

More Than 70 Walls Students Register to Vote Ahead of Primaries

By David Sipos (2024)
Staff Writer

The D.C. Board of Elections held a voter registration drive at Walls on May 13 in preparation for upcoming elections, one of many similar drives at high schools across the city.

At the drive, the Walls student body, considerably engaged in politics and current events, showed unsurprising enthusiasm about voting in the upcoming D.C. primary elections to decide party nominations for the mayor, attorney general, and several councilmember seats. The primary is only weeks away, scheduled for June 21. Mail-in ballots have already begun arriving at the homes of registered voters.

The drive was a resounding success. Though the voting age is 18, D.C. allows 16- and 17-year-olds to pre-register to vote, allowing many freshmen and sophomores to register in addition to seniors. However, the junior class was on a field trip on the day of the drive and were unable to participate. In total, more than 70 Walls students registered or pre-registered at the drive. LaVonna McCann, the DCBOE worker who orchestrated the drive, said that it was the most successful registration effort since they began in March.

Gabri Kurtzer-Ellenbogen, a sophomore and co-leader of the Walls Democrats Club, spoke to and registered students with McCann. “I think having a student run the drive made it more successful,” Kurtzer-Ellenbogen said of



Credits: Kerry Sylvia

her role in an interview. “It’s relational organizing.”

She noted the importance of registering potential voters as soon as possible. “When people are registered at a young age they’re more likely to get involved in the future,” she said. That’s the goal of these school registration drives, she said: “Working with more high school students who want to take the initiative” to organize registration drives is the best way to register more people nationwide.

But she still sees work to do when it comes to youth civic engagement. Students are “passionate and rallying around the issues, like going to protests, but we still need to work on getting people to take action” such as “sign[ing] up for a phonebank, help[ing] register people to vote,” she said.

Registering to vote in D.C. is relatively easy and straightforward. Eligible voters could

Voter Drive continued on page 3



U.S. Supreme Court building in Washington, D.C. / Credits: Jeff Kubina

Adoption Post-Roe

By Josie McCartney (2024)
Staff Writer

This May, a leaked draft of Justice Samuel Alito’s opinion on *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* indicated that the Supreme Court was prepared to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, leaving abortion access and lawmaking up to state legislatures. The move is expected to reduce abortion access in many states and ultimately lead to more childbirth in the U.S. An increase in childbirth would change the state of adoption in the United States. Adoption agencies are expecting an increase in children nationwide to be available for adoption, but many

lawmakers opposed to abortion access are not taking steps to ensure that there will be social programs in place to care for all of these children.

Yet at this time for a variety of reasons, there is a lack of children available to adopt in the U.S. right now. Over the past 50 years, teens, who are more likely than older parents to give up their children for adoption, have had fewer pregnancies and single motherhood is less stigmatized so fewer single mothers give up their children for adoption after birth.

Additionally, international adoption has also decreased. In the past, American families frequently adopted children from developing

Adoption continued on page 5

College Admissions End, and Seniors Reflect

By Jennifer Nehrer (2022)
Senior Editor

To celebrate the end of their college admissions season, the senior class held a Decision Day party on May 18th during advisory. Seniors were encouraged to wear merch from the colleges that they will be attending. At the beginning of Advisory, the senior class entered the terrace to find it decorated with balloons spelling out “Class of 2022,” party hats, bubbles, and their All About Me posters from Bridge. Students laughed and cheered at the decorations, took photos around the space with their friends, ate candy, and participated in a class photo where they wrote “22” by standing in formation. The atmosphere was one of pure glee, and well deserved. After all, they had just finished a long, difficult journey.

College admissions is, as the seniors will gladly complain about, a very stressful time in life. To ease the worries of underclassmen, the Rookery asked seniors to reflect on their college journeys.

Matthew Premysler, who will be attending the University of Vermont, said that he feels “solidly OK” at the end of the admissions season. He said that he chose UVM because of the outdoorsiness and the well-established bike team, among other things, as both are important to him.

However, he said, “I felt like I applied to too many universities[.] I applied to 13 and got into 9, but ended up going to a school I early-acted on because it was inexpensive and seemed like fun. I felt like I kinda wasted my money a little bit, but I was happy with my choice.” For reference, application fees for colleges can be costly if you apply without fee waivers.

Seniors continued on page 2

OPINION

Making School Lunch More Inclusive

By Darya Filippova (2024)
Staff Writer

What do you normally have for lunch? A homemade sandwich? Last night's dinner? Or maybe you bought something from the deli. Not often do I hear students reply with school lunch. Every day, I see the same 20 people at the lunch line, relatively few from a school of 600. That makes me question why no one else considers school lunch, especially since it's free. Doesn't school lunch seem like a better option than spending money or waking up early to pack food? Sophomore Abigail McGraw-Traster regularly gets school lunch because "it's more convenient when I don't want to leave the building or pack a lunch in the morning."

However, the real problem comes from the school lunch menu. As a person who gets school lunch a few times a week I've noticed a pattern. Pizza, chicken with rice, pasta with some greens, or a grilled cheese sandwich. Occasionally there's breakfast for lunch, consisting of french toast and eggs. This pattern of consistent meals isn't just seen at Walls, but across all DCPS as schools share the same menu. These same meals have been served since I can last remember getting school lunch in middle school. Along with that, these meals aren't very inclusive of the student body.

Some progress was made with the introduction of vegetarian alternatives at Walls. This is the first time in my years as a DCPS student where school lunch has more than one option. But it shouldn't stop there. States in the midwest, like Ohio, include suggestions from stu-



Signs outside the Walls lunchroom
Credits: Darya Filippova

dents in their lunch menu. Schools in Colorado have previously stated that they like expanding their menu options to add ethnic foods for students to try. Adding cuisines from different countries is a unique idea, but in the meantime, schools should consider the basics and be able to provide a variety of meals for those with accommodations, such as gluten free or vegan options.

Some students have different concerns and ideas on how to improve the lunch system. Sophomore Raphael Udemba suggests that "getting notified electronically on what is on the school lunch menu," would be a great feature to add to the weekly emails. Additionally, he says that "fruits with lunch should be

Seniors on College Admissions

Seniors continued from page 1

From the financial angle, Premysler noted the importance of thinking about costs when deciding where to go, saying, "I know friends who are gonna go to ivys and possibly get... 100k worth of student debt and others who are going to lesser state schools with complete full rides. I don't wanna sound like your dad here but bang for buck is really important." He clarified that his comments aren't to discourage kids from going to their dream schools, but that student loans are a real challenge for many. Currently, the total amount of student loan debt in the United States is around \$1.75 trillion. Applying for scholarships and correctly filling out forms

Seniors continued on page 3

optional because most people take fruits with their lunch and don't eat them." Having a balanced meal is important, but wasting food should be avoided. Freshman Faith Nesbeth thinks that, "surveying hundreds of kids from different schools across D.C." would be an effective way to get student input on what goes into our lunches.

Although all these recommendations are great, real change won't be made until the concern is brought to the attention of DCPS. Students should feel good about what they are eating and schools should be able to provide them with the choice of free meals that accommodate the student body. ●

OPINION

Everything Wrong With Advanced Placement

By David Sipos (2024)
Staff Writer

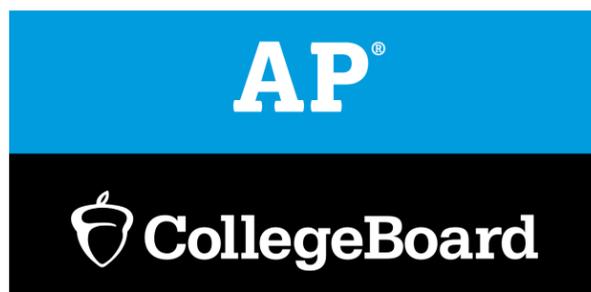
Many of us recently endured two weeks of AP testing. For many, it meant intense studying and considerable anxiety. It was the culmination of a year of classes following the AP curriculum. The stress of the AP exams is bad enough, but there are far greater problems with the College Board, the curriculum, and the test itself.

About a week before my AP World History exam, I heard a fellow sophomore sum up one of the worst parts of the AP.

"My goal is to squeeze as much knowledge into my brain as possible and let it go after the AP," this student said.

The issue here is that the emphasis on the AP test has made the eight-month class little more than a cram course. The content in AP classes is often important, useful, or interesting. But because it is all used on an exam that is ever-present in the minds of students, even months before the test, the content becomes identified solely with that test. When information is absorbed, it is irreparably tied to the AP exam. More so than in non-AP classes, the content is learned in order to pass, not in the pursuit of learning — so much so that some might disagree with my characterization of AP content as interesting or useful.

Though the AP curriculum may be seen as a cram course, it is rigorous and covers considerable content. However, the way that many AP courses accomplish this is by taking a very broad approach to their subject. AP World History is a great example of this. Even after reducing the time period relevant in the exam



Credits: College Board

to 1200 C.E. to the present (down from all of human history), the AP World curriculum still barely covers a number of significant historical events. I know that World War I had a few causes and a few effects, but how it proceeded and even how it ended was apparently unimportant to the College Board. The same was true for the entire Renaissance. The problem with this broad approach is that it dilutes the value of the learning. To cover so many ideas in such a facile way — to merely glance at important topics like the Renaissance — is a disservice to what education should be. AP Human Geography and AP U.S. History are similarly broad in their attempts to cover as wide a variety of subjects as possible with limited time, say some of my fellow students who have taken those classes. This broad and rapid coverage of the parts of AP curricula is a result of the focus on the exam.

Then there is the matter of the College Board itself, the organization that crafts the AP curriculum and designs the exams. To begin with, the College Board is effectively a monopoly. The International Baccalaureate (IB) program, among the few courses of study comparable to AP curricula, barely measures up to the AP and the College Board. Under 90,000 students took part in the IB Diploma Programme in the U.S. in 2020, according to the IB website, compared to more than 2.6 million AP takers that year (per the College Board). Around 70 percent of U.S. public schools offer AP cours-

es, according to a Georgetown University study. They are largely allowed to remain a monopoly as they qualify as a non-profit. But do they deserve this designation? In 2019, the College Board brought in slightly more than a billion dollars in revenue, which is \$150 million more than it spent. That's a 14 percent profit margin, strong even for a for-profit business. These revenues go towards paying College Board executives high six- and seven-figure salaries. This behavior certainly poses questions about its values as a non-profit.

The College Board's conduct also raises considerable privacy concerns. Did you fill in the bubble to opt into the "Student Search Service" on your AP? If you did, know that your personal information just went on the market for 47 cents apiece. The AP Student Search Service includes your gender, ethnicity, and more. The SAT provides even more information, including extracurriculars, educational aspirations, sports, and other personal data. Colleges can buy this data en masse, acquiring millions of student profiles each year. They can then choose which students to target with recruiting tactics. It's time to call the College Board, along with the AP, PSAT, and SAT what they are: a racket. The College Board's monopolous racketeering does not have any bearing on the efficacy or importance of its tests. But we must examine whom we trust to have so much control over our futures.

I don't want to talk too much about the anxiety that the APs cause. It is well known and no one needs to be reminded of it. Instead, I want to highlight the financial, rather than mental, strain that the APs cause for many. Walls students are fortunate that the school pays for students to take AP tests. Even if they didn't, the fact that the Walls student body is relatively middle- and upper-income might make it difficult to grasp the financial consequences of AP tests.

APs continued on page 2

Board of Elections Holds Registration Drive at Walls

Voter Drive continued from page 1



District of Columbia
Board of Elections

Credits: D.C. Board of Elections

register online on the DCBOE website before May 31. D.C. also allows same-day registration, so people who will be 18 before Nov. 8 can still register and vote in the primary. To register on Election Day, you will need to provide proof of residence, such as a government-issued ID or a utility bill; more information can be found on the Board of Elections website.

Many current Walls seniors won't be voting in the D.C. general election this November as they will be in college in other states, but these students can register in the states of their colleges. Vote.gov provides information on how to register in each state, along with the deadlines for registering, when to mail in your ballot, and how long you need to be a resident to register, all of which vary from state to state. It's not illegal to be registered in two states (or in a state and a territory like D.C.), as states periodically remove people from the voter rolls if they've moved, but it is illegal to vote in more than one state.

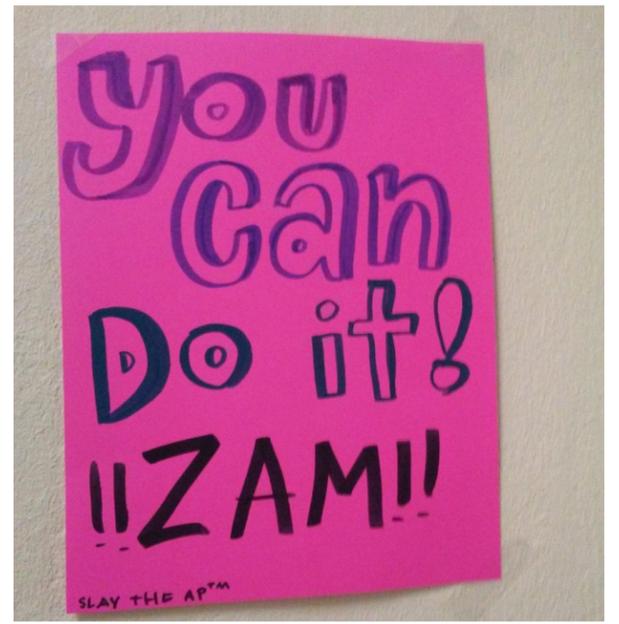
Seniors should note that certain scholarships are contingent on legal residence in D.C., like the D.C. Tuition Assistance Grant. Registering to vote in another state means changing your legal residence to that state, and you could lose access to these programs if you do so. ●

AP Exams Are Not As Advertised

APs continued from page 2

But for many low-income students in less academic schools that don't pay for the tests, the cost of taking the AP can be a barrier. The College Board charges \$96 per exam. On top of that, students must pay \$15 to send these scores to each college they apply to after the first free score report. Although some school districts, including DCPS, completely pay for or significantly reduce the exam fee, the majority of states and districts do not, and none of them pay to send scores. As close by as Montgomery County, Md., the public school system does not subsidize AP exam costs for most students. In addition, a federal program subsidizing AP and IB exam costs for low-income students was discontinued in 2016, according to Education Week, further increasing costs for students in districts that could not provide the subsidy themselves. These costs add up for students taking multiple APs in high school and applying to several colleges. Alternatively, they might just convince someone not to take AP classes at all. Then there's the well-documented issue that upper-income families will more readily pay for tutors and studying materials. There's little that low-income students can do about this.

Returning to my point about the College Board's monopolous nature, there's no alternative, economical testing option, and there's nothing to stop the College Board from raising prices for tests, something they've done repeatedly in the past decade. AP tests are marketed as a way for low-income students to attend col-



Credits: Mitali Mirchandani

lege, by giving college credit and allowing them to skip semesters. But instead the APs have become yet another educational division between classes.

In recent years, accelerated by the pandemic, colleges and universities have stopped requiring SATs and ACTs on applications. As long as we live in a world where AP tests are considered by colleges, Walls students will continue to have to take the courses, and I do not fault the school for that. The burden is thus on colleges. It is my hope that tertiary education recognizes the issues with the APs and phases out their recognition, thus bringing an end to this monopolist, classist, and educationally harmful system. ●

Seniors Reflect on College Admissions Experience

Seniors continued from page 2

such as the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) are ways to get aid from colleges to reduce total expected costs.

Caroline Hester, who will be attending Wellesley College, says that at the end of the season she feels "very relieved and thankful because I feel like I sort of had the best outcome I could since I got into my [early decision school]. Definitely looking back though it was a super stressful process and I'm glad it's over."

Hester remarked that procrastination was a driving factor of her stress, because "I didn't start my regular decision apps until like november so I was scrambling to get those done in case I didn't get into Wellesley." To avoid unnecessary stress, she advises underclassmen to begin outlining and/or drafting their essays early (during their summer before senior year) to avoid feeling that stress during the school year. Outlining was especially helpful for her. She notes how "it helped me organize my thoughts and think about what I wanted to say/how I wanted to say it/how I wanted it to connect to an overall theme."

Hester also noted that having academic deadlines - especially senior project ones - due at the same time as some applications was a source of stress, but she advises that underclassmen shouldn't "be afraid to ask [their] teachers for support/extensions/that kind of thing (within reason), because they want to help you and see you succeed and they know how stressful [the] application season is." For her specifically, senior project added more stress than for other seniors because she was in one of two periods that should have had Madame Thorpe, and because of that, "no one really knew what was going on since we weren't being given the same info/assignments that other senior proj-

ect classes."

In the end, though, Hester wants to reassure the underclassmen. "[A]t the end of the day," she says, "remember you will get in somewhere and it will all work out."

Asher Lawrence is a future student at the West Chester University of Pennsylvania. At the end of his college admissions season, he is "relieved and content." Like other seniors, he said that the application process was stressful, but that "getting a definitive answer on where I'm going to spend college gives me a better indication of how my future is going to look." This, he says, makes that stress go away.

"I am also very happy with my choice," he says, "as the university has the exact environment I want for college."

Lawrence said that the most stressful parts of his process were "where I needed other people to take action for me to progress in my applications." It often happens that a student does everything they need and then has to wait for a transcript or letter of recommendation to go through.

When asked to give advice, Lawrence had three key ideas to pass on:

One, he says, is to "have a good idea of the criteria you want a college to meet...because the environment of a college is going to be integral [to] whether or not it will provide a good experience." Sometimes students may not know what they want until they can see the campus in person, so visiting all of your schools is generally a good idea.

Referencing his earlier stressor, Lawrence's second piece of advice is to "get the documents you need from other people ASAP, since it's something you individually will not have control of." While you can generally submit the basic components of your application (the essays and information that you input

without transcripts and recommendation letters, teachers and counselors get very busy very quickly. It's best to get those things out of the way when you can. Several seniors recall asking for letters of recommendation at the end of their junior year.

His final piece of advice is to be aware of scholarship opportunities. "Posse pays full tuition, and DCCAP covers tuition and board up to the pell grant, [and] Questbridge covers the majority of college costs. Be aware of these programs and see if any of their schools meet your criteria since they will become very affordable." Several students in this year's senior class have earned large scholarships through the aforementioned programs as well as others, and Lawrence himself was awarded a full-tuition scholarship for West Chester through DCCAP.

Speaking as a senior myself, I have two pieces of advice to give:

One: apply somewhere under rolling admission. Under rolling admission, your application can be reviewed and decided on by the college as soon as you submit it instead of waiting to be reviewed after the submission deadline. There are a surprising number of colleges and universities that do this, so if you find one that you'd be interested in I would encourage you to apply. There is no better feeling than having two acceptances under your belt by the end of October.

My second advice is less logistical, but just as important: your acceptances, rejections, waitlists, and eventually your choice of college do not define you. At all. What will matter is what you do when you're there. You don't need to be in a top 20 school to feel that you've "made it." The colleges that your classmates go to do not make them better or worse than you. Everyone is different, and their college journey should be too. So take a breath, relax, and repeat these words to yourself:

It's not that deep. ●

As COVID-19 Surges, China Locks Down and D.C. Carries On

By Carys Shepard (2023)
Staff Writer

During the week of May 22, an average of 368 cases of COVID-19 were reported daily in Washington, D.C. This is a 351% increase from the average only 2 weeks ago. At School Without Walls, particularly after the spring dance on Friday, May 20, many students have been missing school after contracting COVID-19. However, not much has changed in the city regarding coronavirus policies. At SWW, while testing is offered to students, this is the only remaining measure regarding COVID-19. Masks are optional and any social distancing that occurred at the beginning of the school year is long gone.

Practices in cities in China present a sharp contrast to life in the United States. In March 2022, Shanghai began to experience a sharp increase in coronavirus cases. The Chinese government placed the city on lockdown, also known as the “zero COVID” policy. In late April of 2022, Beijing was also placed on lockdown as it experienced a rise in cases. Although quarantine is an effective measure to prevent the spread of COVID-19, it takes a large toll on a population that already lived through more than two years of a pandemic largely without needing to undergo a complete lockdown.

Residents are forced to stay inside their apartments, only leaving for periodic COVID-19 testing. Although official policies have not been confirmed, there have been several cases in which one positive case led to the entire floor of an apartment building being



A banner in Shenzhen, China, advising pandemic caution / Credits: M. Granger via Wikimedia Commons

sent to a separate government quarantine facility. In other instances, certain neighborhoods have been placed on complete house arrest, not even permitted to leave to collect groceries ordered online. One Shanghai police officer reportedly informed a citizen, “It’s not that you can do whatever you want — unless you’re in America. This is China.” His statement clearly portrays the difference between the American and Chinese responses to an increase in coronavirus cases. Such strict control and stringent policies would never be permitted in the United States, yet under the totalitarian Chinese government, anything can and will be done to keep COVID-19 cases low.

In Washington, D.C., policies meant to prevent the spread of COVID-19 removed a few months ago have not been reinstated. Although private institutions can create their own policies, mask mandates throughout the city, for

example, have been removed. At School Without Walls, an increasing number of students no longer wear masks within the school building. The majority of D.C. residents, including the students at School Without Walls, continue attending their in-person daily activities, with or without a mask. This is in stark contrast to the circumstances faced by fellow high school students across the world.

Cherly Mok, a junior at a high school in Shanghai, and Jaskiran Arora, a junior at a high school in Beijing, are both currently in lockdown due to the coronavirus. Mok, living in Shanghai, has been in lockdown since April first. She explains, “At the beginning of the lockdown, there was a bit of panic over food as all the shops were closed and you had to rely on apps/deliveries and usually groceries are sold

China continued on page 5

Education and Housing at Center of D.C. Mayoral Race

By David Sipos (2024)
Staff Writer

On May 16, D.C. mayoral candidates met virtually for a debate held by the D.C. Office of Campaign Finance, in which all three candidates outlined their differing approaches to these issues.

On June 21, D.C. voters will effectively decide the mayor of the city for the next four years. D.C. is overwhelmingly Democratic, which means that whoever wins the June primary will win in the general election.

Mayor Muriel Bowser is seeking a third term, but is facing a challenge from Robert White, an at-large member of the D.C. Council, and Trayon White, the Ward 8 Councilmember. All three leading candidates have made the issues of education and affordable housing central to their campaigns. Whichever candidate wins, their education and other policies will likely have a direct and noticeable impact on Walls students. A notable example of this was the mask mandate at D.C. public schools, a policy both put in place and ended by Mayor Bowser.

Education continues to be at the center of D.C.’s local politics. Under Bowser, school budgets have significantly grown, and she has championed her record on D.C. schools. Bowser has especially noted her response to COVID-19 and her successful efforts to keep almost all schools open this school year. “I was very firm in our response to COVID and making sure we could bring our kids back in person,” Bowser said at the event, additionally noting the availability of testing in D.C. Bowser said that she was proud of her record on education since she took office in 2019, arguing that she has narrowed the gap between minority students in D.C. and the national average.

Councilmember Robert White pushed back on this record. “The mayor is trying to convince us that we only have two options on education: The system 15 years ago that was failing students or the system now that is failing students,” he said. He pointed out that “60% of students of color are behind grade level.”

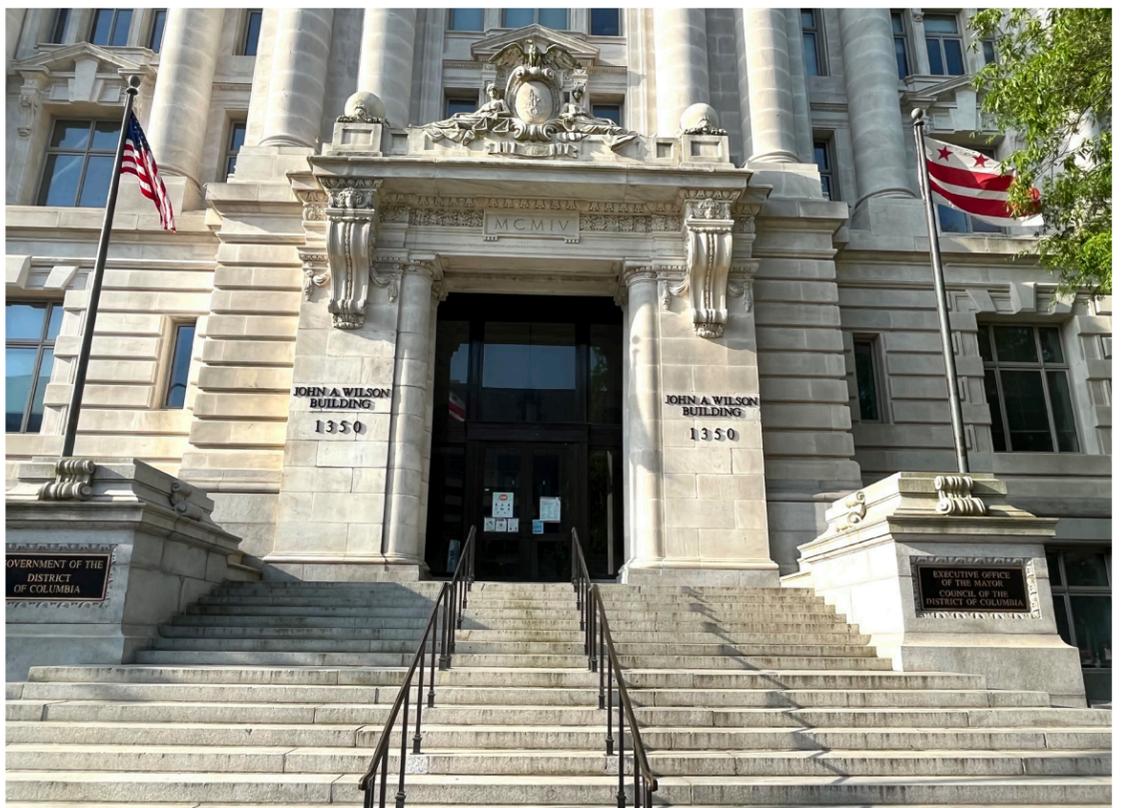
Another point of contention between the two frontrunners was the role of the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE). In 2007, educational policy came under the purview of the mayor with the creation of OSSE. Robert White advocated for taking this power away from the executive by making OSSE an independent agency, which he views as an issue of mayoral accountability. “You shouldn’t even be strongly considered for this job if you don’t want the responsibility of leading our schools,”

Bowser shot back.

The two challengers also highlighted what they would do differently if elected, focusing on an expansion of trade and vocational schools. Both Robert White and Trayon White supported the introduction and expansion of schools not solely focused on college. “We are going to have three pathways to success: there’s of course the college track, the career track, and also the entrepreneur track,” Trayon White said.

One of the biggest questions was the future of police officers in schools. Under a law passed by the Council last year, D.C. is on track to end police presence in schools by 2025. In her budget, Bowser proposed reinstating school

Mayoral Race continued on page 5



The John A. Wilson Building, the seat of D.C. local government / Credits: David Sipos

Adoption Central to Abortion Debate

Adoption continued from page 1

regions and countries such as Guatemala, Ethiopia, Romania, Russia, South Korea, and China, where many girls were given up under the now expired one-child policy. Scrutiny over international adoptions mounted, resulting in organizations working to relocate children within their home country as opposed to sending them to families abroad. At the same time, the amount of families looking to adopt has increased.

Due to the aforementioned trends, there are far more families looking to adopt than there are children viable for adoption. Many families have become stuck waiting for a child to adopt, and anti-abortion lawmakers point to all of this as a reason that adoption is an ethical substitute for abortion.

Anti-abortion advocates argue that overturning *Roe* would provide more children for adoption. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, clinics report upwards of 600,000 abortions each year in the U.S. However, this figure is likely lower than the actual number of annual abortions due to unreported at-home procedures and illegal pill-induced abortions. To anti-abortion advocates, these 600,000+ abortions represent children who could be adopted.

Proponents of abortion access argue that adoption is not an applicable alternative to abortion, contrary to what many pro-life advocates claim. They believe that abortion is not a decision about becoming a parent, but not to be pregnant, and so putting children up for adoption is not a feasible alternative to abortion.

Aimee Christain, a writer and adoptee who has had an abortion, disagreed with commonly cited anti-abortion sentiments, explain-



*The current justices of the Supreme Court
Credits: U.S. Supreme Court*

ing the amount of trauma accompanying either process is vastly different, but that there is a vast disparity in the emotional and mental effects each event carries. “The trauma of pregnancy and the very trauma of forced birth, it doesn’t do away with not having to raise a child,” she told NPR in May. “And that is incomparable to the trauma — if there is trauma — of abortion.” Christain’s words were supported by the research of Gretchen Sisson of the University of California San Francisco.

In Texas, state lawmakers have passed bills in recent months to restrict abortion access. They made requirements on the building dimensions of abortion clinics and delegated citizens to sue clinics for providing abortions past 6 weeks of gestation. The state also has a “trigger law,” which would make providing an abortion a felony 30 days after the Supreme Court overturns *Roe*. The law only makes exceptions if the mother’s life is at risk or if the patient is in danger of “substantial impairment of major bodily function.”

Many of the conservative state lawmakers who passed these laws are now pushing for expanded adoption and foster care funding. However, the majority of their caucuses are not supportive of more funding for these social services that would alleviate the pressure that would come with a rise in births. Texas

Republican state representative Steve Toth claimed that expanding the state’s social safety net would be the appropriate “moral response” to helping mothers and placed an emphasis on funding more abortion services and foster care, according to the Texas Tribune.

The executive director of the pro-life Texas Alliance for Life, Joe Pojman, supports more funding for the state program Alternative to Abortions, which funds a network of mostly pro-life non-profits that provide counseling and other services to pregnant women. The program received \$100 million in the most recent two-year budget cycle, but Pojman says the state could provide more backing and publicize the agency more because many women are not aware of all of the options for resources, telling the Tribune, “For a lot of women who find themselves pregnant, they don’t even know that those exist.”

Republican Oklahoma governor Kevin Stitt committed to expanding adoption and foster care services in an appearance on Fox News Sunday on May 15, stating, “We want the churches, we want all the services, we want the state and nonprofits to come around with adoption services and that is super, super hard, and we are going to do everything we can to help them.”

Critics point out that there is little unity amongst the Republican caucuses in Republican-controlled legislatures on how to move forward on expanding different social programs. They also mention that there have been no bills or plans introduced to codify anti-abortion lawmakers’ pledges to expand social safety programs.

It remains to be seen if Republican state legislators will be able to whip the votes to expand adoption and foster care services, as conservatives have historically been reluctant to appropriate large amounts of money for social programs. ●

Mayoral Candidates Debate Persistent Issues Ahead of Democratic Primary

Mayoral Race continued from page 4

police officers, but this proposal was defeated by the D.C. Council in May. Robert White was one of the Councilmembers who voted to reject this, later saying in the debate “we have to have a holistic plan” for school safety. He cited the will of students for his vote.

Bowser countered, however, saying, “What we’ve heard from the principals is that having an officer that they know and that they can rely on is the public safety official that they need.” She cited the importance of developing relationships between students and school resource officers. Trayon White voted for Bowser’s proposal, but noted he didn’t see it as a final solution. “We’ve seen the highest violence in D.C. that we haven’t seen in 20 years, and as a result it’s spilling over to the schools. I also think that policing is not the end-all solution to crime,” he said.

Then there was the matter of housing. D.C. continues to experience an affordable housing crisis and has a substantial homeless population. The crisis has only been made worse by rising inflation and rising housing costs nationwide. Bowser argued that her two terms have helped alleviate the problem, saying, “We have kept our promises as it relates to affordable housing.” She also noted the expansion of the Housing Production Trust Fund, a D.C. program that helps finance affordable housing.

Robert White criticized Bowser for this response, arguing that a simple infusion of money doesn’t solve the problem and suggesting that Bowser’s definition of affordable housing was flawed. “We are seeing development of housing on public land that looks unfortunately almost the same as development of housing on private land,” he said. “The issue is needing a mayor who is going to stand up to developers,” he added.

Trayon White noted that he helped craft the law to make the Housing Production Trust Fund more supportive of low-income residents, but argued that the infusion of money has made it “a slush fund for developers.” Though



*Mayor Muriel Bowser
Credits: D.C. Government (CC BY 3.0 US)*

the three leading candidates differed on their solutions and proposals, they all seemed to agree with Trayon White’s characterization of the problem: “We are in a housing crisis and have to do something about it.” ●

As D.C. Leaves Pandemic Behind, China Maintains Restrictive “Zero COVID” Policy

China continued from page 4

out pretty quickly.” Mok describes a predicament affecting families throughout China that struggle to get enough food to support themselves through lockdown.

The zero COVID policy has even been prioritized over education, Mok says. “We even had to leave classes to do covid testing in the compound,” she said. “We had to switch to distance learning, and I’ve heard that [Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate]

exams were canceled.”

Arora further details challenges she’s faced with the zero COVID policy, saying, “It surely has impacted my mental and emotional state because we are not fully aware of the COVID cases, as the actual number is never declared. Also, having covid tests daily affects you because you can feel the anxiety and panic created. I honestly miss going to school because you can have friends and teachers to motivate and support you.” Lockdown is clearly detrimental to the health of millions of people

throughout China as they lack the human contact and resources one needs in life.

At School Without Walls, students might relate to feelings of anxiety over rising COVID-19 cases in the recent weeks. Yet this is where similarities end between the two countries’ coronavirus situation. A zero covid policy in the United States would be met with zero tolerance here in D.C. More than two years into the pandemic, people around the world are still struggling to find the most effective method to contain the spread of COVID-19. ●

Your Guide to Summer In D.C.

By Layla Rethy (2025)
Staff Writer

Summer in D.C.: tourists streaming in, the sun beating on your shoulders, watermelon dripping down your arm. For residents of D.C., summer is a familiar time, but this year's summer can be unlike any other. From exploring nature to admiring the stars at an outdoor movie, there are endless possibilities this summer and this is your guide to making the most of it.

One of my favorite things to do in the summer is enjoy the fresh air and go for a walk or bike ride. I usually stick to Rock Creek Park or go for a lap around my neighborhood, but there are countless trails and paths that are perfect for afternoon adventures. The Whitehaven Trail, located in Glover Park, offers a great mix of shade, sun, and natural streams. This trail is great for walking, running, jogging, and mountain biking and is pretty level throughout the route. The hike is fairly quick at 1.8 miles round-trip.

The 20-mile beast of a hike known as the Anacostia River Trail gets you a full tour of the D.C. waterfront, not to mention a great workout. The many sites along the river as you make the journey include Kingman Island (which has its own trail), Anacostia Park, and the Bladensburg Wetlands (foxes and bald eagles are commonly spotted here). While the length of this trail is a stretch for most, it's easy to explore small parts of it.

The National Zoo is a common and beloved destination for D.C. residents, and its Asia Trail is a unique way to see the animals while getting in some exercise. The Asia Trail forms a unified exhibit that is organized by ecosystem and focused on simulating the natural habitats of the animals. This walking path is a unique experience and a must for residents who have

tired of the standard hike through the zoo.

Going to D.C. festivals is one of my favorite ways to enjoy the summer stars and the D.C. scene. The Smithsonian Folklife Festival honors international cultures annually. This free event will be on the National Mall from June 22 to July 4 this year. Head over for a week of exhibits, presentations, live music, cooking, and more!

You can enjoy the last Saturday of summer break by attending the 17th Street Festival the afternoon of Aug. 27. The festival is a showcase of 100 local artists and includes an entertainment stage with dancers, singers, and other performers. In addition, there are slides, snow cones, face painting, food, and more.

Countless outdoor and drive-through screenings are available all summer, including the Drive-In at Union Market, GLDN+ Cinema, and Adams Morgan Movie Nights. A free and memorable experience is the Films at the Stone; movie screenings at the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial include *Encanto* and *Fatherhood*. Bringing a lawn chair or blanket are popular ways to enjoy the fireflies, night sky, and movie while sitting in the heart of D.C.

Exploring new restaurants is also a fun way to experience different parts of the city. The Washington Post called the Red Hen, an Italian-inspired restaurant located in the historic Bloomingdale neighborhood, "the best kind of neighborhood restaurant." The seasonal and creative menu blends classic Italian cuisine with unique pasta and other dishes.

dLeña is a new restaurant in Mount Vernon Triangle that takes a modern approach to authentic Mexican cuisine. dLeña has brunch, lunch, and dinner menus, including enchiladas, corn empanadas, and Tomahawk.

Brookland's Finest is a great place to find local, seasonal food in a relaxed environment. Their brunch menu consists of classic comfort foods like burgers, chicken and waffles, and shrimp and grits. The restaurant is a great place to hang out with friends or family, or just to take a break from the swampy D.C. weather.

Whether you're spending the break relaxing at home or you're busy all summer and have a free weekend, these activities are experiences to check off your summer bucket list. Enjoy these last few weeks of school and have a great summer! ●



Credits: Gabriel Kraemer



Credits: Rick A. Dikeman

The Formula One Fervor

By Zoe Fisher (2025)
Staff Writer

The sun beats down on your skin, the smell of gasoline wafts past your nose, the sound of engines revving booms in your ears, and screams and shouts surround you. There is a sea of mechanics dressed head to toe in team colors swarming around masterpieces of world-class machinery. As soon as the mechanics scurry away, the red lights beep, and in less than a second, competitors zoom off and the crowd explodes with joy.

This is the feeling that millions of people all over the world anticipate for so long: the experience of a Formula One Grand Prix. Even watching from home, you feel this reaching your living room through the screen. It's the feeling that ignites the obsession of so many, including myself.

Formula One is a European car racing sport that has been around for decades. Over the years it has evolved considerably, but at its core, it is an appreciation of the art of car building and the excitement of such a fast race. Every season, the cars themselves evolve and get faster, and the drivers get better.

Each race is in a different country. Grand

Prix's span from Friday to Sunday, entailing three practice sessions, a qualifying round, and the final race.

Americans have always been enthralled by new technologies and have been excited about car racing for a while, too. But for years, F1 never caught the attention of Americans. The European cultural phenomenon never mixed so well with American car racing fans. There have been a few F1 races in the US, but none of them have stuck.

But in 2018, Netflix released the show "Formula 1: Drive to Survive." Until then, most viewers, who knew close to nothing about car racing, saw it as a bunch of people driving in circles for hours, solely relying on the car. This show debunks that idea right off the bat, going behind the scenes to show the drama-filled stories of how the team principles (essentially team managers), mechanics, and drivers interact and work to make the team and car more successful. It is not just a race between the 20 drivers, but against the 200 to 1,200 people who work for each of the teams. Between the people at the factory and at the race, it takes many hands and many brains to make a team work.

The show became an in-depth and popular drama-filled (somewhat over-the-top) introduction to the sport for people all over the world, especially Americans. The show follows drivers and team principles into their personal lives, giving fans a more intimate connection to the sport, and prompting them to choose a favorite driver or team. The show made people obsessed.

In 2012, the Circuit of the Americas in Austin, Texas opened for the first time. It was the first Grand Prix in the United States in years. Once "Drive to Survive" came out, there was a clear boom in popularity among Americans for this sport. Since then, just this past

Formula One continued on page 7

Local Ice Cream Reviews

By Carlotta Rother (2025)
Staff Writer

With the summer season fast approaching, cold food items are returning to their peak popularity. This includes ice cream. My friends and I decided it would be a fun idea to go through D.C. and try to find the best ice cream shop. We went to seven different ice cream shops, tried their most popular flavors and ranked the ice cream shops from the worst of the best to the best of the best.

Moorenko's Ice Cream

720 C St. SE

Located on Capitol Hill, Moorenko's has around 30 ice cream flavors. All of these flavors are handcrafted, and made with simple ingredients. When I asked an employee what the most popular ice cream flavor was, I was told it was Cookie Overload. When I tried it I was able to taste the different cookie flavors as there were pieces in the ice cream. It has a reasonable price for how much you get, and aside from that they also have great non-dairy ice creams and it is in a great location. Depending on the season, they also add flavors sometimes. I previously went in the fall when they had apple pie, pumpkin spice and many other seasonal flavors.



Credits: Carys Shepard

Mt. Dessert Island

3110 Mt. Pleasant St. NW

Mt. Dessert Island has a lot of typical ice cream flavors, however they are homemade so you are definitely able to taste a difference between store bought ice cream and the ice cream made at the store. It is located in Adams Morgan and is well known. When asked, an employee told me that the three most popular flavors were Blueberry Sour Cream Crumble, Girl Scout, and Cookies and Cream. While all of these flavors intrigued me, I decided to try the Girl Scout ice cream because some of my friends had mentioned to me that it was their favorite flavor. The ice cream definitely lived up to its name: It tasted just like frozen thin mints, and the pieces of cookie throughout the ice cream helped the flavor reach its full potential. The price was definitely reasonable; I got a kid's size for around \$4.50 and the serving size was sufficient.

Ice Cream Jubilee

1407 T St. NW / 301 Water St. SE

Ice Cream Jubilee has a variety of flavors and each location rotates between flavors to give each of them a time to shine. While Cookies and Cookie Dough is their most popular flavor according to an employee, they recommended different, more unique flavors when asked. I ended up trying Thai Iced Tea, and it tasted just like the tea I typically order at boba places. They make all their flavors in store, and in order to make the thai flavor, they steeped tea into the cream, which then gives the ice cream the beautiful color and amazing flavor. While it seemed a little overpriced, it is still an amazing option for ice cream in Navy Yard or near Logan Circle.

Jeni's Splendid Ice Cream

1925 14th St. NW / 526 8th St. SE / 1300 4th St. SE

Jeni's isn't only unique to D.C., as it has multiple locations throughout the United States. This is because their 40 flavors are very desirable. These flavors range from regular flavors such as Vanilla and Chocolate to unique flavors such as Strawberry Pretzel Pie, Everything Bagel, or one of their most popular flavors, Brown Butter Almond Brittle. I decided to sample a few flavors and determined that my favorites were the Goopy Butter Cake and the Brown Butter Almond Brittle. Jeni's has six shops within the DMV area, and specifically three shops within D.C. If you're looking for ice cream on a hot summer day, Jeni's is definitely a great option as you can buy it in store — or at your local grocery store as they carry pints.

While writing this article I got in touch with a student who works at an ice cream shop and decided to ask him a few questions. First I asked about any bad customer experiences and he mentions that he hasn't had any particularly bad customers, just some short tempered customers. He also said his favorite flavor was strawberry buttermilk (which my friends and I collectively rated a 8/10 for its perfect balance of strawberry flavor). His least favorite ice cream flavor was vanilla — not because it is bad; more so because it is bland in comparison to the other flavors. I'm sure a lot of us have seen the popular TikTok trend where ice cream workers rate the "scoop ability" of certain flavors. Because of this I decided to ask him which flavor he believed was the most scoopable, and he thought it was vanilla; however, he said it depends on the freezing situation as it changes more than a person would think.



Credits: Gabriel Kraemer

Thomas Sweet

3214 P St. NW

While Ice Cream may be their most popular treat, Thomas Sweet has a lot more to offer. They also sell merchandise, along with chocolate, pastries and other sweet treats. When I first walked into the 41-year-old ice cream shop I immediately took notice of how many ice cream flavors they offered. While all the flavors looked amazing, my friend and I shared a medium of Cake Batter, Tiramisu and Coffee Oreo. We were told that Coffee Oreo is the most popular flavor — and rightfully so. If you're a person who loves both coffee and Oreos this is your flavor. The coffee flavor is much stronger than it is in usual ice cream, and they add Oreo pieces into the ice cream. I had never previously heard of this combination, but it tastes amazing. So, if you're in Georgetown and it is going to be a hot day, definitely try the iconic Thomas Sweet ice cream shop.

Larry's Homemade Ice Cream

1633 Connecticut Ave. NW

For over 30 years Larry's Homemade Ice Cream shop has been standing in Dupont Circle. Discovering it was an amazing treat, as it is truly some of the best ice cream I have ever had. When I asked the owner what the most popular flavor of ice cream was he said they're all amazing, and therefore popular in their own way. He wasn't wrong! I tried the Cappuccino Bean and Oatmeal Cinnamon Cookie Dough, and my friend tried the Peanut Butter Cup ice cream. All three of these flavors were amazing

and tasted very strongly of what they were supposed to be. Oatmeal Cinnamon Cookie Dough was definitely my favorite, especially because I had never heard of this kind of ice cream before. Ever since my first visit, I make sure to take my friends whenever we are in the area. The owner is also very sweet and always makes my friends and I laugh. The shop is certainly a great hidden gem within D.C.

Pitango

841 Columbia Rd. NW

After trying all of these ice cream places I decided that Pitango was definitely my favorite. There are two locations in D.C. — one in Adams Morgan and one in Penn Quarter. While it is more of a gelato place, their 50 flavors live up to regular ice cream. I tried both mango and coconut gelato and they kept the gelato in a custom made bancone a pozzetti. A bancone a pozzetti is very common throughout Italy, as these coolers help regulate the ice cream better than the display containers, there is less oxidation which makes sure the texture and the natural flavor are preserved a lot better. This type of storage doesn't only help contain flavor better than the normal display-oriented method, it also uses less energy making it better for the environment. The ingredients used by Pitango are also very basic, as the flavor is meant to stand on its own; which they definitely do. So, if you're looking for an amazing gelato place near you, I would definitely try Pitango.

Overall, D.C. is full of great ice cream shops and all are unique in their own way. During the summer I would highly recommend going to some of these places, especially if you're in the area and wanting ice cream. My friends and I plan on discovering more hidden ice cream shops this summer and I think it's a great summer bucket list activity. ●

Experiencing Formula One

Formula One continued from page 6

May, the Miami Grand Prix was introduced. It was a complete American take on an F1 race. They recreated the harbor from the iconic Monaco Grand Prix, but with painted wooden planks surrounding the boats instead of water, creating a multi-thousand dollar Disney-like experience. There was also a police escort for the drivers from their cars to the podium, something that F1 fans had never seen before.

Many thought their focus on the experience of the viewer was far too excessive, as F1 has always been a seamless show. The race itself is what excites the viewer. The challenging turns and the rain, both of which often lead to crashes, makes the sport a show all on its own. The technicality of the cars, even the importance of what tire is chosen and how that may change the entire outcome of the race— that's what excites fans.

That being said, the theatrics are coming from Americans' new-found obsession with F1. The sport is evolving. It is no longer confined to Europe, and parts of South America, the Middle East, and East Asia; it is beginning to dominate America with this new emphasis on the show of the sport, instead of the more intricate aspects. Next year, the US will have three races, as they are bringing back the Las Vegas Grand Prix. This circuit hasn't been used for F1 since 1984, so it is making an exciting return.

All in all, Formula One is an amazing sport. It is no surprise that so many have found their love for it. With cars that can go up to about 230 miles per hour at their fastest, around twisty circuits anywhere from the tiny streets of Monaco to the mountains of Austria, this intricate sport has stolen the hearts of people around the world. You can't blame Americans for wanting to join in on the fun — it is not something to miss. ●

Rookery Crossword Puzzle

Created by Emmett Brosowsky and Tess Buckley

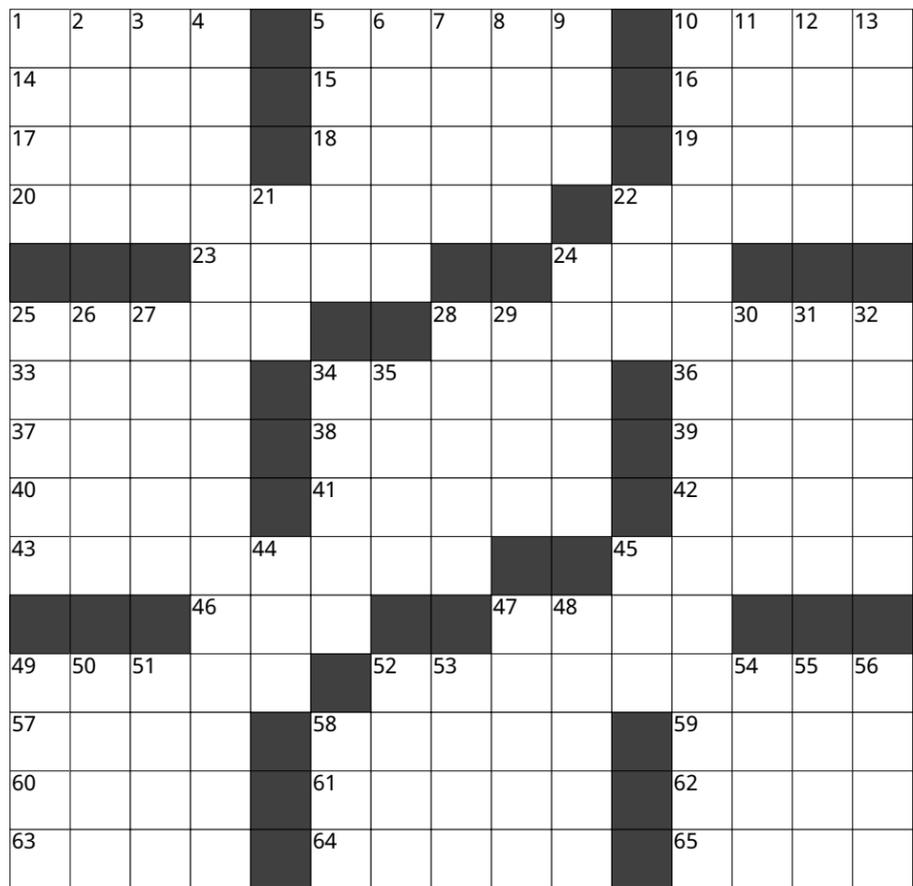
ACROSS

- 1 When is a door not a door? When it's ___!
 5 Skedaddle
 10 Table salt, to Ms. Piper
 14 Waiter's handout?
 15 Bamboo aficionado
 16 Treat with the same coloring as 15A
 17 Touch
 18 Fancy tie
 19 Primary
 20 He completes the square
 22 Eating surface
 23 "Me too!"
 24 Rand of "Atlas Shrugged" fame
 25 Operation for a burn victim
 28 She speaks to sophomores
 33 Friend of Skipper, Kowalski, and Private
 34 An Erie body of water?
 36 Actor Connery
 37 Cake decorator
 38 Frenchman that 52A might teach you about
 39 Architectural pier
 40 "It's ___ or nothing"
 41 Some frozen drinks
 42 Partner of cranny
 43 He conserves energy
 45 Journal

- 46 Altar vow
 47 Hoppy bar orders
 49 Licorice flavor
 52 He paints a picture
 57 Nicki Minaj fan, in slang
 58 Early computer
 59 Impose ___ on
 60 ___, subscribe, and hit the bell!
 61 Composer Georg
 62 He fiddled while Rome burned
 63 Otherwise
 64 Something directionless
 43A might teach you about
 65 Colorless

DOWN

- 1 Kind of radio
 2 Taunt
 3 From the top
 4 Something 20A might tell you about without you asking
 5 Jerk
 6 Bygone system in India
 7 "___ upon a time..."
 8 Stench
 9 "Tit for ___"
 10 John Donne quote you might find in 28A's class
 11 Type of spring?
 12 Provide with a roof
 13 Solitary
 21 Cat: Woman :: ___ : Man



- 22 Norse God of war, or Speedo rival
 24 Helps illegally
 25 What one must embrace to ace their exams, with "the"
 26 Kitchen gadget for jasmine basmati
 27 Biting
 28 Frenchman that 52A might teach you about
 29 "___-Ball"
 30 Italian city with a sausage named for it
 31 Croc's cousin
 32 Serpentine
 34 Friend, to Ms. Jimeno
 35 34A, in Scotland
 44 Suffix you may learn from Mr. Klawender
 45 N.J. neighbor, and where S-corps are registered
 47 Lessen
 48 Title word in a Juice WRLD song
 49 Partner of willing
 50 What a hammer hammers
 51 Annoys
 52 They queue to Q?
 53 Tick off
 54 Lyft rival
 55 ___ mia (Italian term of endearment)
 56 Door opener
 58 Superman's symbol

The Rookery

Editors-in-Chief:

Tess Buckley and Gabriel Kraemer

Editors: Wesley Greene, Jennifer Nehrer and Mikayla Wolf

Staff Writers: Darya Filippova, Zoe Fisher, Josie McCartney, Layla Rethy, Carlotta Rother, Carys Shepard, David Sipos and Brady Woodhouse

Staff Advisor: Shakir Ghazi

Who are we?

The Rookery is an independent student newspaper of School Without Walls High School, located in Washington, D.C. The Rookery works to serve as the voice of the School Without Walls community and report on accurate and newsworthy stories that pertain to the SWW community. These articles and more can be found online at swwrookery.com.

Our office is open to all students that would like to contribute to the paper every Monday morning at 8:30 a.m. in room 127. If you are interested in joining or submitting an article, photography, or other work, please contact the editors-in-chief, Tess Buckley and Gabriel Kraemer, at theswwrookery@gmail.com. Our staff advisor is Shakir Ghazi, who can be reached at shakir.ghazi@k12.dc.gov.

Message From the Editors-in-Chief Emeritus

We want to say a huge thank you to everyone that has helped us make the Rookery possible this year. Coming back to school from the pandemic was definitely a challenging transition for the newspaper staff, but both our newer and our more seasoned writers pulled through. We managed to publish four print editions with more articles online and we could not be prouder. A special thank you goes to our five wonderful editors, two of whom have taken over the Rookery for this edition and will continue to lead the staff in SY 22-23. We're both so excited to see what they make of it.

Best,
 Clara Shapiro Morton and Toni Jackson