

## New PVCC Police Chief Wants to Make a Difference

Meet the candidates  
 for VA District 58  
 on pages 12-13

Veronica Reyes, staff writer

Many students struggle with difficult circumstances, disappointment, or a lack of optimism per academic and social pressure. PVCC’s new police chief believes that finding and setting the example of a positive attitude will make students successful. Throughout his life, PVCC Police Chief Carl A. Murray Jr. faced difficult times with strong determination to better the community.

Chief Murray was raised in Newport News, Virginia, in a single-parent family. “My mother was my backbone...she encouraged me to be anything as long as I put my mind to it,” Murray said. He credits much of his success to the strong support system of the women in his family as well as his uncles and those he knew.

When asked if he ever gained interest in

police work before leaving high school, he explained that he had never thought about it, stating, “I never saw a police officer growing up.” In school, Murray was interested in sports and academics. After high school, he worked as a long-term substitute teacher and received his certification to become a regular, full-time teacher while working a retail job at night. To Murray, everything was going fine until suddenly things changed.

Murray was on his way to becoming a school principal, but when a student decided to slash his tires, his plans were altered. When a city police officer came to investigate and file the report, Murray felt as if “he didn’t really care.” His first direct interaction with a police officer made him think about how the police are expected to “make a difference in the community.” Murray to this

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Chief Murray poses in front of the newly decorated wall of his lobby.

## DATES TO REMEMBER

— Election Day—  
Nov. 5

— Drop In Job Win LinkedIn Photo Booth \*—  
Nov. 5, 4-6 p.m., Bolick Center

— One Mic Stand \* —  
Nov. 7, 7-9 p.m., Dickinson Building D202

— In Form: Shapes of  
Contemporary Improvisation \* —  
Nov. 8, 6 p.m., Dickinson Building D202

— Virginia Opera Presents *Arias and Duets* ^ —  
Nov. 9, 7:30-9 p.m. Dickinson Main Stage

— How to Track Gold Smuggling  
across West Africa \* —  
Nov 13, 12-1 p.m., Auditorium M229

— BSA/One Book Screening: *Thirteenth* \* —  
Nov. 13, 12-2 p.m., North Mall Meeting Room

— The Financially Savvy College Student:  
Managing Irregular Income \* —  
Nov. 14, 12:30-1:30 p.m., M103

— Free Movie Friday: *Judy* \* —  
Nov. 15, 7:30 p.m., Dickinson Main Stage

— Theatre of the Oppressed Lab:  
Creativity and Democracy \* —  
Nov. 16, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., Dickinson Building D202

— BSA/One Book Screening: *Coachman* \* —  
Nov. 20, 12-1 p.m., North Mall Meeting Room

— Human Services Career Expo \* —  
Nov. 21, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.,  
North Mall Meeting Room and Bolick Center

— PVCC Theatre Presents *Spamalot* ^—  
Nov. 21, 22, 23, 7:30 p.m.  
and Nov. 24, 2:30 p.m.  
Dickinson Main Stage

\*Free Event    ^Student Vouchers Available

# PVCC's PTK All Virginia Nominees

Cody Clark, assistant editor

This month, PVCC is recognizing Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) President Jacob Laxton and PTK Vice President of Service Steven Lunsford for being All Virginia Academic Team nominees. The All-USA Academic Team annually selects twenty members from across the United States.

Those selected earn a \$5,000 scholarship and are presented at American Association of Community Colleges Annual Convention's President's Breakfast.

The nominees from Alpha Epsilon Tau, PVCC's PTK chapter, will be recognized at a future event in Richmond by leaders of the Virginia Community College System.

Everyone at PVCC is encouraged to join Alpha Epsilon in congratulating the nominees for the 2019-2020 school year.



Jacob Laxton and Steven Lunsford  
Photo courtesy of Bruce Robinson



# Student Government Association News

Elizabeth Phan, staff writer

Poker chips lined the tables at PVCC's Casino night on Oct. 11 from 7-11 p.m. in the main building.

The halls of PVCC were decorated with a Great Gatsby theme. Gold and black streamers greeted guests upon arrival. Every guest received play money which they could exchange for poker chips or raffle tickets. Music played loudly and a projector displayed popular music videos.

Laughter and singing filled the Bolick Student Center as students rushed to place their bets. PVCC's Student Government Association (SGA) staffed the event and set up the poker tables.

"At casino night, we make the Bolick center look like an actual casino," said Jacob Laxton, the president of SGA.

The SGA supplied catering from Bojangles. Chicken tenders, pizza with a gluten-free option, cookies, and vegetable trays covered two long tables in the hallway.

The event was open to anyone of any age. Coordinator of Student Engagement and Student Life Shawn Anderson said that students could invite their family or friends to enjoy the night.

Each guest received \$10,000 in chips. Attendees arrived wearing formal wear to the event. Anyone who dressed up, or donated cans to the food drive, received an additional \$10,000

in poker chips. As per casino night tradition, some students wore their Halloween costumes or wore cosplay. All of the poker chips and money were supplied by a casino event company.

Laxton said that casino night allows everyone to participate in events that would not otherwise be offered at PVCC.

"It gives students the chance to meet other students in a non-school driven atmosphere," he said.

Guests played blackjack, craps, roulette, trivia, and other games to win poker chips that could later be cashed out for raffle tickets.

The raffle tickets were taken to the North Mall Meeting Room where prizes and tables were set up for the last event of the night. Some of the prizes for the raffle event included PVCC bookstore gift cards, PVCC t-shirts, and Amazon gift cards.

"My favorite part of casino night was the games. The night was a lot of fun. It was low-key, but also a nice social event," said Phia Davis, an attendee. "Getting the word out about the event next year would be nice," she said.

Laxton noted, "It's a really cool experience. We always want as much people to show up to casino night as possible, so students should definitely invite everyone they know!"

To be involved in PVCC's next casino night, email [sanderson@pvcc.edu](mailto:sanderson@pvcc.edu) to help set up the event or become a dealer.



Sophia Keniston dealing to Chief Murray. Photo courtesy of Jan Newcomb

# New Police Chief, Continued

day does not want anyone to have a similar, negative experience to his.

He applied to Virginia Commonwealth University, where he studied Criminal Justice, and from there, he is now completing his Master's at Virginia State University. For 13 years, Murray served for the Richmond Police Department and spent five of those years as a school resource officer for elementary through high school grade levels.



Chief Murray playing basketball at PVCC. Photo courtesy of Chief Murray

“I understand that there’s distrust,” Murray explained about the stereotype of police officers. However, he said, “it is not the people’s job to get over the distrust, it is the police’s responsibility.” Since he first began serving as a police officer, Murray remains committed to putting his beliefs into action.

From grade schools to Virginia State, he always remained active with the student body. As an officer at VA State, he spoke at freshman orientations, athletic events, and tried to attend the school’s events and carnival. He shared videos and photographs with some of the students and athletes that he continues to maintain good relationships with today.

Murray explained that people may always

believe that police are “hard and tough,” but instead he wants to impress on people that “we are human beings...we laugh, we dance, we can be down-to-Earth.”

When not in his office, Murray can be seen on campus “dunking” over students on the basketball court, stated PVCC student Carlos Martin. Off campus, Chief Murray spends his time with his wife and children. Excitedly, he also shared that he enjoys playing golf and is a fan of R&B group, New Edition.

Chief Murray maintains an open-door policy at PVCC. He wants the PVCC Police Department to be “more seen, more approachable,” for students and faculty. Students are invited to come and talk to him with their concerns, which do not always have to be police related.

“Surround yourself with those who want you to be successful,” said Murray. To be successful, Murray believes that students need to have a good support system which can be made up by one person to several other mentors. For the chief, these include his mother and fellow police

chiefs. For students, mentors can include himself, other police officers, faculty, or classmates. For this reason, Chief Murray also expressed interest in beginning a leadership program for students to develop and sharpen their skills to be effective leaders in the community.

“You have to be intentionable, you have to be a go-getter,” he said. He urges students to take “initiative.” Chief Murray personally made the goal of making a difference in the community by becoming a police officer. Murray is looking to add more positivity on campus and wants for the PVCC Police Department to reach out and be there for students.

His motto for facing challenges is “Don’t tell me what we can’t do, tell me what we can do.”

# How to Transfer Credits after Attending PVCC

Deadra Miller, online editor

Speaking with a transfer advisor before leaving PVCC would be helpful if one plans to attend a four-year university. At this semester's Student Success Day, held on Oct. 1, Abby Bullinger, an advisor in the Admissions and Advising Center, set up a table to explain to students the option of transferring to a four-year university after leaving PVCC.

Bullinger said, "Check out all of the agreements, guidelines and possibilities of where and how to transfer after graduating from PVCC." The website to do this is [www.pvcc.edu/transfer](http://www.pvcc.edu/transfer).

Bullinger had a busy table at Student Success

Day this year because students were not fully aware of what schools PVCC has agreements with and when those deadlines were. Bullinger was adamant in promoting the website because she could not put all of the information needed by students on paper.

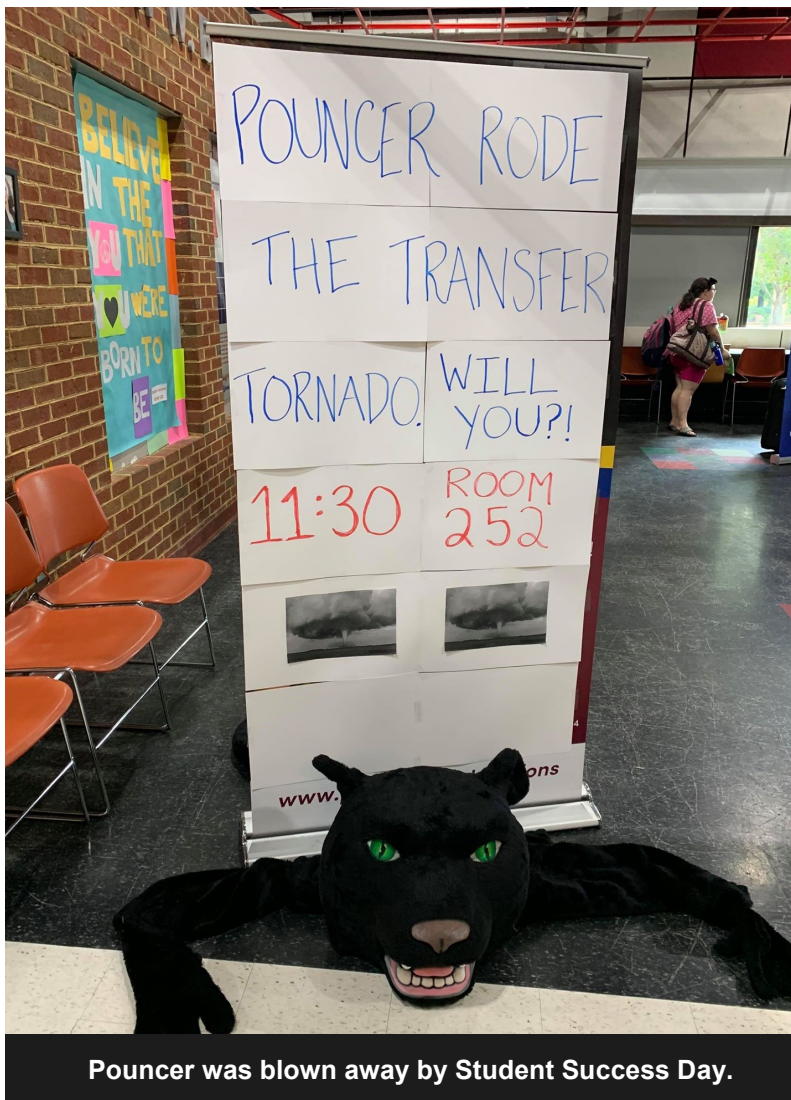
On Oct. 2, there was also a seminar held in room M252 to explain the options in greater detail of how to transfer to a four-year university. Admissions and advising used PVCC's mascot to advertise the event. "Pouncer rode the transfer tornado. Will you?" was used to promote the seminar. Students need to understand that education after PVCC does not end if they do not want it to, therefore, these seminars and workshops are always offered to students at a variety of times.

Student Success Day also included tables from Financial Aid, SGA, Voter Registration, Career Services, and even doughnuts. This year, David Lerman, director of student success and retention, with the help of the other Student Success Advisors, Kristen Holt and Kendra Powell decided to go a different route with food. Instead of pizza, they went with a variety of Krispy Kreme doughnuts.

They also spread the Student Success Day events out across two days this semester so that students had a chance to attend if they had class during one of the scheduled dates. The Student Government Association was recruiting for new members during these two days. Financial Aid had riddles that had to be solved in order to receive some of the prizes on their table.

This Student Success Day was unlike any other. Although it was a different type of day, it was promising to be fruitful for the students that attended.

To take advantage of the opportunities offered at the Student Success Day(s), please stop by M132 and schedule an appointment with one of the advisors.



Pouncer was blown away by Student Success Day.

# Los Valientes Receives A Standing Applause

Elizabeth Phan, staff writer

The lights dimmed and suddenly music quiet edthe chatter. On Oct. 12, from 7:30 - 9 p.m., Los Valientes, The Courageous Ones, gave a beautiful performance in honor of Hispanic Heritage Month. The group performed in the Dickinson

America and Mexican history. Books, movies, and documentaries were made about these figures.

“The performance of each figure and how the music reflect on their persona was very unique,” said Elizabeth Valtierra, an attendee. “I’ve read books about them but what got me was the music behind the performance,” she said.

Valiant, meaning brave or courage in Spanish, had a monologue that expressed a deeper meaning to the performance.

“I had originally thought Joaquin Murrieta’s ‘El Zorro’ would have inspired me the most, but it was Oscar Romero,” she said.

Oscar Romero is an Archbishop of San Salvador. In the performance, his character spoke out about poverty, social justice, economic shifts, and political wars.

“Those are all topics that are very real to this day. Sadly, he was assassinated,” she said. Many leaders and activists were assassinated during a Mass. The musical pieces heightened the meaning of each character’s performance.

“The music only left me wanting more scenes of each

character,” she said. “I also want to point out that Oscar Romero is a Catholic figure from San Salvador. It’s a country that is often overlooked when recognizing Latin America.”

At the final scene of the performance, many attendees stood to their feet and applauded the performers. Valtierra, and a few others, wiped their tears.

“I would love to see Los Valientes outside of PVCC. The performance needs to be brought to the community as a Latinx community in Charlottesville. The community is quickly growing,” said Valtierra.



Photo courtesy of PVCC Marketing & Media Relations

building on the Main Stage Theatre. Ticket prices were \$12 for adults and \$10 for seniors and children.

According to PVCC’s website, The CORE ensemble brings diversity, culture, and history with the story of human rights and social justice. Los Valientes told the story of many men including Diego Rivera and Joaquin Murrieta—a real-life Zorro.

The ensemble played a variety of songs from traditional Latino folk, some famous scores by Astor Piazzolla, and Osvaldo Golijov.

Each character is an iconic figure in Latin

# 600-Word Horror Stories and the Candyathon

Ari Oxford, staff writer

On Oct. 28, the Dickinson commons was taken over by five folding tables covered with paper to keep them clean, life-size cutouts of Edgar Allan Poe and Mary Shelley, and about 50 people. The tables had Day of the Dead (Día de los Muertos) themed murals made of candy and designed by Adjunct Instructor of Art Fenella Belle's 2-D Design Class.

The murals were designed and put together by five teams, and they used candy in several creative ways, such as opening packages of colored sugar candy and spreading it on the table for a background of a scene.

After 10 minutes of being on display and judged, the candy in the murals was eaten by creators and attendees. Though the candy murals were supposed to be part of a judged competition, the judges decided that all of the designs won.

Once the murals had been decimated, people gathered in the audience in front of the cutouts of Poe and Shelley.

Professor of English and Writing Center Coordinator Jennifer Koster and the Creative Writing Club president introduced the authors of the winning stories and the honorable mentions (all of the winners and honorable mentions, as well as their story titles, are listed at the end of



Photos courtesy of Writers Unite PVCC

the annual 600-Word Horror Story contest. They presented the authors with custom painted clay medallions before they read their stories.

The event ended with Chris Cutshaw dramatically reading his winning story "The Home Invader."

Winners:

First place: "The Home Invader" by Chris Cutshaw.

Second place: "Stuffed" by Anthony Madison.

Third place: "Something's Wrong with Amy" by Jess Amos

Honorable Mentions:

"Pumpkin Eater" by Emily Karasz  
"Always Lock Your Car" by Natalie Murphy

"Richie Baby" by John Powell



Chris Cutshaw (1st); Anthony Madison (2nd); Jess Amos (3rd); and Emily Karasz (Honorable Mention)

# How to Eliminate Stereotype Threat

Aleena Haidari, staff writer

Do stereotypes have a positive or a negative connotation? Stereotypes are socially constructed perceptions about a particular group, religion, race, and gender.

Each group has at least one stereotype; however, the implications or severity of the stereotypes varies from one group to another. As many studies have demonstrated as well as argued by Toni Schamader, the author of *Stereotype Threat: Theory, Process, and Application*, that when stereotypes amplify, they would severely impact a group and could be considered as stereotype threat.

Stereotype threat is defined as a threat or perception that is placed or imposed on a group which could potentially impact their race, religion, or sex, negatively.

During the talk, “Understanding and Coping with Stereotype Threat,” which was one in a series of One Book events, Associate Professor of Sociology Dr. Todd Platts explained studies and statistics that have demonstrated the adverse effects of negative stereotypes.

For instance, most schools that are situated in low-income neighborhoods have a high population of African Americans, Latinos, and other minority students.

This illustrates that stereotypes have elevated to an institutional level which hinders students performances due to a lack of adequate budget and attribution.

Many of these students live in poor neighborhoods and their schools don’t receive an adequate budget to properly prepare them in comparison to highly developed neighborhoods.

Therefore, it is essential to note that stereotypes have heightened to a point where students are being adversely impacted.

Many other countries have carried out similar studies and they have shown similar findings.

If you are someone who would

like to eliminate stereotypes, then do not hesitate for there are many ways to consider eliminating stereotypes.

The easiest way to approach solving this issue is to understand and learn about the implications of stereotypes of affected groups.

By simply engaging in conversations or working with people that are different from you, you would gain invaluable experience from the affected people.

Learning about others can be challenging if you have a firm belief in your perceptions of them; however, in order to eliminate stereotypes, adopt a growing mindset and allow yourself to be open to new information and new encounters.

These steps will allow you to be comfortable with others and understand things from their perspective.

Understanding others’ point of views does not promote rejection of your perspectives; it is a way to peacefully disagree.



Dr. Todd Platts. Photo Courtesy of Dr. Todd Platts





Carl Brown, Richard Koonce, Eddie Harris, and Duane Washington  
Photography by Deadra Miller

## One Book Panel Explores Life after Incarceration

Deadra Miller, online editor

The term mass incarceration refers to the way the U.S. has locked up a vast population in federal and state prisons, as well as local jails. On Oct. 9, the One Book Program brought in three formerly incarcerated individuals for a panel to explain their experiences of life after incarceration. Carl Brown, The Fountain Fund client relations manager, was the moderator. The other men, Eddie Harris, Duane Washington and Richard Koonce, were all formerly incarcerated individuals that are now succeeding after serving their time.

Carl Brown explained that it would be helpful to know the “old Jim Crow” before reading *The New Jim Crow*, “This being that drugs were brought into society at this time.” Brown said, “It was intriguing to grow up during the times of segregation.”

Brown likes to use the analogy that support and failure are one in the same because one has anxiety asking for support and that same person has even more anxiety when they fail. Anxiety is their way of handling situations good or bad.

Eddie Harris was the first panelist to explain his personal situation of how he was introduced into the life of crime and how he came out of it. Harris became rebellious when he was around 8 or 9 years old by selling drugs.

Now Harris is a part of Ready Kids, which is a non-profit organization that helps children get out of the life of crime by learning to be effective in many ways. Harris is also the CEO of Vinegar Hill Vintage clothing line and *Vinegar Hill Magazine*. Without the support of a lifelong

friend, Carl Brown, he would not be where he is now.

Duane Washington, the third panelist to speak, became defiant in the 1980’s by selling drugs to support his family because his father was absent. While Washington was incarcerated, he found a faith-based program to start his journey of turning around his life. Washington is now a part of The Fountain Fund and Ready Kids, but also owns his own small trucking company which he achieved in less than nine months.

Although it took Washington a long time to find a path within life, he takes time out of his busy schedule to help spread the message of it being possible to make something of yourself after incarceration.

Richard Koonce was the last panelist to speak on his rehabilitation after prison. At the age of 15, Koonce began his life in and out of the prison system during a 17-year time frame. He realized after getting sentenced to 60 months in 2014 his reasoning is “the misinformation on the inside of those gates is in abundance.”

During the same year, Koonce decided to go on a fact finding mission to get the information that he needed to turn his life around. After Koonce got out of this time in prison, he became a Virginia State Certified Peer Support Specialist in Albemarle Charlottesville Regional Jail (ACRJ). Now Koonce is teaching incarcerated people how to make something out of nothing.

All of these men have interesting stories of getting turned around in life. To understand more of what these men and other prisoners go through, consider reading this year’s One Book program selection *The New Jim Crow*.

# Deliberative Dialogue Tackles Tough Issues

Samuel Huff, staff writer

On Oct. 23, the North Mall Meeting Room on campus was filled with students who came to voice their opinions on one of America's most touchy subjects: gun control. The students were divided into five groups, each led by a volunteer student moderator who had been trained in the proceedings.

Some students had their opinions and were prepared to debate them, that is, until the faculty leading the event opened the discussion by explaining that they were not here to debate their points.

"Deliberative Dialogue is not a debate where you risk relationships; it is a discussion where you build relationships by understanding where people with opposing views are coming from," said PVCC Professor of English & Writing Center Coordinator Jennifer Koster, an organizer of the event.

Koster presented a PowerPoint that informed the participants of how this discussion would be structured by laying out the rules, the issue to be discussed, and the three possible solutions to be weighed by each group.

The rules laid out by the facilitators ensured the environment was one of understanding, learning, and respect. Students were encouraged to remain open and engaged during the event.

As the discussions commenced, students began engaging with each option. From realizing the benefits of some options they had not considered, to respectfully challenging the claims made by their fellow peers, each student had the opportunity to expand their understanding of the topic at hand.

There were several instances where students disagreed, but rather than attack each other's character and motives, they explained their opposition and commended the other participants for the validity of their arguments.

Once the individual groups had concluded their independent discussions, they reconvened to reflect on the issue as an entire body.



**PVCC Professor Jennifer Koster organized the Deliberative Dialogue event. Photography by Samuel Huff**

"Let's go around and discuss which options each group connected with the most," said Koster as everyone reassembled.

When the time came for each group to present the solution they had come to accept, this reporter, who served as a group moderator, was shocked to discover that each group reported vastly different conclusions.

While no one answer is right or wrong, each student made points and compromised with their peers which led to a room of unique viewpoints and diverse conclusions.

After the event, participants filled out a short survey in which many students reported walking away with a broader understanding and an appreciation for the event.

"The goal is to provide a healthy environment for students to voice their opinions and listen to others; we hope these students will be inspired to attend future dialogues," said Koster.

She said the school hosts a Deliberative Dialogue once a semester. The next is to be scheduled in March.

# Democrats: ‘Voting Rights are Human Rights!’

Samuel Huff, staff writer

On Oct. 19, a small group of Democrats assembled in the basement of the Gordon Avenue Library in the heart of Charlottesville. The attendees conversed over coffee and pastries until it was time to begin the meeting. Once a month, this group invites the general public to discuss important issues facing the country. This meeting’s topic was an issue that hit close to home for many in attendance: voter suppression and voter rights.

The meeting was held by the Albemarle County Democratic Party and featured a panel of two prominent figures in the local party: Abigail Turner and Seth Ragosta, both legal consultants and Democratic activists.

Ragosta began the meeting by recalling an interaction he had during the 2016 elections in which he witnessed several individuals, primarily caucasian, challenging the validity of several minority voters’ right to vote. The collective gasp from the crowd set the tone for the duration of the meeting.

Several participants reported seeing similar occurrences or even experiencing it themselves. It became clear that Charlottesville suffers from the same bigotry that plagues the rest of the nation. Turner explained that these individuals were exercising their legal right to challenge any voter’s validity, regardless of how absurd their choices were.

One attendee confronted her saying, “No one has the right to harass another person. All you’re telling us is that you didn’t do enough to protect the person you saw being harassed.”

Turner and Ragosta explained that from a legal standpoint there is little that can be done to prevent this from happening. As citizens, however, Ragosta encouraged those in attendance to challenge the inquiry if they felt that it was unfounded.

“Without being aggressive, approach the

person who you feel is harassing fellow voters by asking them ‘I see you’ve been challenging many voters today, would you be willing to sign an affidavit that states your purpose for challenging these individuals?’ After you ask, nine times out of ten, they will leave the voter alone. It’s our job as citizens to put a mirror in the face of bigotry and to show the individual that they are wrong without humiliating or vilifying them,” said Ragosta.

As the meeting concluded, one attendee, who chose to remain anonymous, reported being shocked at the lack of partisan talking points, saying, “There was no mention of democrat-specific policies, candidate endorsements, or anything dem-related. As a centrist democrat, I was really happy with how this was conducted.”

For those who are confronted by a challenge this election cycle, Ragosta encourages them to comply by filling out the presented form; however, if one does feel that they are being harassed, they may report to the election officials who are in place to address such issues.

Turner encourages all Charlottesvilleans, particularly students, to engage not only in the presidential election, but also local and state elections as they, more directly, affect student issues like education funding, maintenance, and tuition.

The next breakfast event will take place in November; the date has not yet been released.



Seth Ragosta (left) and Abigail Turner (right) address a room of democratic voters. Photography by Samuel Huff

# Elizabeth Alcorn Visits PVCC

Cody Clark, assistant editor

On Oct. 29, Dr. Elizabeth Alcorn came to PVCC to talk with students. In the Bolick Student Center, Alcorn was available from noon to 1 p.m. to discuss her plans for office. Alcorn is currently seeking election in the Virginia House of Delegates for District 58.

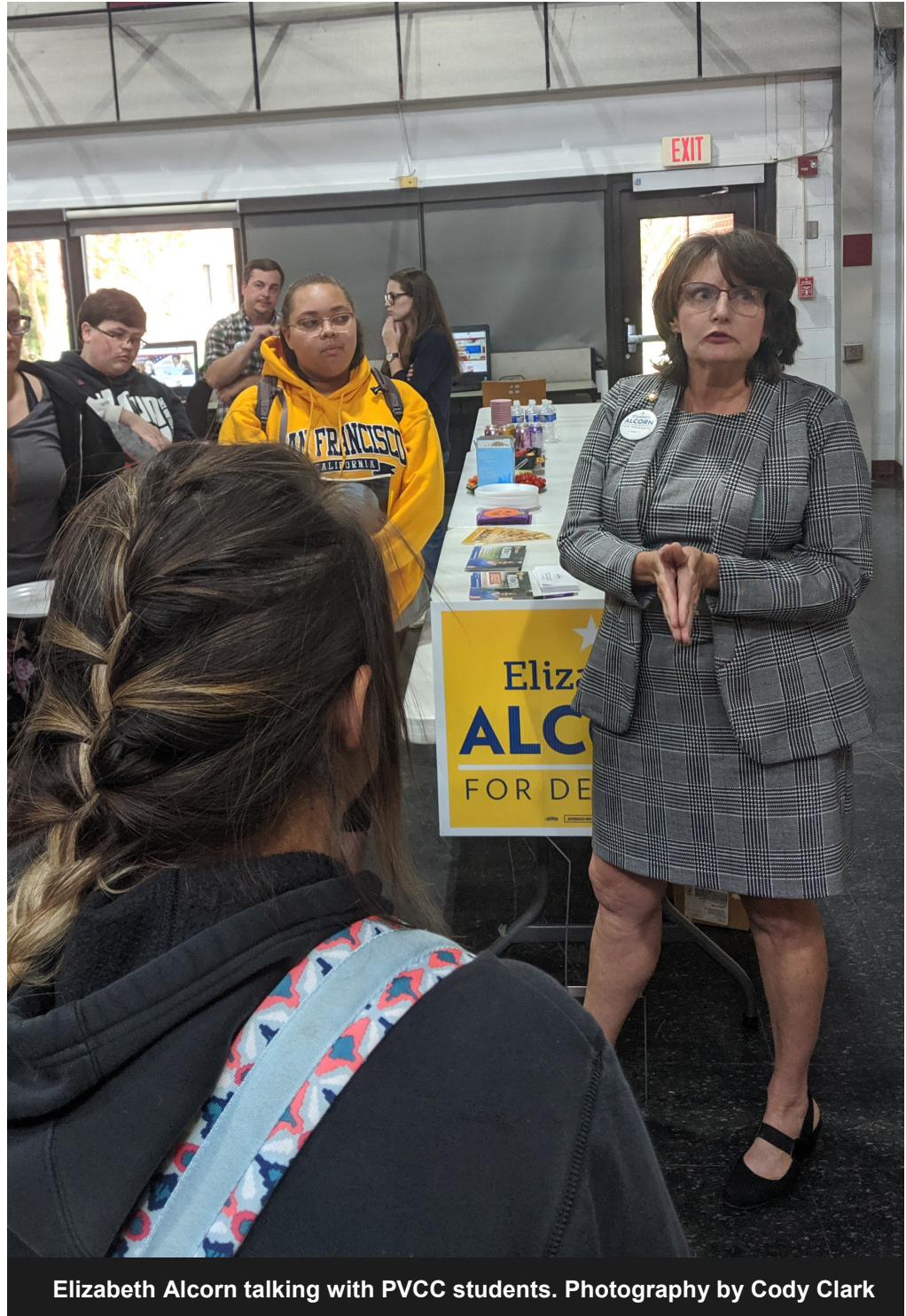
During Alcorn's time in the Bolick Center, she discussed many topics with students. A topic that was discussed between Alcorn and students was education.

Alcorn said that Virginia needs to "tweak the funding formula for public schools." Alcorn also stated she would like to change the SOL's because they have "become an unhealthy culture."

Another topic that students brought to Alcorn was abortion and birth control. Alcorn said that abortion should remain an option for women, but wants women to have fair access to all kinds of affordable birth control. Students also brought up gun-control and this lead Alcorn to talk about support for red flag laws, background check reform, and the

limitation of high capacity magazines.

The general election will be held on Nov. 5. You can find out more about Elizabeth Alcorn at <https://alcornfor58th.com/>. PVCC also has a non-partisan voter guide available for free.



Elizabeth Alcorn talking with PVCC students. Photography by Cody Clark

# Rob Bell Meets with Students at PVCC

Jessica Adkins, online editor

On Thursday, Oct. 24, Virginia Delegate Rob Bell greeted students in PVCC's Bolick Student Center. Delegate Bell is currently the Republican candidate in a race for Virginia House District 58. The meet and greet started at 12 p.m. and lasted a little under an hour. Accompanying Delegate Bell was his assistant and President Frank Friedman.

Bell spoke with fellow PVCC students and staff about the issues he wishes to address if reelected. Some of those issues that he spoke about included mental health reform, veteran services, and anti-abortion legislation. After introducing himself, he opened the floor to questions from students and staff.

Every five minutes, Bell would notice that new people came into the crowd and would ask the same question, "Is there anything that I can help with in the transfer process to a four-year school?" Several students made comments of their concerns when dealing with transferring.

After talking about the community college system, Bell answered a question about mental health. Bell said that he is an advocate for mental health care reform and always has been since his son has been diagnosed with a mental illness.

He then went on to talk about Senator Creigh

Deeds' son and his suicide. He said that the reason Deeds' son killed himself was partly because he could not find a psychiatric hospital that had room for him.

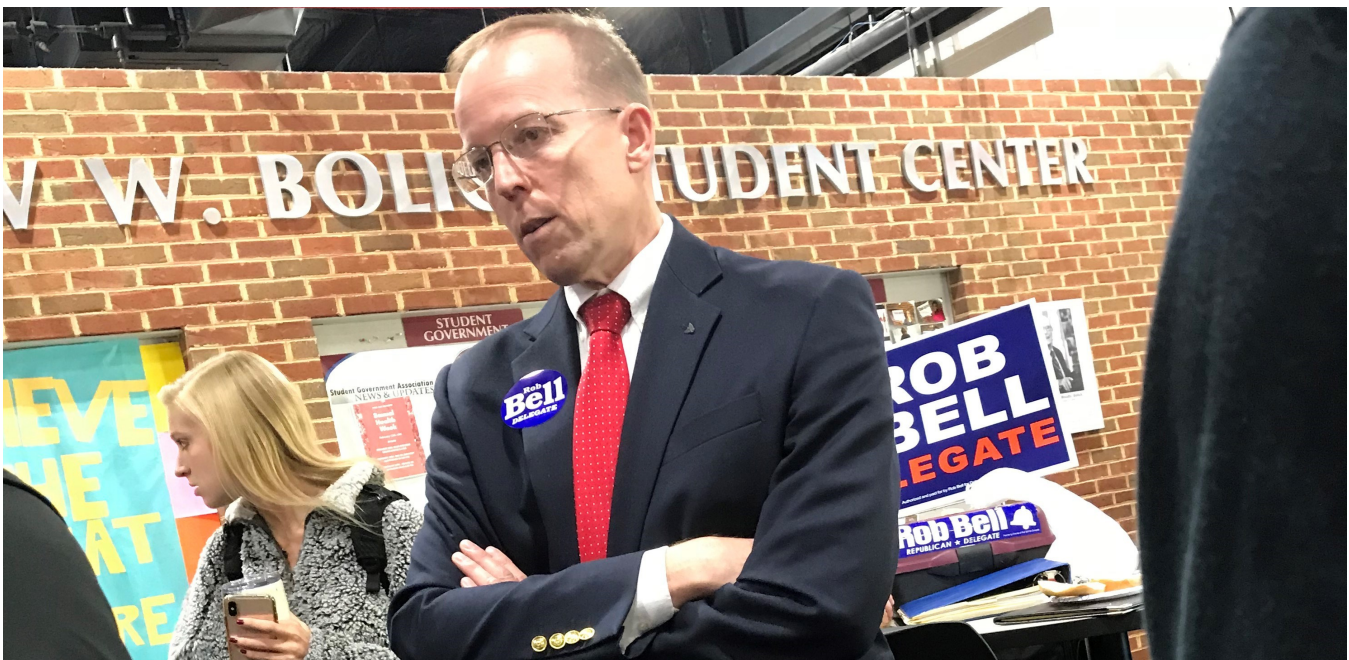
Bell implied that Deeds' son was denied entry and later took his own life after not seeking proper medical treatment. Bell's goal for mental health reform is to make more room available for those who need it.

Bell also spoke about how some people with mental illnesses will be taken to jail instead of a psychiatric hospital, which can lead to negative outcomes.

One of the last questions that Bell answered was his view on abortion. Bell went on to talk about how Virginia has passed multiple bills that are related to abortion. He said, "The part of the bill that received the most attention was a reduction of restrictions on third trimester abortions. I am pro-life, so it failed 5-3."

When Bell was finished answering questions, students had the ability to talk with him one-on-one to get to know him a little better and have any questions answered.

Bell handed out business cards to anyone who asked for one. After the meet and greet was over, students were able to enjoy bagels provided by Bell.



Rob Bell talks with PVCC student. Photography by Jessica Adkins

# Interview with a Small Business Owner

Matthew Minecci, staff writer

On the county line between Albemarle and Greene Counties lies an abandoned gas station. It has been ignored and unnoticed for years. One day, just over a year ago, an aspiring young business woman took notice of it. With hard work and a flair for a more rustic style, she converted the station into the store County Line Country Mercantile, a place that has got a little bit of everything. The owner of County Line is Wendy Peery.

The store can be found at 5548 Seminole Trail, and they are open Wednesday to Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday Noon to 5 p.m. Homemade knickknacks and antiques fill the space. Going for an autumn theme, pumpkins and hay were everywhere, creating a cozy feeling. The store doesn't sell specific items. The owner

expressed that she would buy things she thought were interesting and sell them at the store. She also has hobbyists whose items are sold there. She would then split the profits with them 70/30, her getting the 30.

Peery does not have a business degree. In fact, she never even went to college. But still, she is successfully running a small business. She said that she had originally been in real estate, but after a particularly slow year she decided to follow her dream and try to open up a store.

“If you're passionate about something, it will fall into place. But it won't be easy,” she said. She went on to explain that young business owners should surround themselves with good and trustworthy people if you want to succeed.

The store can be found on the county line on 29, and they are open Wednesday to Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday Noon. to 5 p.m..

## Small Talk Lands Job Interviews

Veronica Reyes, staff writer

On Thursday, Oct. 17, PVCC Career Services hosted much more than a general job fair, bringing in a variety of employers in business, accounting, and office administration in the Bolick Student Center. The events are part of an individualized approach to help students find a career based on their degree program.

Every month, PVCC is focusing on one major area of interest. October is all about Business related careers and programs. From 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., local employers had tables and representatives to talk to prospective students about career options as well job and internship openings. Some employers included the Virginia Forestry Service, Verizon, University of Virginia, Millennium Partners, and PVCC.

“You never know when a conversation will turn into an internship,” or job, explained PVCC Job & Internship Coordinator Gigi Davis. She emphasized the importance of students “making that connection as early as you can” with employers in your area. No matter what field PVCC students are pursuing, gaining relationships with businesses and offices in the area they hope to be employed in can make one stand out in a pool of applicants.

Students and the general public are invited to attend upcoming Career Services events. “Sometimes the best time to look for a job is when you already have a job. And it's beneficial to talk to local representatives and get their feedback on your career path and resume,” said Associate Professor of Accounting Kevin Arrington.

In November, Career Services is concentrating on Human Services. Anyone looking for a career in Education, Nursing, and Social Services is welcome to the variety of public events on campus. In April, there will also be a new summer internship event for all students.

Career Services is hosting more events and employers on campus every week. Be sure to shake their hand, grab a brochure, and make a good first impression to a prospective employer.



Photography by Veronica Reyes

# Lowe's help the Madison Mountaineers

Anandhu Shaji, staff writer

As part of their yearly tradition, the Lowe's Home Improvement store in Ruckersville, Virginia did their Heroes Project on Saturday, September 21, 2019 just like hundreds of other Lowe's Home Improvement stores around the country.

"The goal of the Hero's Project is for us to be a part of the community. Lowe's invests \$2,500 per store and each store has the ability to go into the community and partner with a non-profit organization that needs help such as refreshing schools..." said Michael Comerford, the store manager of Lowe's in Ruckersville.

This year, Lowe's at Ruckersville is helping the Madison County High School refresh parts of



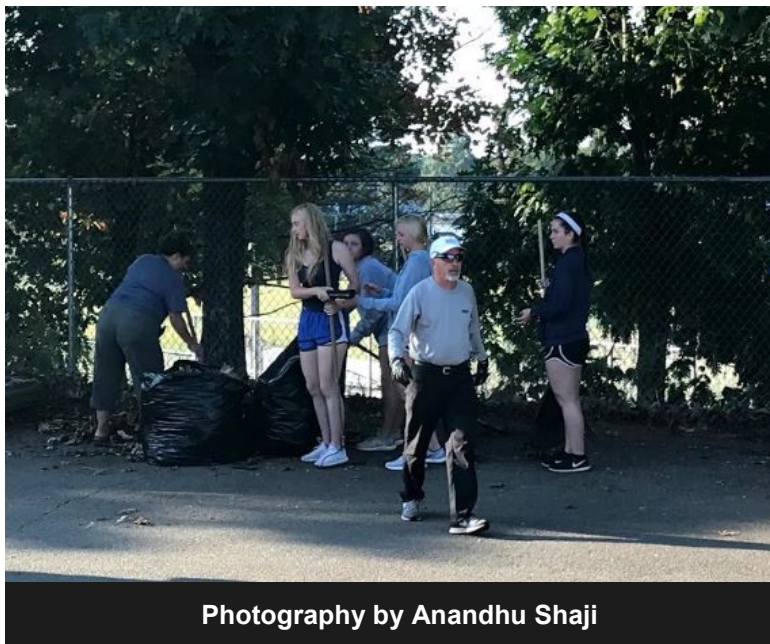
Photography by Anandhu Shaji

their exterior and interior. Along with volunteers from the Lowe's Home Improvement store were students and athletes from the Madison County High School. The store provided tools, equipment, and resources to the students and volunteers for the task.

"We found out that they had a need that they didn't have a budget for and because of that we stepped in and offered our assistance," said Scot Satkovich of the Lowe's Home Improvement store in Ruckersville.

The parents and teachers of students at Madison County High School only had good things to say about the project. "I think it's a great thing... absolutely wonderful. Kids need to be more involved in the schools looks and it bring school pride, so it's a great thing," said Krista Turner, a teacher and a parent at Madison County High School.

The author of this article is an employee at Lowe's Home Improvement at Ruckersville, Virginia.



Photography by Anandhu Shaji

# International Club Welcomes Everyone

Elizabeth Phan, staff writer

PVCC's International Club hosted its annual potluck party on Oct. 18 at 5 p.m. in the main building. Members of the International Club gathered in the Bolick Student Center to share traditional dishes. Tables were covered with cuisines from all over the world. Best of all, the dishes were all homemade and free.

According to PVCC's website on the International Club page, their mission is to cherish the values and differences that everyone at PVCC has to offer. It provides ways for international and native students to learn about various cultures and traditions.

International Club's potluck had many dishes from countries such as Afghanistan, Turkey, Nepal, Georgia, China, Venezuela, and Puerto Rico. Chinese members brought dumplings and spicy seaweed snacks. They also served spicy Nepali noodles, beef curry, Afghanistan rice, and baklava.

The event lasted for longer than two hours. Members and attendees listened to music from all over the world, danced, and played Twister.

Aleena Haidari, the vice president of International Club, said that she hopes more



students participate and join meetings. International club will host a hiking event on Nov. 2.

"It's a way to bond and connect with our members and get to know each other on a personal level. We're also going to host yoga during the final exam week to help students relax and de-stress," Haidari said.

International Club meetings usually hold presentations, activities, and food. Their most recent meeting consisted of a presentation about Diwali while enjoying free pizza and drinks. In the future, International Club will be celebrating Holi (festival of colors), food festival, and Culture Day.

"I'm in the club because it is fun and exciting to learn new things about others and their cultures," Haidari said. International club brings students from all over together and provides them the opportunity to showcase their culture and tradition without fear of any backlash or judgment.

"Everyone is welcome to join us. We meet once a month on Wednesday, room 161, from 12 p.m.- 1 p.m.," Haidari said.



Photos courtesy of Aleena Haidari



# Girls' Geek Day Inspires Kids to Pursue STEM

Ari Oxford, staff writer

On Oct. 12, the joyous giggles of young girls filled the cafeteria of Crozet Elementary School as they picked what activities they would do that morning. About 100 parents, kids, and volunteers spent their Saturday making music with code. They built towering structures, played with robots, launched rockets with the Piedmont Student Launch Team (PSLT), and other fun and educational activities.

"Girls' Geek Days are all about sparking elementary school-aged girl's interest in technology and computing by providing a fun, collaborative, hands-on environment to learn new tech skills and helping them connect to other STEM programs in the community," according to the Tech-Girls website. Girls' Geek Days are organized by Tech-Girls and hosted at a different school each month. The next session will be Nov. 9, at Cale Elementary School, near the PVCC main campus. Registration is required beforehand, but is free, and opens to the host school a week before the general public.

Girls' Geek Days are open to any elementary school-aged girls. If you have an interest in the event but do not have a kid to bring, they are always looking for volunteers. "No previous experience is required - you can learn right along



Kids building with pipes and connectors  
Photography by Ari Oxford

with the girls," says the website, [www.tech-girls.org/girls-geek-day.html](http://www.tech-girls.org/girls-geek-day.html), where visitors can sign up to volunteer at the events.

The future dates and locations are:

Nov. 9 - Cale Elementary School

Dec. 14 - Broadus Wood Elementary School

Jan. 11 - Meriwether Lewis Elementary School

Feb. 15 - St. Anne's-Belfield School

March 14 - Stone Robinson Elementary School

April 18 - Greer Elementary School

The writer of this article was previously the team lead of PSLT.



Kids launching rockets with PSLT  
Photography by Ari Oxford

# Todd Platts: Through the lens of Sociology

Elizabeth Phan, staff writer

Dr. Todd Platts nervously leaned into the back of his chair. He clasped his hands together and fiddled his fingers in thought. “I got in my mind, with a 1.72 GPA, that I wanted to be a professor,” he said.

Platts graduated from the University of Missouri with a PhD in Sociology in 2013. He never thought he would become a professor. In fact, he did not know what he wanted to be.

“I was a very bad student in college,” he said. “I almost failed out of college.” He struggled a lot and found himself blaming his professors. In the Fall of 2000, he realized he wanted to be a professor.

“I thought being a college professor was easy. I was wrong, by the way,” he said. “The reason why I chose Sociology was because after my Fall semester, I needed to declare my major. So, I looked at which class I was the least behind in and my answer just so happened to be Sociology.” After graduating, he struggled with finding a job. He said he questioned if becoming a professor was the right choice.

“It was difficult. I was down to my last three applications and unemployed,” he said as he tapped his fingers on his desk. Before arriving to PVCC, he was a visiting assistant professor at the University of Southern Mississippi. Now, Platts is the associate professor of sociology and has been teaching at PVCC since August 2015. He says that he feels like his experience as a student has really benefited him as a teacher and hopes that his students leave with the ability to question the world.

Now, Platts focuses on horror studies. “It’s, ironically, a weird hobby of mine,” he said, “People assume the reason why you study something must be because you love it, like, I live and die on zombies, but I’m actually not a big fan of zombie cinema,” he said as he sat forward. He further explained that he studied the topic of zombies through the lens of Sociology because of his research on post 9/11 zeitgeist. He discovered that the images of post 9/11 were similar to many zombie imagery circulating in media.

One of his greatest achievements, Platts won a PVCC Faculty Excellence Award for his outstanding work and community effort; he also

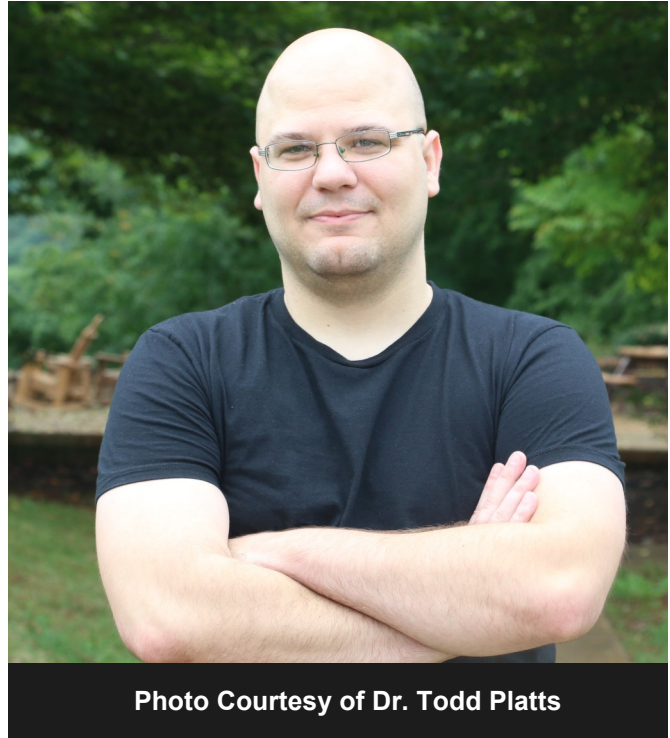


Photo Courtesy of Dr. Todd Platts

teaches at the Fluvanna Correctional Center For Women.

“I want to try to be part of something that helps them reintegrate into society,” he said as he fixed his glasses in concern. He hopes that society keeps an open mind when working with the community. “There aren’t really a lot of opportunities,” he said, “and they’re so talented and able.”

In his most recent works, Platts and his team, Mathmis, Clascan, and Mccollum, have been developing a book titled *Blumhouse: The New House of Horror*, which is one of the first in depth academic analysis of Blumhouse studios. Blumhouse studios is a famous cinematography studio that has worked on films such as *IT* and *Get Out*. His next book will be an assessment of early studio error with voodoo as the major plotline. The working title is *Hollywood Voodoo*. In the book, Platts will research the production, reception, and discourse of voodoo and the reflection of early cinema surrounding Haiti.

Most of Platts’ work can be found on <https://pvcc.academia.edu/ToddPlatts> where anyone can view his articles. He said, “I’m glad I went through (what I did as a student) and now 20 years later. I remember the first question I got: ‘Is this your first time teaching?’”

# Academic Coaching Teaches Students to Learn

Samuel Huff, staff writer

Though it is a fairly new addition to the long list of PVCC resources available to students, Academic Coaching is credited to the success of many successful PVCC alumni. From helping students develop academic skills, like note-taking and time-management, to providing stress management techniques, Academic Coaching is an invaluable resource that all students stand to benefit from.

Located in the Writing Center of PVCC, Academic Coaches provide personalized sessions to help students balance work, school, and daily life. The writing center opens each weekday at 9 a.m., and the Academic Coaches are available by appointment.

Ruth Yoder, a PVCC alumna, has been an Academic Coach for about three years; she meets with students daily to help them discover the tools that are needed to succeed in their Academic lives. With each student being unique in their learning styles and capabilities, different students require different strategies. One such strategy is a regularly scheduled visit.

“Every week, your meeting with someone who is asking you how your studies are going,” says Yoder.

She is speaking to the sense of accountability that students are provided by Academic Coaching. That sense of accountability comes into play when students make appointments on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. Yoder believes that this encourages students to stay caught up on assignments and put forth a greater effort to maintain their grades. Of course, recurring visits are not required, and students may attend sessions as much or as little as they desire.

Yoder has a plethora of resources available to her which

she is able to provide to students, her own experience being the first go to. Yoder exposes her students to new ways of thinking through topics and problems. When a student approaches her with an issue that doesn't fall in line of her expertise, Yoder is knowledgeable and able to point them in the direction of an alternative resource that may better serve them.

Yoder, along with the other experienced Academic Coaches, are a reliable asset to the PVCC student body. Whether you are just wanting supplemental advice or needing extensive help designing an effective study plan, Academic Coaching is a PVCC resource that you will undoubtedly benefit from.



Ruth Yoder is an academic coach at PVCC.  
Photography by Samuel Huff

# Celebration of Autumn at Chiles Orchard

Karli Turner, staff writer

Chiles Peach Orchard, located in Crozet, has been a family owned orchard for the last 100 years. This scenic orchard, has just ended its eighth year of “Fall Into Fun Festival,” which celebrates the change of season. This was a great event for adults who wanted to enjoy a calm day out with their friends, teenagers, older couples, and families with young children. Though, this festival is not big or well known, it had a nice small-town charm to it.

The Fall Into Fun Festival lasted two days; Saturday, Sept. 21 and Sunday 22 of This event offered a variety of activities. Both days, events consisted of apple picking, wagon rides, face painting, and Uncle Dave’s Kettle Corn. Uniquely, Saturday offered an apple butter making demonstration, while Sunday offered the Walnut Ridge Boys, a band from the Shenandoah Valley, who stopped by to play their distinctive style of Bluegrass music. Behind the market, wine and Bold Rock were provided as well.

Though, the orchard itself is quite small, the wagon ride was a very successful attraction because the orchard is located right at the base of the Blue Ridge Mountains which provided a picturesque view.

The wagon ride was especially popular for families with small children because the children loved watching the apples and pumpkins slowly drifted by them, and the ride itself really seemed to calm the children. However, the wagon ride wasn’t just for families with young children. Anyone who wanted to enjoy more of the view could climb aboard for a ride.

Those who visit this incredibly scenic orchard should stop inside the market to check out the variety of goods, most of which are produced at the orchard. Before leaving, visitors should stop by the snack counter, located inside of the market, to try their homemade ice cream and milkshakes.

The most popular items seem to be the freshly made peach and strawberry milkshakes because most of the ingredients come right from the orchard.

Throughout most of the year, Chiles Peach Orchard is open to the public seven days a week. Anyone interested should definitely check out this smaller, not as well-known orchard.



Chiles Peach Orchard in Crozet. Photography by Karli Turner

# State Fair of Virginia Celebrates 165 Years

Jessica Adkins, online editor

The State Fair of Virginia has been around for 165 years, according to Richmond Magazine. Every year, the State Fair attracts thousands of people, including some from out of state. These people come to the State Fair to see animals, eat fair food, purchase from vendors, and ride a few rides. This year the State Fair was open from Friday, Sept. 27 to Sunday, Oct. 6.

This year the State Fair main attractions, which can be found on the State Fair of Virginia's Website, included Xtreme Chinese Acrobats, a group of street drummers, livestock competitions, tractor pulls for smaller tractors, the Ultimate Stunt Circus, the demolition derby, the Richmond Portal, Rosaire's Racing Pigs, the Blacksmith World Championships, and Mutton Bustin', which is a sport where little kids ride on the back of a sheep to resemble bull riding.

Getting to the State Fair was a little tricky this year. All of the free parking lots were packed full of cars and buses. Premium parking was offered for \$15 a car, and that gave people the opportunity to get closer parking. Handicap parking was also available.

Once people got to the front gate, they were greeted by security officials that were checking bags and strollers. After passing through security, there were two directions to go. The first direction was to the left just past security. This was the line for people who had purchased their tickets online or for those who had state fair season passes. The second option was for those who had not yet purchased tickets. The ticket booths looked like little sheds that were evenly spaced which allowed for smooth traffic flow between them.

Just beyond the front gate, food vendors sold

anything from kettle corn to chicken tenders. Past the food vendors was the RAM Ride and Drive off-road course. This attraction was free and allowed people to ride in a RAM 1500 trucks through an off-road course to show all of the off-road capabilities. Each truck was driven by a professional driver. One driver said, "I do not actually work for Dodge. I just simply come and drive people around."

Once people walk through the first part of the fair they are met by a tunnel. Sounds of joyous laughter and entertained talking echoed off of the curved walls of the tunnel. Once on the other side,

people could choose two directions to go. To the right, up a hill, was a children's area, livestock tents, the Meadow Pavilion, more food vendors, Rosaire's Racing Pigs, and the Richmond Portal. In the livestock tent, there were chickens, ducklings, rabbits, and guinea pigs for sale. The ducklings were four for \$6. In side of the Meadow Pavillion, one could find information booths about all things agriculture.

After coming down the hill people were

greeted by the recognizable scent of fried food. Located just a few feet from the bottom of the staircase were all of the food, vendors, and rides. People could walk around with a corndog and purchase jewelry all within five feet of each other.

In the midst of the hustle and bustle was the Expo Center. In the Expo Center, people could find everything from Virginia Lottery tickets to a candy maze. People of all ages especially flocked to the candy maze. Little children could not help but put their hands into every candy bucket their was. Other exhibits in the Expo Center included an art showcase from Virginia schools.

Fair-goer Rachel Blocksom said her favorite part of the State Fair was "The racing pigs, of course."



**First place chicken at the State Fair  
Photography by Jessica Adkins**

# A Pocket of El Salvador in Charlottesville

Veronica Reyes, staff writer

As the waves crash against the coast and the infectious melodies of popular music styles such as cumbia and salsa fill the valleys at the foot of the green, lush mountains of El Salvador, the rich smell of freshly cooked meat and maize wrap the people in a comforting bubble of a beautiful culture. Just at the foot of the mountains that surround Charlottesville, is Mi Casita Salvadorian Restaurant, a local venue featuring authentic food from Mexico to Central America with a taste that reminds local Hispanics of home and will take you there too.

Just ten minutes away from PVCC, Mi Casita is located at 312 Pantops Shopping Center. Mi Casita serves classic El Salvadorian and Honduran breakfast, lunch, and dinner meals. Mi Casita is different from the Hispanic restaurants in the area. “We are not your typical Mexican sit

When you walk into the dining room, you can automatically feel the home like vibe the restaurant owners describe. There are no overwhelming features of Hispanic culture, just simple decorations with quiet background music including popular Latino styles. One can feel as if they have walked into their home dining room and can feel comfortable and enjoy a delicious meal.

For breakfast, try a Baleada. This is a thick flour tortilla filled with refried beans, scrambled egg, sour cream, and avocado. Breakfast meals such as Baleadas can cost less than \$5. Another popular option is a hot, fresh burrito filled with steak, cheese, and vegetables for under \$10. Just, maybe not before class if you want to be awake for most of it. Be sure to pair it with Mi Casita’s Horchata, a plant-based milk drink with cinnamon.

For lunch, if you’re looking to sample of a little bit of everything, find the lunch specials and order “Especial #1,” which includes one taco with steak, a pupusa (a thick cornmeal pocket filled with pork and cheese), and a tamale (or tamale with chicken and a doughy outer layer). All tacos from Mi Casita are common to street food style which is often small but packs a delicious punch. The pupusas and tamales are made just like they would be in El Salvador. Those who dined with me thoroughly enjoyed their meals as well which all ranged between \$6 to \$12.

However, all new businesses have their cons. Mi Casita is fairly new and is heavily understaffed at lunch time. When my friends and I went, there was only one waitress taking orders, bringing meals, and ringing customers up for dine-in and carry-out. We waited for about thirty minutes for our lunch.

This is a nice place to bring a few friends for a long lunch and many who work there speak both English and Spanish. You always enjoy kind service from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

“One thing you can tell about this place is that Hispanics like it. If most of the customers are Hispanic, you know this is good food,” noted one customer. Mi Casita is welcoming back authentic Latino dishes with a formal dining experience to Charlottesville for all to enjoy. For a fresh, hot El Salvadorian meal for great prices, you cannot beat Mi Casita!



A tamale, taco, and papusa at Mi Casita  
Photo courtesy of Tammy Navarro

down restaurant, but an informal “HOMETOWN” LATINO-CENTRAL AMERICAN place with a twist. All fresh, handmade, and always hot,” the restaurant venue said on their website. Their detailed attention to bringing the bold and common flavors of El Salvadorian and Honduran cuisine is unmatched with other Latino restaurants in the area.

# Pizza Hut Invaded by Singing Charlottesvilleans

Samuel Huff, staff writer

On Thursday Sept. 19, the night started out slow at Pizza Hut on W Main Street as usual. The staff, however, were busy using their down time to prepare for the biggest night of the week. Around 9 p.m., people from all over Charlottesville flood the small restaurant for the main event.

Every week, Thunder Music takes over the restaurant and transforms the usually quiet eatery into a karaoke concert hall. People from all walks of life come together to eat, drink, and sing their favorite artist's greatest hits.

While some people are new to the weekly event, most of the patrons are regulars and look forward to seeing the friendly faces that fill the restaurant.

"Most of us see each other as family, and this serves as our weekly reunion," explained Carly Bradburn, a freshman at UVA's School of Nursing. Bradburn and her friends have been attending the karaoke night each week for the past year, only missing out when inevitable. Their moment of stardom comes each week when the group performs the Backstreet Boys classic "I Want It That Way."

With three high-tech microphones and an endless collection of songs, anyone can be a rock star for the night. From an 8-year-old belting out Whitney Houston's "I Will Always Love You" to a retired trucker rocking out to Bon Jovi's "Livin'

On A Prayer," the night is filled with unique voices, fun performances, and every genre one could imagine. The atmosphere was one of love and acceptance; the only rule of the night being "no talent required." As voices cracked and lyrics were skipped over, the audience erupted with cheers that would put Celine Dion to shame.

Clinton Johnson, the karaoke DJ and owner of Thunder Music, said, "This is a fun, safe space and our goal is to bring the community together, not just the UVA community or the young crowd, but all of Charlottesville." With such a diverse group of participants, it is safe to say that the goal is achieved each week. Johnson also uses his platform and the event to raise money for charities around the holidays.

With all the singing going on, the staff is hard at work supplying the crowd with delicious pizza and cocktails. "Karaoke nights at Pizza Hut are livelier than any other nights, it's awesome to see everyone so eclectic and joyful," explained Norman Dorise, the head bartender. Dorise was an employee when the karaoke night was first implemented and has watched it grow to the tradition it is today. Dorise stays busy throughout the night, but he always makes time to grace the crowd with his rendition of "It's Raining Men" by The Weather Girls.

With affordable cocktails, local beers, classic food, new friends, and singing Charlottesvilleans, karaoke night at Pizza Hut is a hidden staple of Charlottesville's culture.



Pizza Hut on W Main Street in Charlottesville appears empty as the employees prepare for karaoke. Photography Samuel Huff

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