone would want to do. It is a big mental switch to transition back into working for 6+ hours, which overall could affect students' mindsets.

This is not just a winter break experience. A total of 18 out of 20 randomly surveyed students felt anxious the night or day of coming back to school after being on break for a while. Junior Samantha Densel explained her feelings as "very stressed. I honestly would have rather just gone virtual

after the break so I could stay home longer." The feeling of staying home and being able to do whatever you want is much better than the anxiety students get from school.

Since Howard County creates a break that ends at the beginning of the new year, a lot of students use that time to reset their mindset about school. Students like Maddie Antevil state, "It was more stressful after the break than before because teachers keep cramming in missed material due to the winter snow days we missed." Others disagree like Eric Roth who indicated that, "Everyone was just waiting for a break to happen so all of the work I was getting just felt like busy work and it was too much."

This year some teachers decided to ease back into the week by controlling their workload. Ever since virtual learning, most teachers understand the stress that students experience from constant work. Junior Sophia Salicru gave a shout-out to Mrs. Tokar saying, "I think she did ease into it which was helpful because we needed time to transition into going back to school after being away for a week plus snow days."

In this day in age, everything seems to relate to Covid and quarantine times. Winter break reminded students of what it feels like to stay home all the time. Being used to

a certain schedule changes students' ability to be productive and do things that need to get done. All most teenagers want to do is stay home and do nothing over break. "I didn't want to do anything because I had already done nothing over break and my head wasn't warmed back up to school yet," said Junior Andrew Gick.

For high schoolers, transitioning from open schedules and late nights to congested brains and early mornings is a very complicated thing to do. Students' minds are programmed based on how their night went the day before. As teenagers are usually going to bed late over break, waking up for the next couple of days is challenging. Sophomore Carolyn O'Rourke mentioned, "It was harder to wake up earlier when coming back from break because you get used to sleeping in late over break."

As hard as it can be to adapt back to school after a long break, it seems that a week to chill out and be with friends and family with little to no responsibilities is always beneficial. Students take the week of coming back to school to catch up with friends and teachers and slowly but surely get back into a normal schedule even with the back from break blues.

# How Has the Coronavirus Impacted Students' Breaks?

By: Lauren Shin, Staff Writer

Every new season, students look forward to the upcoming week(s) of break. However, COVID19 has set restrictions on what they can do during this time.

With the first snowfall of the year, this past winter break was filled with fun things to do, but many students found that they were missing out on normal activities due to the coronavirus.

Sophomores Lily Peng and Sarah Chin agree that after the start of the pandemic, "We only really hang out at each others' house or at wide open areas. We mostly just stay at home." They realized that they have been staying inside their house more, resting and spending time with their family.

Sophomore Sofia Somilani says that she has to "be at home, stuck with my sister. We play board games and that's about it."

Sarah pointed out, "I occasionally go out to the mailbox." Even short outings are different from pre-pandemic times, however, because she now wears safety gloves to avoid contact with germs.

Students felt that summer break was especially difficult for them to enjoy,



with the pandemic going on. Lily says that she no longer goes to summer camps or summer school, and Sofia hopes to be able to travel. Going to the beach, even, can be risky because of the large number of people.

Some people even opt to spend their holidays and birthdays via Zoom, where they can video call multiple people without having to worry about becoming infected with the virus.

Sophomore Divya Kumar shares her memory celebrating her birthday with family members on Zoom. She recalls that "It was a new experience, and it was kind of nice because we could also celebrate with family members that don't live nearby. I still had fun, I baked a chocolate cake like usual, and nobody got sick."

Meanwhile, others don't feel that the virus has impacted the way they spend their break.

Chris Jung, a freshman, says, "I don't think [covid] really impacted my break. I

still go out with friends almost anywhere, like the mall and movie theaters."

Still, he admits that he is not entirely without concerns: "My mom gets scared that I'll get covid, though, so I try to be extra safe with masks and safety precautions. I also need to get tested if a friend or someone close tests positive."

Adding on, Junior Kayoung Kwon says that not much has changed regarding the way she enjoys her break. "I go shopping and go to restaurants with my friends and family," she says, "but I also do think that I've been hanging out with my family much more. We spend family time by going on hikes and road trips and doing activities that don't require contact with other people."

Going into the third year with COVID19, we can all agree that we hope this pandemic will be over soon. In the meantime, we should continue to take safety precautions while having fun.



## Picture Perfect, or Are They Really? (Book Review)

By: Sunny Jain, Staff Writer

In her 3rd novel, April 1995's *Picture Perfect*, best-selling author Jodi Picoult once again demonstrated her mind-blowing ability to utilize words to paint a picture so realistic, anyone can plant themselves amidst the characters.

Renowned physical anthropologist Cassandra 'Cassie' Barrett wakes up one morning and finds herself in a graveyard in downtown Los Angeles. Suffering from amnesia, she's escorted by a newbie police officer to the downtown station. Soon, and to her utmost surprise, she's claimed by one of Hollywood's prized possessions-Alex Rivers. As she's re-acustoming to her seemingly perfect and luxurious life, she's flooded with bits and pieces of her memory. She finds a seemingly normal pregnancy test one day (reading positive) and her mind is flooded with the frightening and dark reason of why she actually left.

Firstly, I loved this book. Even though this is one of Picoult's earliest works, we can see her style emerging, which has thankfully remained pretty similar up to this date. Something to know about Picoult's work in general—it's heart-wrenching. It's deep, it's emotional, but above all it's beautiful, right from the start to the very end.

In the opening scene we're introduced to 2 characters. We have Cassie with her graveyard-amnesia moment who is currently a mystery, and the police officer, Will Flying Horse, who 'rescues her.' Cassie and Will immediately

form a strong, unexplainable bond, and you get a sense of a romance bubbling between them, but, to my surprise at least, their relationship, while definitely slightly intimate, remains completely platonic. This is something from Picoult's side that I greatly appreciated. It was refreshing to see the main female character not fleeing into the arms of a man (or another man) when she rediscovers her freedom without a partner. Cassie is portrayed as an intelligent, determined and successful woman, but physically described as "pretty in a simple way." But when it came to her husband Alex, he was a complete stunner. I think this emphasized how their relationship began, and was based on more than just physical attraction despite their unconventional first interaction. They had a real connection and understanding with each other, and having similar backstories especially brought them closer.

I always liked Alex. You may not. Even though he caused Cassie so much pain, I understood where he was coming from and why he was doing what he was. That doesn't justify his actions towards her, but I understood. I liked Will's role in Cassie's life, but I didn't particularly like how his character was initially built up. I had questions about how he could have such strong feelings for Cassie when she was a stranger, and why he felt such possessiveness for a woman he didn't know. His character development and relationship with Cassie felt a little disconnected from the timeline of the story.

Several other side characters (Ophelia won't like this one) have a big impact on Cassie's life and all have one thing in common—they've protected her in one way or another, and have helped her reflect on her relationship with Alex.

There are also different settings throughout the timeline of the story. The peace and quiet of the wild grasslands of Tanzania, bustling L.A with its

endless lookalikes and South Dakota with its rich history. Each place has a key significance in Cassie's life, and we often jump back and forth between them.

The events seem to follow a 'Cinderella' plot. The story starts off at a high point, but then a tragedy strikes and our main character is left in a complicated situation, but all is well towards and at the end. The reason why *Picture Perfect* doesn't really follow this trope is because there are several small victories and threats throughout the story, so there's not really a clean cut rise-fall-rise. I enjoyed that. It was exciting to not know what might happen next instead of being able to predict the nature of events.

There were also narrative changes in the story. For example, it switched from a third person to Cassie's first person narrative in Chapter 10 but then reverted back to third person. I think this helps personalize the story further. We see it from Cassie's eyes, as she directly addresses us a few times.

Picoult's writing is beautiful, but when

it comes to what she writes about, that's a whole different story. She fearlessly tackles difficult and controversial topics such as gay rights, religious beliefs, medicinal practices and so much more. She runs towards topics that most other authors may feel intimidated by, and does it effortlessly. She heavily researches all her topics by talking to people who are relevant and have personal experiences with said topic, reads books on them, and sometimes even visits the settings she's writing about. Picoult mentioned in an interview that she gravitates towards topics she doesn't know answers to because she's trying to find why her opinion is what it is and help her readers do the same.

I would highly recommend this book. In terms of the storyline, the approach to the subject and the character development, most of it was brilliant. While it's not Picoult's best, award-winning novel, or even her most read one, in my opinion it's pretty darn good.

**Picture Perfect, or are they really? (Book Review)**

By: Sunny Jain, Staff Writer



## The Possibility of Online School

By: Salma Zaghari, Staff Writer

As more and more counties went back to online learning amid the recent Omicron surge, Howard County maintained in-person students, which has sparked diverse opinions on this decision. While online learning was great for some, it was challenging for others. Online learning allowed students to create their own schedules and be more organized, however it came with its downsides. Many students say they developed stress throughout their schooling.

Junior Bushra El-Bedawi said that "online school was better, we got to create our own schedules and it was less stressful, with everything going on and the new variants I am worried for my family, I would literally hate to see anyone get sick, especially my parents. Howard county needs to go online." Student

Adila Ahmed also agreed, having said, "I think going online would be the better option in the circumstances and these situations right now, because it is better for overall safety and cases are rising every day." Many students want to bring back online learning, feeling that it was much safer and less scarce.

Hybrid learning started in Howard County in 2021, this impacted the lives of many giving them a chance to choose how they want to learn. It is a schedule in which students partake in school through their own will, they choose the options of online or virtual. This allows for everyone to get some of what they need amidst the pandemic. Sophomore Alicia Anotny indicated that "I would prefer hybrid learning because it's both sides of the spectrum, if you think you cannot concentrate online you can come in person, and if you don't feel safe in the environment, and want certainty of being covid free you could be online." She also added how everyone has their own opinion about the situation and there should be

an option for all. Another student, freshman Sitara Chakkamadathil, agreed saying, "I think the problem is that we don't have an option. Having a hybrid model fixes that problem because you get the choice of going virtual or staying in person." Students definitely feel the need to have an online option here at River Hill high school.

Some students in Baltimore county had off school on Jan 10-11 in order for teachers to prepare for potential online learning in the future. Students liked the idea of having the two days off because it was a break from school, and they felt safer. Student Musa Kholti Yamani, a sophomore from Catonsville high school said, "I liked it because we got an extra 2 days off... and it gave the teachers a break." He also added that it was a time for him and many other students to be able to catch up on work. Students have also added they feel that the country is doing something unlike others and that they are happy about it. Afrah Mumtaz, a sophomore at Catonsville High School agrees that

"cases are going up day by day and I would be more comfortable with a bit more time off, but for right now I am still happy the county is doing something to help, and after those two days I was definitely more comfortable with coming into school. However I hope to see some more Covid-19 guidelines being followed in the future for the safety of everyone."

During January alone Howard county has taken in over 13,000 Covid-19 cases, and is adding death numbers every day. Covid is definitely getting hard to get control of in Howard county, if it keeps going on like this online learning will definitely be an option. For now though Howard county students still must remain in-person and wait. Make sure to protect yourselves and others from Covid-19 by wearing N95 masks, keeping a distance, and making sure to sanitize and understand your symptoms, as well as getting vaccinated. All of these safety protocols are super important in making sure this virus no longer spreads.



## College Applications 101

By: Katie Bena, Staff Writer

No matter what grade you are in, you have probably heard about the college application process. The process begins junior year of high school with teacher recommendations and continues until halfway through senior year when decisions come out. Decisions come out from the winter to the spring, depending on the college. Seniors are particularly stressed at this time of year because it is not always easy to balance college applications and schoolwork.

The first step in the college application process is to make a list of schools that interest you. Begin by determining how far you want to travel from home. From there, research some colleges in those regions. Once you have identified a few, look on their websites to learn more about what the college has to offer. These would include majors, student to faculty ratios, costs, activities and career services. After researching the various possibilities and reducing down a list, it is essential

to note their acceptance rates. Being realistic with yourself will be extremely important, which is why establishing reaches, safeties, and targets is critical. Utilizing Naviance and other resources will help you see where you stand with different colleges. The majority of students apply to five to ten schools, however it all depends on how many you wish to apply to as a student.

To submit applications, most institutions will use the Common App. Some schools, on the other hand, will use Coalition, their own application, etc. once you have determined what application type the colleges accept, begin by creating an account and adding the schools to your list. After an account is created, there will be several general questions that must be answered for the Common App. These questions will be personal, about testing, your activities, and your essay. The essay will be the most time consuming. Once the prompts for this essay are released, you will be given plenty of time to choose from them. Starting your essay early will be beneficial and help ease stress. Additional questions and, in some cases, supplemental essays will be asked by each school.

There are differ-

ent admission plans, ED I, ED II, Rolling, Regular or Early Action. Each college will have different options and it will be important that you stay aware of deadlines. Once you have done this, the next step is to submit your application. You will receive an email confirmation and information for the portal. The portal will be essential for viewing your decision, to see if you have gotten in. It can take up to a few months to hear back from each school but it is important to continually check on them. In the meantime you can fill out information for student aid, if that applies to you.

Here at River Hill, the guidance counselors are here to support you throughout the process. When speaking with Mr. Ives, he explained that his biggest piece of advice is, "Be as productive as possible with your college application process and search." He stresses the importance of starting applications as soon as possible because there is a lot to do. It is essential that you are informed of how much is due and when it is due. In addition to getting all of your applications due in a timely manner, Mr. Ives would like, "students to remain as balanced as possible." He added, "Unfortunately, we have lots of students who overwhelm them-

selves with their coursework and once the school year starts and they are working on applications and schoolwork, it's too much." It can be hard to stay on track with deadlines, which is why it is important to know what admissions term you will be choosing. When making the decision to choose Early Decision, Mr. Ives said it is important that it is a family agreement. He however noted that there are also disadvantages to Early Decision, "A lot of times you don't get any financial aid, so whatever the sticker price of that school is, will be the price." He noted this because if you are accepted to a school ED it is binding and you must attend. In addition, in terms of applying, he wants everyone to make sure they have a balance of schools. "We do have some students that only apply to reach schools and then have to go back and adjust their list of schools, so making sure you have some safeties is helpful."

The college application process can be stressful and worrisome but with time management and planning, it can be made a lot easier. All of the guidance counselors here at River Hill are here to help with the college process and if you ever have a question about anything feel free to go and ask.

## Choosing the Path to Your Future: The Course Selection Process

By: Julia Trost, Staff Writer



Freshmen, sophomores, and juniors are facing the challenging yet rewarding task of choosing their courses for the 2022-2023 school year. They are expected to select from a wide variety of courses, from Marine Biology to AP European History. Course request forms were due on Synergy by Tuesday, January 18.

On Wednesday, January 12, freshmen and sophomores met with their Hawks on the Rise mentors, who offered detailed information about the course selection process. Upperclassmen mentors gave helpful advice to underclassmen students, talking about their experiences in certain classes and their favorite electives.

Seniors, who have undergone the course selection process for three years, share their favorite electives and why, hoping to provide valuable guidance if others are unsure about which classes to select.

Defne Demirekler (12) exclaimed, "My favorite electives were definitely AP Chem, AP Bio, and Java. They are challenging, but expect to work hard and continue to study. Programming is very useful in your future career and in college classes so it's great to start with some basic knowledge of a programming language."

For AP Chem, AP Bio, Java, and other STEM courses, certain prerequisites are recommended such as completing Algebra II, which is also something that students should consider when registering for courses.

"I really enjoyed taking Independent Research because I feel that it prepared me for the business world in terms of emailing and contacting professional leaders. I also got to work with

so many different types of people and was able to build professional skills. Another elective that I enjoyed taking was Anatomy. If you're interested in taking any of the sciences or pre-med, I definitely recommend taking this class because it introduces you to the world of medicine and is a really fun elective," explained Aisha Arain (12).

Some classes like Independent Research require students to apply; for those interested, applications are due no later than January 28 and can be found on Canvas. As Aisha mentioned, it is important for students to follow their interests, picking courses that could benefit them career-wise in the future.

"I took dance sophomore year and junior year and I really liked it because it was a break from stressful school work," remarked Nellie Jayalatharachchi (12). "We get to perform and hang out with our friends."

Fine arts classes are fantastic for musical or artistic expression, as River Hill offers everything from Piano to Photography. Students must also take at least one fine arts class during high school to fulfill their graduation requirements.

To make an informed decision, students should talk to their parents, counselors, teachers, and other students who have taken the course. Some important resources for course scheduling include the Student Canvas Community, River Hill counselors, and the Howard County Course Catalog, which includes detailed information and prerequisites for every course offered. As always, students should take advantage of the courses offered at River Hill, any of which could inspire their love for a certain topic or career.



## “So Now What?”... Seniors’ Opinions On Finalizing College applications

By: *Eden Barnes, Staff Writer*  
*Renae Elsaesser, Staff Writer*

After more than a year of virtual instruction, seniors were hit with the dreaded college application process. For many, immediate stress and anxiety directly correlate to even hearing about applying. College is climatically built up by teachers, counselors, and peers; everything that has been done up until this point has been stepping stones in hopes of being accepted into an elite university.

Students start to compose their educational resume as sophomores and are continually followed by college information nights and SAT preparation in the form of timed essays shortly into their junior year. Sophomore and junior year are the two out of the four years that are very heavily built around how to successfully get into your college of choice. Senior John

## Snow Days: Do We Want More?

By: *Babiha Kaur, Staff Writer*

Students here at River Hill High School have similar opinions regarding the snow days that closed school after winter break and how their preceding school days were affected by the extra few days off.

Howard County schools were supposed to resume on January 3, 2022 after winter break. However, schools closed on January 3rd and 4th as a result of snow, adding two more days to this year’s time off. Additionally, a two hour delay was issued on Wednesday, January 5th, and schools closed again on Friday the 7th because of more bad weather.

Most students deemed these extra days at home beneficial. In a survey asking sixteen students if they enjoyed the snow days and if they hope for more in the future, approximately 93% of the students stated that they preferred the snow days over going to school, and 81% hope for more snow days this school year.

Sophomore Carolina Herrera stated, “I absolutely loved the two extra snow days because I felt like we were really pushed and pressured on adjusting back to school. Winter break was a much needed break, as well as the extra off days--they gave us extra spontaneous time to enjoy our life,

Bernas says he feels “rewarded, relaxed and glad that it is over.” With those two years being predominantly virtual, seniors were hit with a substantial workload entering their last year of high school. Senior Aiai Calmer feels “incredibly relieved, it’s been over a year’s process for me and right now I’m looking forward to the future and continuing my scholarship research.”

Since August, seniors have been flooded with complicated writing prompts, countless short answer questions, and the unavoidable “why us” individualized essay for every single school. This also includes running to parents to obtain the answers to all the financial aid and economic-based questions. Kristina Kim, a senior, has “had senioritis since like the first day of school and probably the summer of because I had no intention of trying this year at all.”

Now sitting in the second half of the school year, seniors are finally coming to an end on their list of due dates and submissions. Senior Michael Flaim states that it feels “like a million bucks.” After being accepted into her dream college, Laura Peng feels “a big relief knowing,” but voices that she is “definitely slipping into bad habits since my grades don’t really matter any more.”

relax, and realize that school shouldn’t be our main priority.” Carolina greatly enjoyed the extra two days off school because they helped her regain energy and adjust to the usual school routine after having a relaxing, stress-free winter break.

Some students found the snow days favorable because of their ability to sleep in for a few extra hours. Sophomore Aubrey Heiges communicated, “I liked the extra snow days because they helped me start to fix my sleep schedule to get more on track for school.”

When asked if the extra two days off and the two hour delay helped her transition back to school after winter break, Carolina shared, “The surprise made me be able to prepare more for school as well as become mentally prepared for school. It was awesome!” She agrees that snow days during this time in school give her much needed relaxation and stress-free time at home.

Sophomore Gabi Demuren concurred, expressing that the two extra days “helped me transition because I also got up early on those days, so I already started getting ready for school. I did not do that before the two days off. I didn’t have to hastily get up for school: I was just home, so it was a good transition.” Gabi liked the snow days because they helped her prepare for school much better than she would have if they did not happen. She also hopes for more snow days, expressing, “I like the time where there’s just an unexpected free

With a semester of high school left, some seniors predict what the future might entail. “I feel like once the second quarter ends, senioritis is going to hit more, and hopefully, the environment will feel more chill and less stressed,” senior Ria Krishna says.

For the up-in-coming seniors:  
good luck!



Photographed by *Joey Pickus of Evan Yi*

day because I feel less overwhelmed with whatever is going on and it’s a nice pause and break. I appreciate snow days!”

Aubrey also added, “The extra snow days and half day were helpful because it made it so I could get into the mindset of school again, and I didn’t have to make it through a whole school day for the first day back. It was more of a gradual ease back into it, and the teachers weren’t really able to assign much work so I didn’t have much to do that day.” Going back to school after winter break is hard for many, and Aubrey felt like the extra snow days and two hour delay helped her ease back into her normal school regimen without being overwhelmed for the first day she went back.

However, a few select students do not hope for more snow days this school year. Freshman Jonathan Mackrell does not want additional days off because “they’ll just make us waste our vacation time over a tiny amount of snow.” Isabelle Flynn, another ninth grader, also agrees because “the snow days get tacked on at the end of the year.” This addition of snow days causes more school days to be added in June; HCPSS has built in five inclement weather make-up days, and students do not get to start their summer until much later in the month than they would have desired.

Overall, a majority of the students were happy with the extra days off school and are hoping for a few (but not many more!) snow days in the future.



## Why Adolescents Should Get a Booster Shot

By: Nicola Staples, Staff Writer

As new Covid variants like omicron begin to surge in the United States, receiving booster shots has become a widely discussed issue. According to the Washington Post, vaccine boosters “help broaden and strengthen protection against omicron and other variants,” hopefully slowing down the transmission of new variants. Although booster shots will not stop the spread of new Covid-19 variants, they will lessen the effects and lower hospitalization rates. Recently, the CDC shared that children ages 12 to 17 are now eligible to receive vaccine boosters, and are encouraging everyone to get their booster shots. Junior Donna Cazeau supports the boosters and believes they “would help slow down the transmission rates of omicron and would allow us to keep doing in-person learning.”

The booster shots are crucial for adolescents to get because there have been more reports of adolescents getting Covid, and more pediatric hospitalizations in the U.S. CDC officials have also shared that unvaccinated 12-17 year olds are 7 to 11 times more likely to be hospitalized, which is why the vaccine is so crucial. Booster shots act as a “boost” for your immune system since the previous vaccine may not be as effective over time. The CDC shared that Pfizer’s booster increases antibodies against omicron by 25 times. Although this will not fully protect people from the variants of Covid-19, it will help immune systems to build up enough antibodies in order to less-

en the effects of the virus. A student at River Hill also shared that they believe “it is important to understand that studies show vaccine immunity wanes over 6 months and a booster shot can strengthen your immunity.”

While encouraging everyone to get boosted is important, it is also important to make sure everyone is fully vaccinated as well. According to the CDC, out of the 16.7 million adolescents in the U.S., only half are vaccinated. Although encouraging everyone to get boosted is important, professionals are also urging that everyone should at least be fully vaccinated.

Boosters are an important part of stopping the spread of Covid, but it is also important to get unvaccinated adolescents vaccinated first. Children older than 12 are now eligible to receive a booster five months after their second dose. Along with getting booster shots, it is also important to remember to wear an effective mask, social distance, and get tested regularly. Vaccines and boosters are not a permanent cure for the virus, but they are a crucial part of

slowing down the spread of Covid-19 and lowering hospitalizations and deaths. Junior Leah Nesmith shared that they, “trust science and encourage everyone to get boosted.”

Booster shots are extremely crucial for stopping the spread of new variants, and will protect people by increasing antibodies and developing immunity against the virus. Keeping in mind that vaccines and boosters will not prevent people from getting the virus, it is important to remember to wear an effective mask, like the N95 or KN95 mask, social distance, and get tested when experiencing Covid-19 symptoms. Choosing to receive the vaccine and booster is up to the individual, however it is important to keep in mind the benefits of receiving the vaccines which slow down the spread of new variants and hopefully end the pandemic. Professionals from the CDC have claimed that the surge of omicron cases “emphasizes the importance of vaccination, boosters, and prevention efforts needed to protect against COVID-19.”



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