



School Without Walls at Francis-Stevens under construction this month / Credits: Carys Shepard

## Francis-Stevens “Modernization” Upends Walls Athletics

By Carys Shepard (2023)  
Senior Writer

School Without Walls at Francis-Stevens is not well-known to many students at School Without Walls High School. Many Walls students haven't even set foot in its building. But as School Without Walls's sister school, located just under a mile away, the elementary and middle school has been used by the high

school for plays, assemblies and most frequently, athletics practices. However, that space is no longer available to any students and educators this year due to ongoing renovations.

“The school building was built in 1927, with the only addition onto the building being the gym,” Kip Smith, the Walls athletic director, said in an interview. “Almost 100 years later, it is overdue for renovations.”

*Francis-Stevens continued on page 3*

## Soccer Star Ellie Maxson Discusses College Recruitment Process

By Jessie Moss (2026)  
Staff Writer

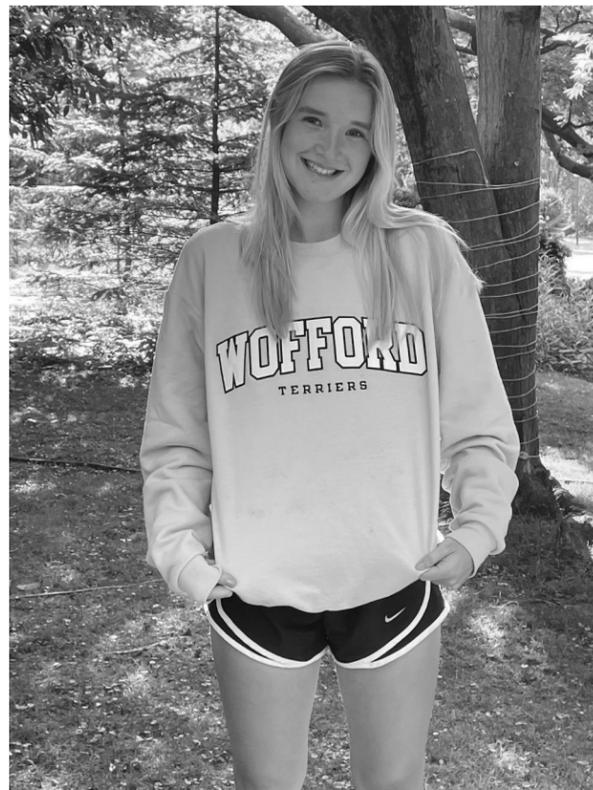
College admissions seem to be on every senior's mind, but for current Walls senior Ellie Maxson, this mountain is one she has already climbed. Ellie Maxson was one of an esteemed group of high schoolers in the United States recruited to play a sport in college. In the fall, she'll be playing soccer for Wofford College in Spartanburg, S.C.

Still, the process of athletic recruitment is a strenuous one. Even before the recruitment begins, students applying often have years of experience in the field that make unathletic types like myself mildly embarrassed for our own athletic shortcomings. Maxson has been playing soccer since she was five, but began playing more seriously on a team when she was eight years old.

This background experience is only part of what allows students to pursue athletic scholarships. Kip Smith, the SWW athletic director of eleven years, offered insight on the process of athletic recruitment and its history at Walls.

In terms of his involvement in the process, he describes talking “to different student athletes on what they want, where they want to go, what their aspirations are and kind of help them along the way. [I] make sure that they know the NCAA eligibility, make sure they know they're doing what they need to do here at school.”

What they need to do for the athletic recruitment process can begin at various stages and years, depending on the student athlete. According to Mr. Smith, “Some of them are recruited extremely early, middle school, and some are recruited in their senior year.”



Credits: Ellie Maxson

Maxson began the recruitment process in her sophomore year, amidst the pandemic. “When we finally started to go back and play,” Maxson said, “it was a lot of emailing and reaching out to coaches and you play at showcases, where colleges come and watch you and your team.”

She went on to say, “It was certainly pretty stressful. There's lots in your control but there's a lot of it that's out of your control, like if a coach needs your position or if they just happen to see you on an off day in a game, so a lot of it is up to chance.”

## Plastic Bins at Security Cause Lines, Delays

By Sonja Talwani (2025)  
Staff Writer

Students who have come to school close to 9:00 a.m. or gone off campus for lunch may have noticed that everything is a little slower than it used to be.

Instead of just a conveyor belt in school security like years before, all students must put their backpacks in bins. Some say it reminds them of airport security, some don't mind it at all, but most of all, students are confused.

Many students say that the new system of security causes big issues when trying to get to school. “I think they're annoying and unnecessary,” said Bailey McFadden, a sophomore. “You can just put your things on the belt.”

Some students, however, disagree and think that the new security system isn't particularly inconvenient.

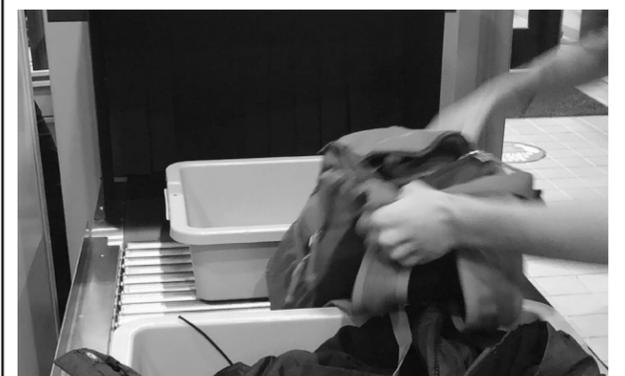
Another student who asked to remain anonymous said that she has “never been caught up in the line,” but she acknowledged that she comes to school earlier than most students. She said the bins don't bother her because security officers are usually nice and understanding.

Many students feel that security processes last year went smoothly and do not understand the change in procedure.

Last year, a conveyor belt “went down because of a water bottle that spilled inside the machine,” said Myron Bell, a security officer at Walls. “It caused us to have to get a new machine, which took a long time” and led to weeks of officers hand-searching bags last year. The bins ensure that similar accidents won't break the machines.

Mr. Bell noted that people at other schools are “not allowed to bring in the water bottles [through security], and they have to be empty.” He thinks that the bins in security are “not that big of a deal.”

“If you can cooperate with us, we can cooperate with you,” he said. ●



Credits: Sonja Talwani

Maxson is one of few such recruits at Walls, despite the school's numbers in athletic programs. “It's usually one to four [recruits per year],” Mr. Smith said. “In the past, we've had maybe one or two that end up playing collegiately, but for the most part, a lot of our kids who are recruited at the next level, they end up going to a school that focuses more on their academic endeavors than their athletic.”

Applicants face many challenges along the recruitment journey. “A lot of the challenges are oversaturation in certain sports,” Mr.

*Ellie Maxson continued on page 6*

## DCPS Permits, Cancels, and Reinstates Much-Loved Walls Rome Trip

By Josie McCartney (2024)  
Senior Editor

For almost a decade, Rome has been a favorite destination for Walls travelers over the long Thanksgiving weekend. The trip occurs regularly every other year, most recently in 2019, but students were unable to travel last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In August, DCPS threw extensive plans for a 2022 trip into chaos by initially canceling it. But to the relief of many parents, students, and faculty, central offices allowed the 10-day trip to go forward in a last-minute reversal over February break in 2023.

History teacher Carlton Ackerman, Latin teacher Jane Brinley and English teacher Jan McGlennon have led 16 students throughout Rome and its surrounding areas four times before. The three teachers, all passionate about the language, history, art, and culture of Italy, developed their own itinerary that includes olive picking, an afternoon in Ostia, visits to various historical sites and museums, and bike rides along the Appian Way.

Reminiscing on past trips, Mr. Ackerman recalled, “Somehow we always end up having an adventure that we weren’t expecting [and] coming together as a group...it’s like [the students] become part of the city.”

Like students and families, these faculty members were dissatisfied with the first DCPS ruling against the trip. In an interview, Ms. Brinley explained her perspective on the timeline. “We put the request in [for DCPS approval] in April, following the standard procedure that we’d followed [when planning past Rome trips],” she said. “We waited until right up when we had a deadline with the airline. And then, when we couldn’t make that deadline with the airline, we lost our tickets.”



Mr. Ackerman (upper left), Ms. Brinley (lower right) and students at St. Peter’s Basilica in 2019  
Credits: Jan McGlennon

Ms. Brinley continued, “Sometime after that, we got word that [DCPS] wouldn’t approve it.”

Senior Katrina Tracy, who planned to go on the November trip, called the time after the trip was canceled “a devastating couple of days.”

Penny Hruby, another student hoping to go to Rome, concurred. “I was really, really sad,” she said. “Obviously I was concerned we wouldn’t get refunded at first [for plane tickets], but we did get refunded.”

Hruby described yearslong excitement about going to Rome. “When I came to Walls as a freshman, one of the big selling points was all of these international trips that Walls [students] got to go on,” she said. “We haven’t had

the chance to do that in my high school career, so I’m very excited.”

International travel had long been popular at Walls pre-pandemic, with students and faculty traversing the Andes of Peru, exploring the cities and temples of India, and scuba diving in the tropics. The upcoming trip will consist entirely of seniors given that the pandemic disrupted their travel opportunities in high school.

“It’s been such a rough ride for this group of seniors,” said Richard Tracy, Katrina’s father. “[A] culminating trip with classmates and friends [would be] too good an opportunity to pass up. We ha[d] to try to do something to make sure this group of students can have that experience.” ●

## Freshmen Share Expectations for New Student Government

By David Sipos (2024)  
Senior Editor

Members of the freshman class have different expectations and hopes for the Student Government Association (SGA) at Walls informed by their past experiences of similar groups in various middle schools. Some students said the role of SGA was to introduce fun into the school atmosphere, while others believe SGA should advocate for the interests of students. A few freshmen considered running for a position in SGA while others ruled it out entirely. SGA candidates will need to consider freshmen perspectives if they want to earn their support. At the time of publication, SGA elections had not yet concluded.

Freshman Charlie Daggett, who attended D.C. International School before coming to Walls, described some disillusionment with his middle school government. “I knew that they were trying,” Daggett said, but his student government “never focused on the big picture, like helping out students who actually needed help.”

He has higher hopes for Walls SGA. “More people have their own opinions here, so I feel like it will be better,” he said, expecting more than a raw popularity contest; he views SGA as a responsibility and a commitment to fellow students.

He expressed his desire for engaged SGA presidents who care about their role, saying, “I want someone who’s passionate about what they do, not someone who’s going to sit there for their college resume... someone who actually wants to be there is someone I want representing me.” While Daggett has high hopes for SGA, he said he does not see himself running



SGA president Hugo Rosen leads a homecoming planning meeting Oct. 14 / Credits: David Sipos

for a position.

Another freshman, Malaysia Hylton, has had no experience with student government at all, as Center City Middle School, which she attended, did not have one. She described an ideal student government as one that would “speak for the rights of students, see what the students want, then bring that to administration,” and said honesty was the most important quality for an SGA president.

Hylton added that SGA should “actually take into account what the students want, not just what they want themselves.” She said she wouldn’t run for an SGA position, not wanting “people coming at you from all different directions with something different.”

Unlike Daggett and Hylton, Dylan Dona-

hue served in student government in middle school, holding a position at Inspired Teaching Demonstration School in 7th grade. However, he said middle school SGA wasn’t very effective: “They didn’t have much power.” He mentioned their event planning, but otherwise didn’t describe the student government as very productive.

Donahue is not sure of what to expect from Walls SGA, but mainly wants it to exercise power in the school. He said that he would “possibly” consider running, but characterized the elections as “all really a popularity competition.”

Keymah Bonham participated in a more

SGA continued on page 3

## Walls Community Weighs Masking as New School Year Begins

By Darya Filippova (2024)  
Staff Writer

Wearing a mask became optional for DCPS students on March 16. At first, the majority of the Walls student body kept their masks on, with only a few students deciding to remove masks. Many students believed that it was too early to end the mandate, while others had become accustomed to masking. As the year was coming to an end, increasing numbers of students removed their masks.

After school resumed in August, most of the Walls population was unmasked. However, many individuals still stuck to their protocol. Across the school, every individual had their own reasons for unmasking or masking depending on what they felt comfortable with. Students commonly took into account whether they posed a safety risk to their peers and others around them when deciding whether to unmask. “I know that I am vaccinated and so is everyone else around me,” said freshman Campbell Tiller. “I’m positive that the people around me will take a COVID test if they don’t feel well.”

One sophomore, who asked to remain anonymous, agreed. “If everyone is required to be vaccinated then I know we are all somewhat protected, if not completely protected,” they said.

“I made the decision to unmask based on what other people in the building did,” the sophomore said. “I was fine with taking my mask off, but I wanted to make sure a majority of the Walls community was okay with it too.”

Others reached the opposite conclusion about risk to others. One junior who asked to remain anonymous said that they are still masked because they want to keep their immunocompromised friends and family safe.

Some students appreciated masks be-

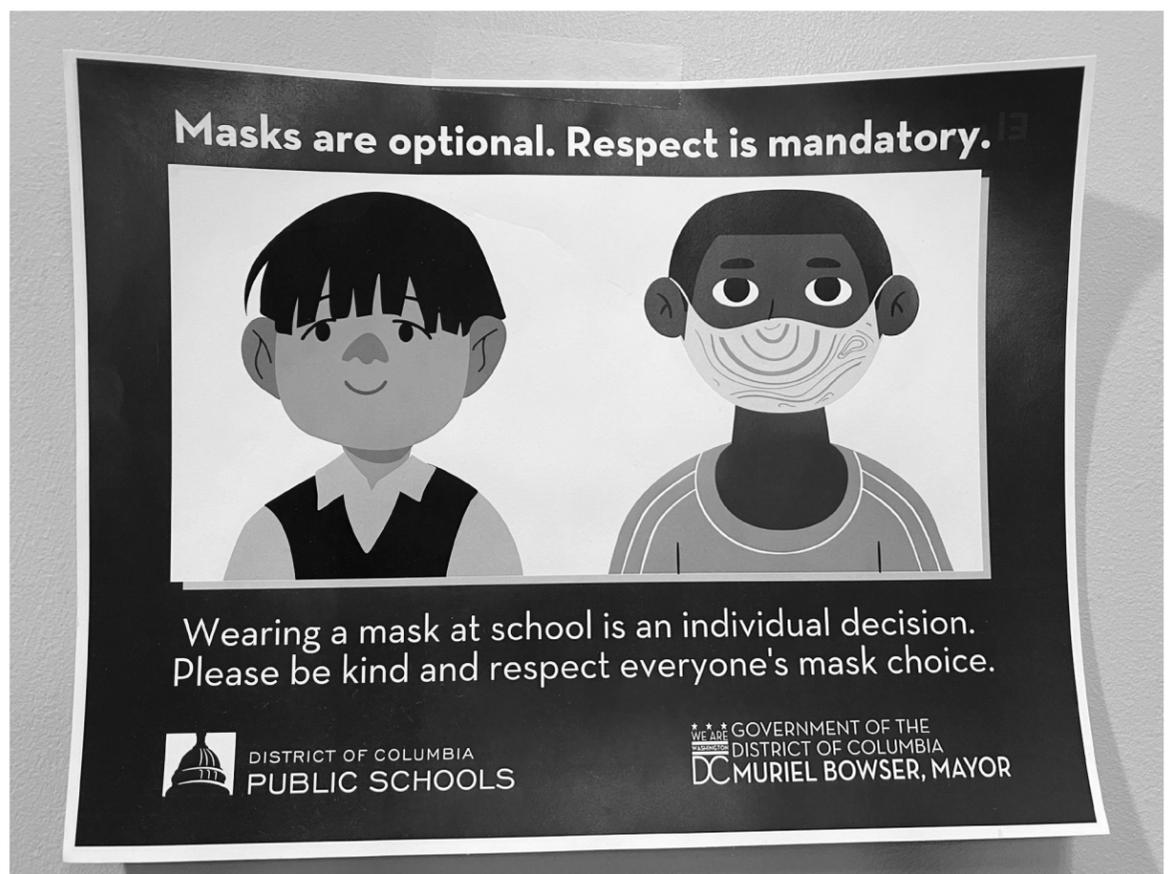
cause they could disguise parts of students’ faces they preferred not to be seen. The same junior said that “wearing a mask has added another layer of comfort in myself that over time has been hard to remove.”

Sometimes students’ decisions change day-to-day. “Sometimes I wear a mask if others around me are sick, or if I’ve been coughing a lot,” sophomore Faith Nesbeth said. “If no one is sick or if I’m too hot, then I take it off, but for the most part, I keep one with me just in case.”

Staff at Walls have also weighed the deci-

sion of whether to remove their masks. Everett Catlin, one of the Spanish teachers, said, “The reason I went unmasked was because it was very difficult for me to speak with the mask on and even more difficult to teach Spanish with the mask on in a way so that my students could understand what I’m saying.”

Whether for safety concerns, self confidence boosts, or conflicting with teaching styles, the students and staff at Walls have done what they think is right when it comes to masking. ●



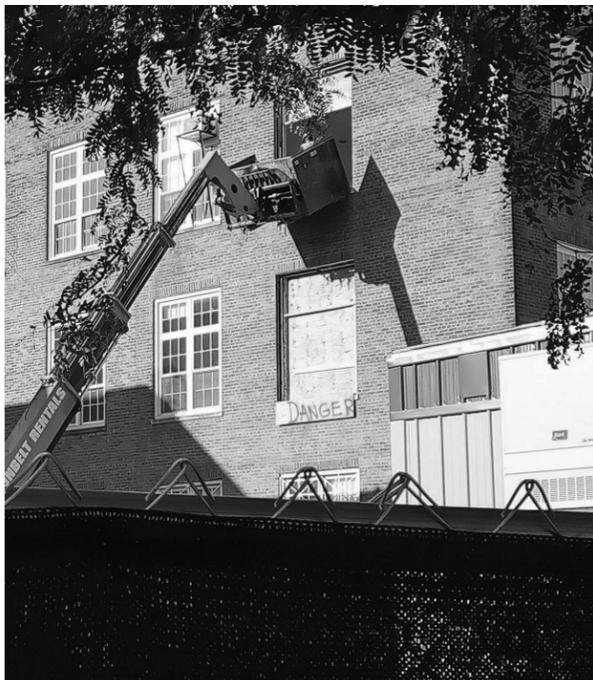
Credits: Darya Filippova

## Francis-Stevens Is Getting Renovated. What Does That Mean for Walls Sports?

*Francis-Stevens continued from page 1*

Intensive renovations on the school building began this fall, and the school expects them to finish by August 2024. The “modernization” seeks to “address Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements,” improving the building’s accessibility, according to the DCPS website.

The renovated facility will incorporate 17,000 additional square feet, with modernized classrooms, dining areas and athletics areas.



Construction at Francis-Stevens  
Credits: Carys Shepard

The renovations also plan to accommodate the growing population of Francis-Stevens: While 587 students currently attend the school, the building capacity is only 440. The new building will be larger, accommodating approximately 680 students.

Mr. Smith said that Walls has “been forced to find alternative sites” for volleyball and basketball, which used to rely on Francis-Stevens gyms. “Our volleyball team has been grateful for Lafayette [Lafayette Elementary School] being an option for us,” he said. “Our head volleyball coach is the principal for Lafayette, which has helped.”

Francis-Stevens itself has been temporarily relocated to Banneker High School’s old building. In the 2021-22 school year, Banneker was moved to what used to be Shaw Junior High School in order to accommodate an additional 300 students, freeing up the old building for Francis-Stevens’s use. The basketball teams will now practice at “the gym in Francis-Stevens’s temporary home,” Mr. Smith said. Although this gym is farther from Walls, the courts are regulation size for high school, an improvement from the middle school courts the teams used to practice on. The basketball teams hope this will prove helpful when preparing to play games at other high schools.

The temporary loss of Francis-Stevens will be a challenge for School Without Walls, particularly for the volleyball and basketball teams that have to travel far for practice every day. However, the two school communities hope these renovations will ultimately improve the lives of future generations of students. ●



SGA presidential candidates hoping to earn freshmen’s votes / Credits: David Sipos

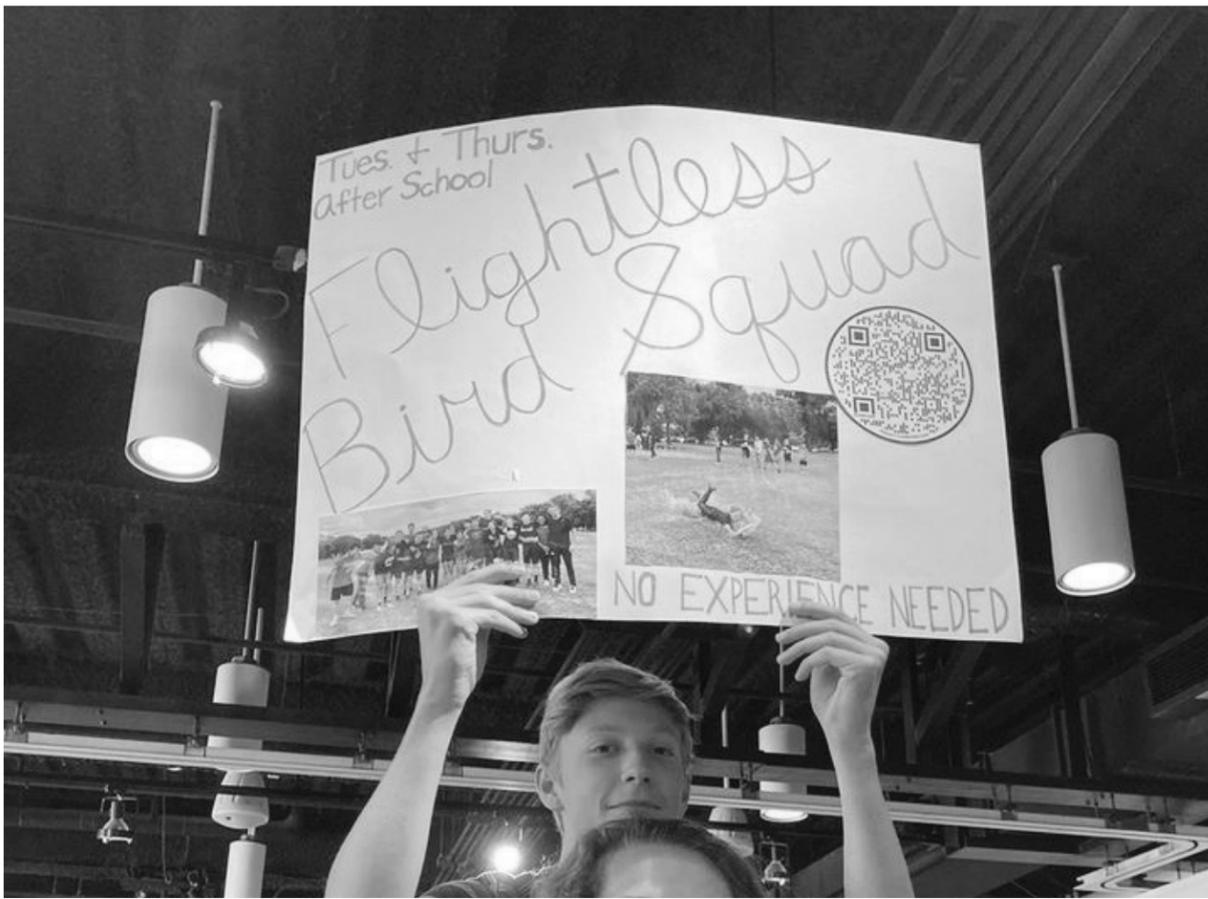
## Class of 2026 Discusses SGA

*SGA continued from page 2*

informal type of student government at Paul Middle School. Students “advocated for a collective” at her middle school, but they did not have a structured student government. Bonham said she periodically had a role in the informal government. “Me and my friends would come up with ideas for our class,” she said, citing a year-end fundraiser as an example.

Bonham hopes that Walls SGA will have power of its own. “A lot of student governments don’t make change,” she said. “They just let the school do what they want to do.”

Bonham also said that she would consider running for a position as a class representative, suggesting a need for more fun in what she described as a “school, school, school” atmosphere. ●



Julius Cohen promoting the Flightless Bird Squad at the Club Fair Sept. 14 / Credits: Layla Rethy

## Club Fair Returns for 2022

By Layla Rethy (2025)  
Staff Writer

Rows of clubs crowded on the lunch tables. “Join our club!” yelled from left and right. Swamps of students wandering the Commons.

This is the scene that greeted students entering Walls’s annual Club Fair, held on Sept. 14 during advisory for club leaders to showcase their clubs and gain members. Many students look forward to joining clubs and leaving the Commons with a handful of candy. Each year, club representatives enthusiastically and passionately recruit club members.

Carmen Coutts, a freshman, thought it was a positive experience for everyone, and she enjoyed visiting the different stands. “The Club Fair was a good way to branch out to see the entire school,” she said. “I enjoyed the rush of excitement when the various clubs tried to recruit new members.”

Coutts also said, “The Club Fair was a good way for the students to practice their public speaking skills in a large setting. Also, I think it was good for the students signing up to practice making their own decisions.”

While the chaos was fun for some, not everyone felt the same way. Sasha Bryer-Gottesman, a transferred sophomore, was overwhelmed by the compactness of the club stands and felt that it limited her experience. “I think they should give us a map of where all the clubs are and have them stationed up and down the hallways, instead of in the Commons, which can get chaotic and disorganized,” she said.

Whether students ran a stand at the fair or just enjoyed their time browsing around, the Club Fair was an opportunity for them to get involved in the school community and allowed everyone to find exciting extracurriculars. ●

### CLUB SPOTLIGHT

## Monthly Club Fights “Menstrual Inequity”

By Camille Galvani (2026)  
Staff Writer

The School Without Walls bathrooms are free; the menstrual products within are not. If you don’t have a pad in your bag or any spare change, you must turn to a friend. This is a small-scale version of what Monthly Club founder and president Marisa Bello calls “menstrual inequity: everything that stems from the stigma that surrounds menstruation.”

The club is mainly devoted to fighting much more extensive, systematic menstrual inequity, through drives and fundraisers (generating both donations and period products) for “menstruators in need in the DC area.”

Now a senior, Bello started the club at the tail end of her sophomore year in June 2021 after reading an article about a girl who wanted to bring changes to D.C. policy in the area. (There was a student group at Walls with a similar mission before her time at the school.) Since then, her club has grown impressively: They’re currently a chapter of PERIOD, an international organization that “strives to eradicate period poverty and stigma through service, education, and advocacy [...] through the distribution of menstrual products, promotion of youth leadership, and championing of menstrual equity in policy,” according to their website.

The club is also partnered with DC Diaper Bank, to which they’ve sent all their proceeds and over 26,000 period products. Women and other menstruators across D.C. often have to decide between period products and other necessities such as food or bills. When they can’t afford tampons, they may turn to unsafe options; the Monthly Club is trying to open another door. Their Instagram account, @themonthlyclubsww, regularly posts updates on drives and other club initiatives.

When asked how the school is doing in regards to period equity, Bello answered frankly. “Honestly, pretty badly,” she said. “But that goes for almost every DCPS school right now.”

*Monthly Club continued on page 5*

## Seniors Offer Freshmen Advice for High School Success

By Miles Felix (2024)  
Staff Writer

Transitioning to high school as a freshman is notoriously difficult. Freshmen have to take harder courses, leave their middle school friends, and fit in with a new crowd. Additionally, Walls offers a significantly more rigorous workload than other schools and students at Walls come from an array of schools across the city, making it harder for freshmen to relate to one another. With that in mind, incoming freshmen may find some advice from seniors useful.

Seniors have had four years to find the best way to manage their workload, and can therefore offer many suggestions to freshmen. Our seniors agreed that organization is key to being successful.

Malcolm Douglas, who went to BASIS DC for middle school, emphasized that students should “stay organized and have a planner to write or type down assignments and due dates.”

Maeve Kelly-Mavretic, who attended Two Rivers Public Charter School, said, “A tip would be to ‘break the ice’ with big assignments as soon as possible. Spend 10 minutes beginning a reading, or merely open up the rubric document.”

Juliette Krevat, who went to Hardy Middle

School, said, “Split up your work so you don’t have to do it all at once. Talk to your counselors or teachers to help you manage your workload.” In general, the seniors agreed on not doing all the work at one time and on keeping track of assignments with a planner.

It can be hard to adjust to high school not only academically, but also socially. Thankfully, our seniors have great insight on what social life at Walls is like, and how they were able to make new friends in freshman year.

Kelly-Mavretic emphasized that she has “made a lot of friends through clubs and sports. It also goes a long way just to be a kind person — offer people gum, compliment people’s outfits, or ask how they felt about a quiz. If you’re not making best friends, you’ll at least have some familiar faces in your classes.” She also recommends that freshmen “go to the dances, the sports games, and the team outings. It’s important to establish a dynamic outside of the classroom.”

Krevat agreed, saying, “Walls has so many ways to know people especially because classes are extremely participatory and group project based, which make them conducive to getting to know other people.”

Although meeting people may be hard at first, both Kelly-Mavretic and Krevat highlighted that taking initiative in class goes a long way.

Douglas also pointed out that participating in a club or sport will build a social framework for the rest of high school, while also allowing freshmen to know people in different grades. The transition from middle to high school is rough for a lot of people, and the seniors want you to know you are not alone.

Krevat explained that her freshman workload “was really challenging, especially because I was switching from lower expectations to really high expectations.” Still, she said, “freshman year is mostly social, so focus on getting to know people and getting adjusted to Walls. Don’t put a lot of academic pressure on yourself, because there will always be time for that later and enjoy where you are now.”

On the other hand, Kelly-Mavretic said, “In middle school, it was much easier to give my 110 percent on everything. Freshman year comes with bigger, more complex tasks, and that level of effort and dedication was unsustainable to give across the board. My advice planning-wise would be to get in the habit of task-prioritization.”

Freshman year is a rollercoaster, but putting work into both school and relationships will go a long way. Pacing is important, so follow the seniors’ advice gradually, not instantly. With patience, freshman year can be one of great personal improvement. ●

## TEAM SPOTLIGHT

## Cheer Team Ignites School Spirit

By Carlotta Rother (2025)  
Staff Writer

The School Without Walls Cheer Team meets twice a week to develop jumps, tumbling, and dances. The team cheers at basketball games and competes in the DCIAA Cheer Competition at the end of March.

Captains Aliyah Blake and Lucca Domenici-Mills demonstrate at practices how to perform over 40 cheers and difficult stunts. Because both captains joined their freshman year, they work well with newer cheerleaders and are able to understand different perspectives.

Cheer is a great way to meet new people and make more friends, according to Domenici-Mills. “I joined cheer freshman year having never done it before,” she said in an interview. “I knew I wanted to make new friends at Walls and be more involved in the school community than I had been in middle school, and cheer seemed like a good way to do that.”

Domenici-Mills said she had learned a lot from former team leaders. “The previous captains definitely were great role models for me,” she said. “They showed me how to be a good leader. I try to emulate their patience and compassion as a captain now because I remember how much they influenced me when I was an underclassman.”

Junior Niyah Sapp’s favorite aspect of



Stunting practice in the Commons / Credits: Coach Asia

cheerleading is dancing and stunting. “I’m really good at dancing and I love being a back spot,” she explained in an interview. “Also stunting establishes trust among the team.”

At the end of March the Cheer team attended their second DCIAA Cheer Competition. The team competed at level one, the lowest level, and performed a two-and-a-half-minute routine which incorporated all the aspects of all-star cheer, such as stunting, tumbling, jumps, and dancing. The team placed first in the level one category, defending their title.

Alice Deal Middle School has a notoriously successful cheer team, which usually wins all

DCIAA competitions. Freshman Mattie Goodloe says, “Deal cheer is definitely different from Walls cheer because there’s no gym, so Walls doesn’t have the home court advantage in terms of school spirit. There’s also no football team to cheer for.”

Despite this downside, cheer is an excellent way to get involved in the school community, show school spirit, and build new relationships across grades.

**Cheer meets in the Commons on Mondays and Wednesdays from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. ●**

## CLUB SPOTLIGHT

## In Quiz Bowl, Knowledge Is Victory

By Leah Levy (2025)  
Staff Writer

Members of the School Without Walls Quiz Bowl team gather twice a week in room 404 to answer questions covering a wide variety of subjects, including literature, science, popular culture, sports, and history.

Quiz Bowl is a competitive trivia game played by two teams who use buzzers to respond to a variety of questions. Teams of middle school, high school, and college students prepare for and compete in formal Quiz Bowl tournaments throughout the year. The National Academic Quiz Tournaments (NAQT) organizes six national championships each year in North America and provides practice questions throughout the year to promote learning, creativity, and teamwork in preparation for the competitions.

Four freshmen formed the current Walls Quiz Bowl team in April, though there was a

previous iteration of the team over four years ago. Elijah Lott, a co-president, explains that the leaders “didn’t really have time to tell anybody about the club, so this year we did a better job of getting the word out and informing people. We did the Club Fair, so this year we have a lot more people.” The size of Quiz Bowl at Walls has tripled from what it was in the previous year.

Now sophomores, Max Stacey, Paul Joire, and Patrick Morelli, and Lott are the leaders of the club. They arrange mock tournaments on Tuesday and Thursday mornings every week. Club members answer NAQT questions that the leaders arranged for the club meetings to better understand how the tournaments work and to explore the various subjects.

The first question asked is called a “toss-up” question and can be answered by one member of any team. By correctly answering this question, a team will earn up to fifteen points, depending on how fast they answer. Then, they will receive a three-part bonus question that can be discussed by the whole team, and then answered by one member. There can be up to four participating players on each Quiz Bowl team and a maximum of two alternates.

“There is a lot to learn in a lot of different areas, because the questions are spread out in

a lot of different topics,” explained sophomore Ian Springer, a member since the club started last year. “So everyone is going to have one area that they are really good at, and one where they can work to improve.” Many members joined the club to learn about new subjects as well as to contribute what they already know.

One literature question in the 2021 PACE National Scholastic Championship, a high school tournament, asked about the domain of the Greek goddess Demeter as described in a number of classical poems. Acceptable answers to the question included farming, agriculture, harvesting, and growing crops.

“We are going to a few tournaments this year, so competing and doing well at those tournaments are some of our main goals,” Lott said. “But [we hope] also for everyone to have a good and fun time.”

Sophomore Nadia Lytle, another founding member, praised the welcoming and exciting environment. “I love the energy that Quiz Bowl brings,” she said. “Everyone is so nice, and everyone is just trying to have fun.”

**Quiz Bowl meets in room 404 on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 8:30 a.m. ●**

## Monthly Club Organizes Drives, Fundraisers

*Monthly Club continued from page 4*

Despite a law being passed by D.C. councilmember Brooke Pinto [D-Ward 2] last year that required free products in school bathrooms, many schools have not adhered to it, including Walls.

“It should be a given that every person in the building does not have to worry about getting pads or tampons during school,” she added. “In a way, it can thwart one from ‘demanding their education,’ as Walls loves to say.”

Bello was referring to the unanimously-passed Expanding Student Access to Period Products Act of 2021, which requires schools to provide period products in both women’s and

men’s bathrooms. She argues Walls’s period inequality contradicts the bill’s aims and policies claiming to put students first.

Period inequity exists everywhere in DC, but the club plans to have free products in the bathrooms by the end of October for “all of us to use,” according to Bello.

The club seeks “menstrual justice activists” to welcome into their community, where students can “make meaningful connections within the club and outside the club with the people we work with,” Bello says, “not to mention the community service hours and the visible, much-needed impact on our local community.” The club aims to change the world, one tampon at a time. ●



Bello (second from right) and club members running a drive last year / Credits: Marisa Bello

## An Exclusive Interview With the Students Behind @FashionofWalls

By **Ryanne Barstow (2023)**  
Staff Writer

In the past few years, Walls has seen a rise in social media accounts for every conceivable topic. Sports, clubs, and confession accounts have taken the student body by storm, but one of the most prominent is @FashionofWalls, an Instagram account focused on “finding the most fashionable students at Walls.”

Created in 2019, the account has garnered over 400 followers, making it one of the largest school-focused social media accounts run by Walls students.

*This interview has been edited for length and clarity.*

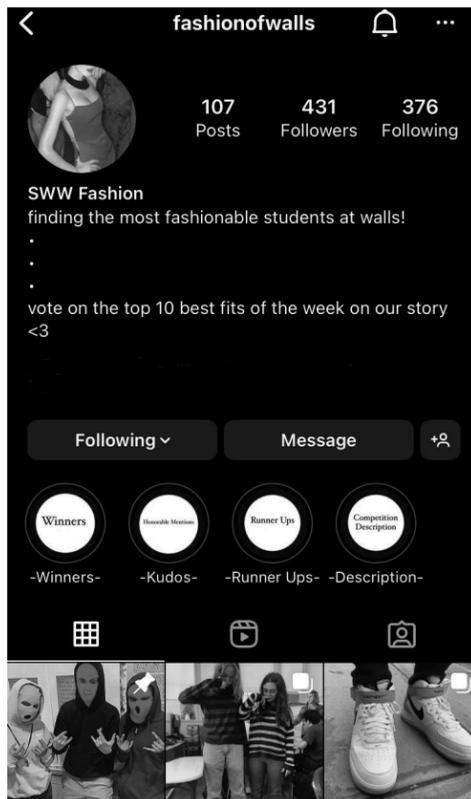
### Why do you choose to be anonymous?

*Fashionista 1:* It’s just the tradition, so we decided to continue it. It also adds an element of surprise when we ask people to take pictures of their outfits.

### How do you decide that someone’s outfit is fashionable enough to be photographed?

*Fashionista 1:* I take pictures of what stands out — things that aren’t usually worn, but look good. I want posts to be representative of what Penguins actually wear.

*Fashionista 2:* It’s less about being “fashionable enough.” I look for interesting outfits that stand out and demonstrate personal style.



Credits: @FashionofWalls / Instagram

### Your account hosts a weekly competition in which students vote on their favorite outfits. What inspired you to start the competition?

*Fashionista 1:* I wanted to reinvent the account. Now people can vote on what they deem to be fashion rather than having it told to them. And more people have the chance to be featured!

### How do you avoid bias towards picking your friends?

*Fashionista 1:* I stand outside during lunch and after school to try and spot fashionable outfits and widen the variety of people that I feature.

*Fashionista 2:* I try to focus on the entire student body. I want to represent all grades, specifically underclassmen, since seniors don’t see them very often.

### If you could give the entire student body of Walls one piece of fashion advice, what would you say?

*Fashionista 1:* Wear what makes you feel confident.

*Fashionista 2:* Wear outfits you are comfortable in. An outfit might be trendy, but it might not make you feel good. Stay true to yourself!

### What is your favorite part about running @FashionofWalls?

*Fashionista 1:* I really enjoy the weekly competition. I love seeing people strive to wear their best fits because they know that they have a chance of being featured. I also love seeing their faces when they’re surprised that we asked them to be featured, and their friends get super excited too.

*Fashionista 2:* My favorite part is capturing how the whole student body dresses. It’s not just what I deem as fashionable, but how people represent their own individual style. ●

## ADMINISTRATOR SPOTLIGHT

### A Conversation With Our New Assistant Principal

By **Bailey McFadden (2025)**  
Staff Writer

At the end of last year, Assistant Principal Gradis White left School Without Walls. Many students were curious as to who his replacement would be. I recently had the pleasure of sitting down with that very person, Assistant Principal Jennifer Tully, to talk about her new position.

Ms. Tully started her career in New York as a special education teacher. “First I was working in a small resource room, and then special education evolved a little bit to be more inclusive, so I became a co-teacher collaborating with different high school teachers [in the classroom].”

From there, she moved to working with a network of schools, to “transform schools to

be more inclusive...we undid a lot of self-contained classrooms, re-did budgets.” She adds “My focus was always on secondary schools.”

After this, Ms. Tully went on to conduct instructional coaching in the classroom, “using [her] experience to support teachers, to really extend their practices and strategies and figure out how to be more responsive to the kids in their classrooms.”

At the start of the pandemic, Ms. Tully and her family moved back to her hometown: Washington, D.C. “Once I had kids, we decided it made more sense to be close to family,” she said. She was drawn to Walls because she thought as an application-only school, every student would want to be there.

Towards the end of our conversation, I asked if she had been given a piece of advice that had stuck with her.

“Professionally, I have heard from several people that I respect and admire that they always keep the students at the forefront of what they’re doing... How can we best support the students and keep them a priority? A lot of times it’s easy to get distracted with everything else, because education’s complicated.”

She adds, “But more personally, my mom gave me the advice to always be honest...and



Ms. Tully / Credits: Bailey McFadden

even when I find it very challenging I stick with that, and I think that has served me well.”

I know I speak for all of Walls when I say: Welcome, Ms. Tully! ●

## Athletic Recruitment: Another Admissions Path

*Ellie Maxson continued from page 1*

Smith said. “Also chasing Division 1: A lot of student athletes, not only here at School Without Walls, chase Division 1 programs until they figure out that they’re a D[ivision] 2 or D[ivision] 3 athlete.”

And while the process is admittedly challenging and stressful, it has also been hugely rewarding for Maxson. While detailing that the process was also very fun in getting to demonstrate her skills to coaches, Maxson also has a love of soccer, more than any other sport she has played partially because she “loves the team aspect.”

She went on to say, “I had offers from two other schools, but Wofford just seemed like the best option because I liked the coach, and it’s

D[ivision] 1.”

Walls wishes her luck at Wofford next fall! ●



The Walls girls’ soccer team / Credits: Eve Rebora

## SWW Sports Report Sept. 25–Oct. 8: Walls Impresses as Playoffs Near

By Julius Cohen (2023)  
Senior Writer

It wouldn't be two weeks at Walls without the SWW Sports Report. Fall sports continued in these exciting weeks, followed and reported by the best Sports Information Club in the city. Let's get into it.

Girls soccer walked over the Bell Griffins and Coolidge Colts. In the two games, the Penguins combined for 20 goals and allowed none. Nadia Lytle ('25) led the charge against the Colts, adding a hattrick to the myriad of other goals.

The squad demonstrated similar dominance in a 3-0 statement win against DCI, but found themselves in a much tighter game against the GDS Hoppers. Walls trailed 2-3 in the final minutes, before DCIAA scoring leader Kylie Emanuel ('25) tied the game with a majestic free kick from near half field.

It was a similar script against Bullis. The Penguins dropped the Bulldogs 3-2 behind 2 goals from Emanuel, who has carried Walls' scoring weight in her dominant sophomore campaign.

The girls won 4 games and scored 29 goals in their most impressive stretch yet. The team is heading towards the playoffs with a head of steam and doesn't show any signs of slowing down.

The boys soccer team had mixed results against the toughest segment of their schedule. The Penguins started with a 0-0 tie against Bell. They failed to find the back of the net, but seven saves from goalie Van Harllee ('24) kept them in the game.

The Penguins came up scoreless again against Roosevelt. An early strike was called back due to a technicality, and the Penguins couldn't convert again. The refs also missed what captain Kazim Hall ('23) described as a "blatant foul in the box" which likely would have led to a Walls goal. Despite another elite performance from Harllee, the Rough Riders were able to score once, handing the Penguins their second DCIAA loss of the season.

Walls bounced back with a 1-0 win against the Cardozo Clerks. Lucas Campbell ('26) scored the boys' only goal of the last two weeks



Ethan Pair ('26) tracks the ball after the Jackson-Reed defender's contest / Credits: Rami Noursi

in the win. The strong performance was dampened by an injury to Harllee, who dislocated his shoulder while making an impressive save.

The Penguins find themselves in a similar situation to last year, when an injury to starting goalie Mark Martinez gave Harllee his first opportunity to shine. This year, it is backup Skyler Elsner ('23) with the chance to step up. "As much as it hurts to watch from the sideline, I have unconditional faith that Skyler and the boys will make me proud," said Harllee about the injury. The team continues to get stronger as playoffs draw nearer.

Girls volleyball continued their dominance against DCIAA opponents. The Penguins took down Roosevelt and HD Woodson in straight sets. Although the girls have cruised past public school opponents, private schools have given them trouble: volleyball lost recent matches to Georgetown Visitation and Maret. According to captain Lourdes Rodriguez ('23),

"the team is working on attacking more." Hopefully this adjustment will keep tougher opponents on their toes.

Cross country was strong in their recent meet. The girls finished first in DCIAA and the boys took second. RYANNE BARSTOW ('23) placed second and TESS BUCKLEY ('23) came in third, finishing just five seconds behind Barstow. ELIJAH LOTT ('25) led the guys' squad to an impressive finish. The running Penguins look to bring home gold in the upcoming championship meet.

2022 has proved to be an exciting year for Walls athletics. Playoffs for fall sports are approaching, and the Penguins need your support more than ever. Show your Penguin pride and come out to support our athletes. If you can't make it, score updates, player features, and other Walls content is posted on @swwpenguins on Instagram. ●

## The Jackson-Reed Curse

By Jack Meltzer (2024)  
Staff Writer

On Sept. 14, the School Without Walls girls' and boys' soccer teams played Jackson-Reed High School (formerly Wilson). Walls's girls soccer team rallied behind a goal scored by Nadia Lytle ('25) in the last 15 minutes that put them up 1-0. But what followed was disastrous for Walls: Star player Kylie Emanuel ('25) sustained a lasting injury to the face and with two quick Jackson-Reed goals our girls were delivered a 2-1 defeat.

Walls girls soccer has failed to beat Jackson-Reed in the playoffs for 13 years in a row. The Walls track teams rarely place higher than Jackson-Reed. Walls' boys soccer did win DCIAA in 2019, but they did so without ever beating Jackson-Reed.

School Without Walls athletic director Kip Smith has coached the baseball team for 13 years. Despite coming very close several times, they have never once beaten Jackson Reed. Part of this comes down to preparation before the game, he said.

The soccer and baseball coaches agree that student athletes should treat Jackson-Reed like any other team. "Preparation during practice doesn't change," Mr. Smith said in an interview. "The best way to prepare is playing a good non-league schedule."

While the coaches encourage their play-



Van Harllee ('24) defends against Jackson-Reed / Credits: Rami Noursi

ers to treat this like any other game, the athletes have the opposite mindset. Van Harllee ('24), the co-captain of the boys' soccer team, says on the morning of a Jackson-Reed game he is "excited with a little bit of nerves and a lot of anticipation."

Because much of the Walls student body is aware when a team is facing up against Jackson-Reed, players feel added pressure. Even Principal Isaac attended both the boys and girls games against Jackson-Reed on Sept. 14.

Mr. Smith acknowledged that "mental intimidation is definitely a hurdle when playing Jackson-Reed."

Furthermore, with many Walls athletes coming from Alice Deal Middle School (a feeder school for Jackson-Reed), there can be intense social pressure because of familiar faces in the stands. "It's hard because I'm playing in front of so many people that I know," Harllee explains.

Walls doesn't always lose to Jackson-Reed. Recently, Walls girls' ultimate frisbee defeated Jackson-Reed 7-3, led by star Josie McCartney ('24). Tennis consistently beats out Jackson-Reed in the DCIAA championship. SWW golf won the DCIAA championship multiple years in a row, largely due to the efforts of class of 2022 star Sean Maxfield, who committed to Macalester College for golf last year. Volleyball is also extremely competitive with Walls' biggest rival. But athletes in baseball, soccer, and track, Walls' most popular team sports, consistently struggle against Jackson-Reed.

Does it come down to the mental pressure of playing both rivals and personal friends? Some don't think so. "I love the feeling of the pressure of the game," Harllee said. "The [Jackson-Reed] atmosphere amplifies that."

Still, some students believe there's more to their losing streak than mere mistakes. Miles Felix ('24), who has faced up against Jackson-Reed multiple times, said, "From referee decisions to unlucky bounces of the ball, it feels like we're cursed when we play [Jackson-Reed]." ●

## Crossword

By Emmett Brosowsky (2023)  
Puzzle Editor

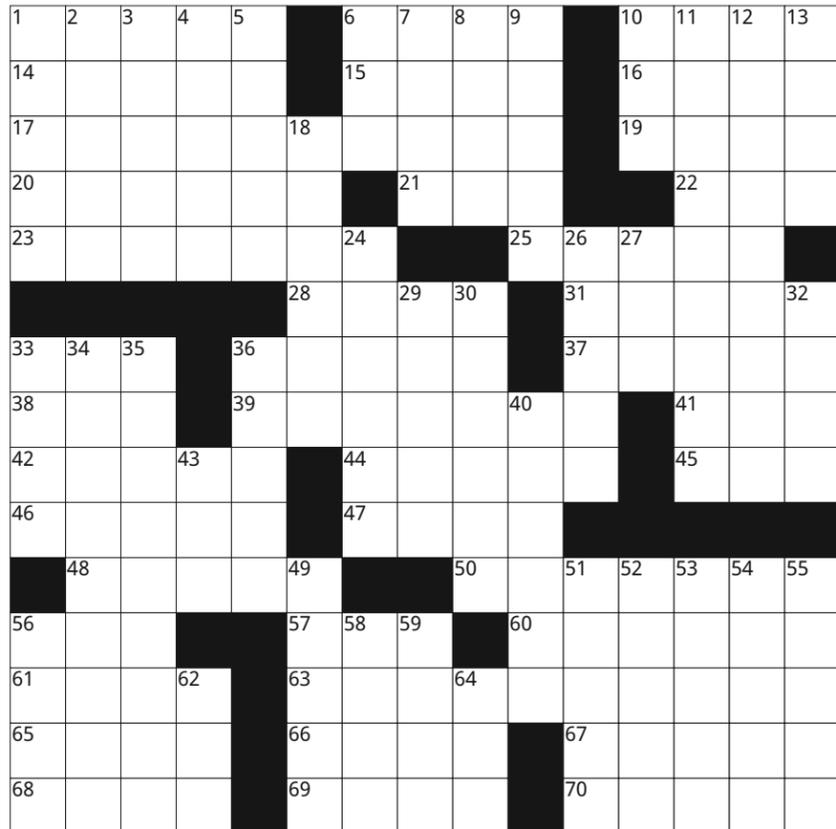
**ACROSS**

- 1 "Pull yourself together," with get  
6 Small dog noises  
10 Electrical adapter letters  
14 "The Faerie Queene" woman whose name means "peace"  
15 Pepper's partner  
16 "Scram!"  
17 Movie series that features 39As  
19 "\_\_\_ Kunta" (Kendrick Lamar track)  
20 Slim Shady  
21 Barely make, with "out"  
22 1983 Nintendo console: abbr.  
23 Caesar, Charlemagne, or Justinian  
25 Coke rival  
28 "Here comes trouble!"  
31 Baseball's Mookie  
33 Plead  
36 Stars and Stripes land, informally  
37 TV's Winfrey  
38 Eggs in a lab  
39 SWW icon that's a hint to 17A, 19A, 23A, 63A, 68A, 11D, and 35D  
41 Pie \_\_\_ mode

- 42 Get chummy (with)  
44 Hollywood's DeVito or Glover  
45 Toilet paper layer  
46 Extra  
47 Starting four?  
48 Where to hear an aria  
50 Unit of land that anagrams, coincidentally, to THE ACRE  
56 Garment under a blouse  
57 "Yup" opposite  
60 Cleaned, as a whiteboard  
61 Anger  
63 Alternate name for 39A that includes an item of clothing  
65 Part of a molecule  
66 Big name in ice cream  
67 Kelly Marie Tran wore one at the 2022 Oscars  
68 Home for a 39A  
69 Small, medium, or large  
70 Ten-\_\_\_ odds

**DOWN**

- 1 Singer Mann  
2 Former Texas senator Phil  
3 Go back for more guacamole, maybe  
4 Nonsensical  
5 Beeper  
6 Beast of burden  
7 Marathon, e.g.



- 8 Criticism, informally  
9 Throat ailment  
10 Query  
11 Football helmet attachment  
12 Accomplished everything  
13 Gear teeth  
18 Quiet as \_\_\_  
24 "Help Me, \_\_\_": Beach Boys hit  
26 Wood for black piano keys  
27 Energy  
29 Gift \_\_\_: talk show host's skill  
30 Leg and loin  
32 One-horse carriage  
33 Good songs, in modern slang  
34 Disappear, as liquid water  
35 South American archipelago that can precede 39A  
36 Lower's opposite  
40 Truly  
43 Suffix with press or fail  
49 Pays to play  
51 Zagreb native  
52 No-no  
53 "Like me"  
54 Aired again  
55 Murphy who played Donkey in "Shrek"  
56 Fiber source  
58 Field where Spirit and United play  
59 Final four?  
62 CPR pro  
64 Opposite of WNW

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