



## PVCC's First Poet Laureate and Visual Arts Luminary

A Night Under the Stars with PTK  
pages 10-11

Isaac L. Tolliver, staff writer

On March 27, PVCC awarded the Poet Laureate and Visual Arts Luminary awards to the top three finalists in both categories. The award ceremony was held in the Bolick Student Center, during Wednesday afternoon. Students, faculty, and family members were invited to witness the winners accept their certificates, acknowledging their extraordinary talent. Laureates read their poems to the audience, and the Visual Art Luminaries provided insightful background of their artwork during the acceptance of their respective awards. The winners of the Poet Laureate were Taylor Goodwin, accepting 1st place, followed by Ruth Reid and Yingxin “Nicole” Lu in 2nd and 3rd place, respectively. The Visual Art Luminaries, awarded 1st through 3rd place, respectively, were Grace Von Elton,

Kiana Allen, and Catherine Selfridge.

Each winner provided an insightful look into their pieces during a brief interview regarding the inspiration behind their work. Taylor Goodwin shared their secret to a tranquil writing process: “I tend to go outside. I’ve traveled all over the world - I’ve been to New York, Egypt, Amsterdam, Wales, but I always feel most at home when I’m just sitting in the woods.”

Yingxin “Nicole” Lu shared that her experience moving to the United States influenced her powerful writing. “I have to accept my new role in my life,” she said, “I think, though now I am in the United States, I am still looking for my belonging.” Her work demonstrates the search for one’s identity, and discovering that identity continuously, while unapologetically embracing change.

*See Poet Laureate on page 4*



Ruth Reid, Taylor Goodwin, and Yingxin “Nicole” Lu.  
Photo courtesy of PVCC Marketing & Media Relations

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## DATES TO REMEMBER

— **2024 Student Art Exhibition \*** —

April 19 to Sept. 7, Dickinson Building Galleries

— **PVCC Academic and Leadership Awards\*** —

April 25, 4-5:30 p.m., Dickinson Building Main Stage

— **Science Symposium \*** —

April 26, 12:30-1:30 p.m., North Mall Meeting Room

— **John McCutcheon ^** —

April 27, 7:30 p.m., Dickinson Building Main Stage

— **Fall Line Reading and Publication Event \*** —

April 29, noon to 12:45 p.m. North Mall Meeting Room

— **Cinco de Mayo in April Celebration \*** —

April 29, noon to 1 p.m., Bolick Student Center

— **De-stress with Origami \*** —

April 30, 3-4:30 p.m., Bolick Student Center

— **Spring Semester 2024 Exam Week**—

April 30 to May 6

— **PVCC Backpack Drive** —

May 1-12, Drop-off bins in Bolick Student Center and outside M107

— **PVCC Graduation** —

May 13, 6 p.m., John Paul Jones Arena

— **10-week Summer Semester Classes Start** —

May 20

— **Memorial Day** —

May 27, All Day, No classes

— **Juneteenth Holiday** —

June 19, All Day, No classes

— **Independence Day** —

July 4, All Day, No classes

— **15-week Fall Semester Classes Start** —

August 26

\*Free Event    ^Student Vouchers Available

# Unlocking Student Success

Victoria Byers-Keegan, staff writer

It's not uncommon for college students to get burnt out during a tough semester. Between homework and other things like work, it can be easy to lose track of when assignments are due. Although college can get to be a lot, PVCC offers a helping hand through the Student Success Office (SSO). The SSO, in room 136 of the main building, offers a wide variety of tools to assist students on their journey through college. Student Success Director David Lerman, said, "We have a lot of experience and can help with tons of tips and strategies. We also do a lot of listening, pep talks, and cheerleading."

The SSO helps students with issues that correlate with mental health, but they also provide students with information on financial aid and grades. The SSO offers a wide variety of assistance, not only in person, but also through its website. Its website includes a section that shows many commonly asked questions. Clicking on each question results in showing a concise answer. There is also a section that shows recommended apps for things such as meetings, mental wellness, studying, and even saving money.

The SSO is a tool for the students at PVCC. It has many uses to help direct students through college. The Student Success Office is not the only tool provided.

Lerman states, "While I believe wholeheartedly in the mission of the Student Success Office and those that work here, I do not think that we are any more vital a part of the PVCC community than any other part. It's a system and in order for it to function as well as possible, all parts need to function as a part of the larger whole."





# Student Government Association News

PVCC's SGA has partnered with a number of student clubs to hold events in the Spring 2024 semester. These images are from some of those events: The Valentine's Day Silent Disco, Pi Day, and the Spring Carnival. Photos courtesy of PVCC Marketing & Media Relations.





# Poet Laureate, continued from page 1

Catherine Selfridge shared her love for those who matter the most in her life. She said, “It was inspired by my girlfriend, my family — when I feel welcome I want to do the menial tasks for them. I want to peel their pomegranates, fold their laundry, and make them breakfast in the morning!” Selfridge’s bright personality not only exhibits itself through her prominent drawings, but also through the words in which she describes her love and appreciation for the important people in her life.

Support from PVCC faculty could be perceived throughout the ceremony as event moderators, Associate Professor of Art Fenella Belle and Professor of English & Coordinator for the Writing Center Jennifer Koster, demonstrated care and appreciation for the students and community members who participated in the competition, and also for those who came out to support. They thanked Dr. David Doré, chancellor of the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) for strategically involving students, staff

and faculty from all regions of Virginia.

The following weekend, April 6, PVCC held the “I Belong” Poet Laureate event which took place in the V. Earl Dickinson Building. Distinguished author, artist, and educator Douglas Powell, artistically known as Roscoe Burnems, hosted the event as Master of Ceremonies. As Richmond’s first poet laureate who is also recognized as an international finalist leader for the National Poetry Slam (NPS) representing Virginia Commonwealth University, Powell offered guidance and his spirit of mentorship for the student laureates. Those who attended were also graced with a showcase of paintings, mixed media, photography, printmaking and sculptures on display in the Dickinson galleries.

Winning pieces from laureates and luminaries will be featured in an upcoming publication this summer, thanks to the Virginia Humanities Grant and all of its contributors. Proceeds from the publication will contribute to funding of scholarships.





# Dr. John Donnelly Retires from PVCC

William McAuliffe, assistant editor

PVCC's Vice President for Instruction and Student Affairs Dr. John Donnelly, will be retiring at the end of June. Donnelly has worked at PVCC for over 14 years, since February of 2010.

Prior to coming to PVCC, Donnelly worked at other community colleges. He started at Germanna Community College in Locust Grove, Virginia, where he worked as the dean of instruction and associate professor of history from 2001 to 2008. Donnelly then was vice president of academic and student affairs at Massachusetts Bay Community College in Wellesley, Massachusetts, from 2008 until 2010.

"I started off as a faculty member teaching history, and I just saw the potential to impact an institution by becoming an administrator more than teaching. So I decided to go into administration and became a dean, then a vice president. But I still teach history at prison locations," said Donnelly.

For Donnelly, there were many changes from teaching history to being an administrator. He said, "It's different because I miss directly interacting with students in the classroom, so when I became an administrator, I missed the direct impact of students in the classroom, but I have indirect impact on students outside of the classroom."

Donnelly said that he has had good relationships with the PVCC presidents he has worked with during his career. Dr. Frank Friedman, the former president who retired in 2022, hired Donnelly as one of his vice presidents. Donnelly currently works under the new president, Dr. Jean Runyon, who was appointed after Friedman retired. He gets along well with both presidents and has enjoyed working with them. Donnelly considers them to be very good leaders.

On July 1, 2022, Donnelly was appointed to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) Commission on Student Success. The AACC is the primary advocacy organization for American community colleges. According to a PVCC press release, Runyon said,



**Vice President Dr. John Donnelly in his office.  
Photography by William McAuliffe**

"John's appointment provides the opportunity to contribute to student completion endeavors at the national level as well as influence our own efforts as a student-ready college."

Donnelly shared a variety of his favorite memories and times during his career at PVCC. He said, "For me, the best times every year are graduation ceremonies where you just see students who have completely met their goals and get recognized for it and they are completely happy. It's a good time to celebrate students, and that's what it's all about."

His favorite part of PVCC is the people. He said, "I think it's interacting with students and faculty and seeing the magic that happens when students and faculty are engaged with each other both inside and outside the classrooms."

As Donnelly approaches retirement, he is still working hard on lots of things that support student success and continues to do that at a good pace. "There's no slowing down," he said. Donnelly shared his post-retirement goals: "I'm going to rest; I'm going to travel and reinvent myself. I think it'll be a natural and organic experience; I'll find things that are interesting to me, but I don't know what those are yet."

Donnelly shared his advice to PVCC students: "I think this is a really good place to be a student. There's excellent faculty; everyone here cares about students and helping them meet their goals. Everybody is dedicated to the students that come here, so take advantage of that."



# Turning Passion into Profession

Samuel Stevens, staff writer

Growing up, Associate Professor of Art Fenella Belle's artistic passions were nurtured from the start. With a painter and teacher mother, architect father, and her stepmother a documentary filmmaker, it might not be surprising Belle turned creativity into her career.

Belle received her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree, in fibers, at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and her Master of Fine Arts degree, in fibers, at the School of Art Institute of Chicago. Fiber art is generally considered any artwork created through textiles or fibers as the main medium. Fibers can be natural, for example cotton or silk. They can also be synthetic, such as nylon or polyester. Some examples of fiber techniques are knitting or weaving.

After college, Belle started a job teaching kids in an after school art program in Philadelphia called Prints in Progress. Belle said, "It was such a great introduction to teaching. We were embedded in the neighborhood, we got to team teach (so much fun!) we got to design our own projects and we were given a budget for high quality supplies. Everything was based on the assumption that kids should be treated as serious artists. I learned from those kids that anything is possible if you can open a door for someone. That's pretty much what I've been trying to do ever since!"

Before Belle decided on her career as art teacher, she originally left college and moved to New York City and worked for the year.

"During that time I took a bunch of art classes at different schools around NY- Parsons, New School, School of Visual Arts. I loved painting but didn't think it was something I could justify going to college for," said Belle.

One of her classes at Parsons was an art class called Painting on Fabric that was more centered toward fashion students. She said, "Because of this class, I decided to apply to art school and ended up in Philly studying something called 'fiber art'. It's been an adventure ever since." said Belle.

Fenella decided early on that she wasn't going to try and make a living from her art. She didn't rely on art for paying her rent, so she diversified her portfolio. She waitressed in many restaurants, worked under a hand-made paper maker, mucked stalls for a horse barn, designed exhibits, was a museum director, and taught people young and old.

Belle said, "I've learned something from every job, even the ones I didn't love. The only thing I have no tolerance for is a bad boss. Life is way too short to work for someone who doesn't treat me with respect!"

Now an Associate Professor of Art and the Chairperson of the Visual and Performing Art Department at PVCC, Belle nurtures young artists with patience, love and care.



Fenella Belle. Photo courtesy of Belle



# Dr. Todd Parks: The Man for the Job

Alex Hartford, staff writer

In the Writing Center at PVCC, there is a dimly lit modest office. In this office, sits a hard-working man who is passionate about his job. This man is Dr. Todd Parks of Student Affairs.

Parks is from Charlotte, North Carolina. He moved to Fishersville, Virginia, in 2007. He then attended the University of North Carolina and received a degree in sociology and a degree in human services with an emphasis on non-profit management. He went on to the University of South Carolina and got a master's degree in higher education and student affairs.

When asked to describe his job, he said, "I'm a part of a team, and our team is responsible for Outreach and Admissions. This includes both credit and non-credit programs." Parks and his team are also responsible for the dual enrollment program, partnership with the Boys and Girls Club, SDV 100, Baber Leadership Program, Lead at PVCC Leadership Development Program for the faculty and staff, Student Government advisor, and student orientation.

Parks made quite the journey, ending up at PVCC. It all started when he was an undergraduate student. He was very involved in campus and Greek life when he had the thought, "I could continue to work on a college campus for the rest of my life." So, he went to the University of South Carolina where he did an internship through the Association of College University Housing Officers International and had a chance to intern in either Manhattan or San Francisco. Parks chose to go to San Francisco and went to University of San Francisco (USF). He went to USF for a summer internship for three months at campus and resident life. After he graduated, he pursued jobs in housing and resident life because he felt that it instilled the best foundation for future work in student affairs and higher education.

Parks moved to Gainesville, Florida, where he got a job as the dean of students at the University of Florida. He was still heavily involved in student affairs and was the advisor of the student government. He had 21 people on his staff, and there were 650 organizations. He was also responsible for a student activity budget of ten million dollars. He said, "I enjoyed being in

Florida and thought that I would stay at the University of Florida for a long time."

Parks then took a job in Iowa directing diversity programs for the College of Business. There he would create a program called Iowa Edge. This is a summer bridge program for students of color and first-generation college students and is still in existence today. Parks said, "I loved living in Iowa. Wonderful place, wonderful people, great university."

He then moved to Fishersville, Virginia, where he entered a doctoral program at the University of Virginia. Parks said, "My goal was to be a dean of students at a four-year residential college or university." Parks said, "In my graduate work, to be honest, I had no interest in working at a community college; it was never something I considered but my advisor, Brian Pusser, suggested, 'You know, I think you might like working at a community college.'"

So, he took a course that Lori Smith taught about community colleges. Parks said, "Lori Smith actually teaches SDV here at PVCC as a part-time adjunct. We have known each other for a very long time." After taking that class and doing some work on the Alumina Foundation with Brian Pusser, Parks did his dissertation on community colleges and workforce.

He said, "I thought, you know maybe being at PVCC I could contribute, maybe I could do something here to make a difference." That is when he interviewed at PVCC.

During his interview, he had lunch with the Director of Student Success and Retention David Lerman, and that is when he thought, "That's the kind of person I want to work with. That's the kind of person I would like to have as a colleague... I like PVCC, and I believe in the work that we do. I want to help the college as best I can, whatever that looks like."

Parks said, "I had a student the other day who informed me that after a few attempts she passed the entrance exam for nursing. That's exciting!"

"I think that the part I enjoy the most is seeing our students, I think everybody at PVCC would agree, it's seeing our students succeed. The student does the work, I don't want to take any credit away from the students. Just seeing our students be successful, that's the best part," he said.



# A Look Inside Admissions and Advising

William McAuliffe, assistant editor

At the main building of PVCC, the Admissions & Advising Center is here to help students succeed at college, pick the right courses for their studies and help students in their majors. When most people think of the Admissions and Advising Center for PVCC, they usually think of advisors, but there's more than just advisors. Along with advisors, there are also student workers, administrative workers and the Dean of Student Affairs, Dr. Andrew N. Renshaw.

The main office of the admissions & advising center is Renshaw's office. Renshaw has been the dean of student affairs since the summer of 2019.

Renshaw had three degrees as a college student to become the college's dean of students. His first degree was an undergraduate degree with a major in psychology at the University of Virginia. His second degree consisted of his masters degree while majoring in secondary education at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, California. The last degree he graduated with was him being a UVA student again while getting a PhD in education.

Renshaw says, "Certainly getting the opportunity to work with our students and help support them as they work towards completing their academic and career goals. But the worst part is definitely having to do interviews for *the Forum*," as his feelings about his role at PVCC.

Renshaw states this as his inspiration for working as the dean of students affairs, "I enjoy the opportunity to work with many of our students, and I thought I would get a better parking spot."

Renshaw's office can be found in room M143; you can also contact him by emailing him at [arensaw@pvcc.edu](mailto:arensaw@pvcc.edu) or

calling his number at 434-961-6540.

There are also student workers in the Admissions and Advising Center. The requirements for these roles are good responsibility, friendliness, and good customer service. Lilly Huffsmith, a spring 2024 graduate with a major in nursing, is an example of a student that works at the Admissions & Advising Center. Huffsmith says, "The real reason is because I like to help people, what amazing time I have and Kemper is such a good boss" as her inspiration to work at the Admissions & Advising Center.

Robyn Lane, an administrative assistant at the center also helps PVCC students succeed. Lane's inspiration for working at the Admissions & Advising Center was the fact that she loved the mountain views of PVCC and found the view from the top of the hill to be very beautiful. Lane says, "I enjoy working with the students, I enjoy working with staff, and I enjoy Kemper Steele's story."

The center is open from 8 a.m. until 6 p.m. from Monday through Thursday and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Friday. To contact them off-campus, call them at 434-961-6581 or file an ask an advisor form online.



Dr. Andrew Renshaw.

Photo courtesy of PVCC Marketing & Media Relations

# Exploring PVCC Workforce Classes

William McAuliffe, assistant editor

PVCC's workforce services offer classes that provide skills that will help students find a good job and a good future to make good money. Classes are taught by instructors with industry knowledge and experience. The Stultz Center also provides opportunities for experiential learning. These opportunities include hundreds of classes and various credits that fall into different categories such as trades, manufacturing, and business.

Thomas Eanes, program manager of Workforce Services says, "PVCC Workforce Services offers a variety of classes and healthcare skilled trades, IT, welding, manufacturing, and agriculture. We offer both career development and life-long learning. In addition to our adult programs, we offer youth programming through our kids-college."

Eanes says, "The classes are a multi-faceted approach involving collaboration between program managers, classroom availability, course prerequisites and instructor availability." Some of the programs also offer industry credentials.

An example for the types of classes offered from the workforce are welding & manufacturing classes. Welding & Machining Programs Specialist Scott Ishler teaches welding & manufacturing classes. Ishler's classes use engine-driven welders and generators with power-tools that are plugged in.

Ishler says, "This is like we are at a construction site. We bring the equipment and trailers. Then we unload the contents and create the classroom."

One of the welding students at the Stultz Center, Daniel Livengood says, "We have Miller multi-process suitcase welders that we use to teach wire fied welding processes to include flux core, mig and dual shield."

Workforce services also offers classes in skilled trades. Intro to Construction is an introductory course that provides a good foundation for students and topics applicable to HVAC and trades including workplace safety, tool operation, and reading project blueprints.

Skilled Trades Programs Specialist Don Davis is an instructor that offers trade classes at both on-campus and at PVCC prison programs. Davis



**Introduction to Construction class in Room 829. Photography by William McAuliffe**

provides classes and encouragement to people that are incarcerated that are about to get released. He also teaches people at faith-based behavioral and addiction rehabilitation centers. Davis tries to understand students' needs, he says, "I would ask them what their goals are and then that would help me determine how I can best help them."

Over the course of teaching the classes, Davis spends at least 40 hours with each student and sometimes up to 160 hours. Due to another adjunct instructor of skilled trades, Sam Northington, the class also has access to tools such as table saws, mitre saws, thickness plainer, circular saws, drills.

Davis says, "We have a lot of fun in this class, and the students learn an incredible amount." He explains, "In the course of my class, I teach them basic safety such as how to fill out a resume properly, teach them basic communication skills, and introduce them to hand and power tools. I introduce them to building plans and building materials, how to properly handle power tools and how to properly handle material as well as math skills you would need to work into the trade skills such as how to properly read a tape measure. A lot of people have no experience in this field whatsoever, so it truly is an introduction to construction."

Davis gives this as advice to workforce students, "Come on in! You will enjoy this class, we will hone your math skills. You'll learn a tremendous amount about hand and power tools, including how to use them because we will build a project together."





Students make geological art at the rock painting station during the event.



The Night Under the Stars disk jockey setup. Photo courtesy of Mary-Evelyn Sellars



The Chick-Fil-A dinner buffet table.



A PVCC student pouring herself a soda. Photo courtesy of Mary-Evelyn Sellars



# A Night Under the Stars

Alex Hartford, staff writer

Upon first walking into PVCC, the smell of Chick-fil-A and other various foods filled the air. There was a nice ambiance from the star lighting that the hosts put up.

The sounds of '90s music filled the air from the DJ performing his setlist. Student Life and PTK hosted a night to remember at PVCC on March 22, an event-filled night with fun activities for everyone.

PTK helped decorate the Bolick Center. Samantha Facio, Public Relations Officer of the Student Government Association (SGA), designed the flyers and tickets for the event.

Mara Cox, President of the Geology Club and President of the SGA, said, "Mary-Evelyn did a stellar job picking out the food and laying it out beautifully! They had everything from cupcakes to shrimp!"

Cox said, "I had a great time at the PTK event! It was so much fun to cut loose and see everyone in their formal attire. PTK put so much work into this event to make it magical for everyone! It really was a super fun night and a great bonding experience. I really hope this becomes an annual event.

My favorite dance was the Macarena where everyone joined on the dance floor together was a blast!"

It was a sight to behold. Star-shaped lights were hanging from the rafters of the Bolick Center. There were decorations on all of the tables. There was even edible glitter one could put in their drinks to make them shine. This event had something for everyone. The night included plenty of food to go around, dancing, and even rock painting, which many people took part in.

Public Relations Officer of the SGA Facio said, "I felt proud walking in and seeing how our hard work paid off because it looked a million times better than I imagined. It was such a fun vibe. I had a lot of fun seeing my classmates mingling and introducing my fiancé to my peers and mentors. My favorite part was the dancing and the food. The food was good! I danced a lot, but my favorite was the slow dancing to one of my peers playing the piano. I slow danced with my fiancé to the classical music; it was very dreamy."

There were plenty of activities for everyone, such as rock painting. Facio did not participate in the rock painting but thoroughly enjoyed watching her friends participate.



Students dance in the Bolick Student Center.



# An Informative Hike with the Geology Club

Alex Hartford, staff writer

The PVCC Geology club organized a hike to Ragged Mountain Nature Area on Feb. 16th. Ragged Mountain Nature Area is 980 acres and full of trails and rock formations, which Kira Miller said are “mostly quartz.” Certain trails can be up to as long as 6.7 miles and the smell of fresh air on a crisp winter day by a lake and the ground covered with leaves

As they were walking along the winding rustic trail, Kira Miller identified some geological features and said, “This here is a mylonite. You can see the kind of like different smearing here. It is indicative of a shear zone. It’s shearing that’s encountered during faulting or folding of the rock so any rock deformation there is a lot of friction and pressure that makes the minerals smear out which is what creates the texture here you can see these lines of black and white which is caused by the smearing of the smear zone.”

Miller and Julianna Gutierrez said, “There are a couple of Catoctin dikes in here. A dike is pretty much a vertical intrusion like a column the rock breaks apart. The existing rock breaks apart and magma is able to flow inside of that dike and

solidifies. It creates a difference in color there that is part of a Catoctin formation which is around 570 million years old. As Rodinia started breaking apart, tension was released as the rocks were breaking apart, and so magma was able to well up and flow and that created the big Carters Mountain is all catoctin flow.”

Gutierrez said, “PVCC is on top of the Catoctin formation.”

The Geology club had a great time Visiting the Ragged Mountain Natural Area. Gutierrez said, “It was great! It was kind of casual, but I’m really happy we got to go on this Ragged Mountain Reservoir. Even though it’s a longer hike, it’s not too difficult and it’s great for building stamina for our trip to Costa Rica.”

After scouring the ground and finding many different quartz formations, Ivy Hill, another Geology Club member, came across something very peculiar.

Hill said, “The weirdest thing I saw on today’s hike was the clearest quartz I’ve ever seen and the giant wall of mylonite which was really neat to see, because I didn’t know what it was the first time I saw it. I also really enjoyed the hike. I never hiked the loop before.”



Left to right: Ivy Hill (She/They), Julianna Gutierrez (She/Her), and Kira Miller (She/They).  
Photography by Alex Hartford



# PVCC Eclipse Viewing Party

Samuel Stevens, staff writer

The most recent solar eclipse was on April 8, so PVCC decided it would be a good opportunity to have a viewing party. Over 200 attendees joined together watching the eclipse on the main building's outdoor patio.

Mary-Evelyn Sellars, coordinator of student life and campus engagement, said, "The eclipse party was amazing! Huge success! I started planning for the event back in February. Many people said it's a waste of time because we wouldn't be in totality. I knew we wouldn't be in totality, but I knew we would have at least some sliver of the eclipse. Regardless, I was like this is a great opportunity to hang out and have fun."

Teachers, other faculty members, and students enjoyed the warm weather and custom-made Duck Donuts from the Charlottesville Duck Donuts. Sellars handed out donuts and eclipse-viewing glasses quickly.

She said, "I ordered 60 pairs of eclipse medical grade glasses in February because I knew that they would sell out and be really hard to get, and I'm glad I planned early. I contacted our local Duck Donuts, and he made an exclusive set of



The eclipse as seen through a donut pinhole projector.

eclipse donuts for me. I gave out 150 donuts."

"Don't throw away your eclipse glasses. They can be recycled," Sellars said, "As a member of the sustainability committee I am very conscious about recycling and I am now collecting the eclipse glasses for children in South America so they can view the eclipse in October. I will be shipping the glasses in May. So far I have collected over 80 pairs of glasses."



PVCC students, faculty, and staff view the partial eclipse. Photos courtesy of PVCC Marketing & Media Relations



# VA Book Festival Gets Organic

Isaac L. Tolliver, staff writer

The Virginia Festival of the Book, an annual celebration of reading sponsored by the Virginia Center for the Book, through Virginia Humanities, celebrated its 30th anniversary on March 20. Authors and writers of various genres were invited to share an intimate perspective on their work. Community members who attended were treated to a unique experience as each author who held talks offered invaluable insight into some of the most interesting and important topics throughout history and the modern day. One of the notable speakers, Tanya Denckla Cobb, who is an author, leader, and champion for social justice and environmental sustainability, spoke to an audience of gardeners, farmers, and general plant nurturers.

Her most recent book, *Backyard Homestead Guide to Growing Organic Food*, is an extensive guide on sustainable, organic gardening methods. Throughout the talk, Cobb shared anecdotes that demonstrated her comprehensive understanding of the relationship between organic foods, farming, and environmental awareness, while also referencing specific chapters within her book to answer the questions of audience members.

Her ability to express complex information into digestible nuggets of wisdom ensured that even those unfamiliar with gardening were left feeling empowered and inspired. By demystifying organic food production and emphasizing the importance of environmental stewardship, Cobb cultivated a sense of connection between the audience and the natural world, sparking a newfound enthusiasm for nurturing plants and cultivating sustainable lifestyles.

Towards the end of her talk, Cobb emphasized the importance of soil care and offered the science behind maintaining the correct chemical balance and observing the way in which certain soil types contribute to the growth or detriment of plants and vegetables. Her previous book, *Reclaiming Our Food*, could be considered as a call to action, prelude to *Growing Organic*, as it offers a captivating spotlight of the communities committed to embracing and strengthening local food systems. It showcases the inspiring stories of individuals and organizations revolutionizing the way we grow, process, and distribute food.

Through compelling narratives and striking photographic essays by Jason Houston, readers are invited on a journey to discover the practical steps and transformative potential of building sustainable food networks in their own communities.

Cobb is the director of the Institute for Engagement & Negotiation at the University of Virginia. Her multifaceted expertise and approach to community engagement, social equity, and environmentalism converge brilliantly in *Reclaiming Our Food and Backyard Homesteading Guide to Growing Organic Foods*. Through these insightful volumes, she not only illuminates the interconnectedness of sustainable food systems and social justice, but also empowers readers with practical knowledge to enact positive change within their communities.

At the Virginia Festival of the Book, Cobb brought together themes that undoubtedly enriched attendees, and offered guidance in their understanding of how individual actions can impact collective progress towards a more equitable and environmentally conscious future.



**Tanya Denckla Cobb.**  
Photo courtesy of Festival of the Book

# Crystal Shop Expands to New Building

Victoria Byers-Keegan, staff writer

Located next to M Sushi in the Seminole Square Shopping Center, sits Minerals & Mystics, a charming crystal shop with an equally charming staff. Minerals & Mystics was formerly located on the other side of the shopping center, but within the last year, they have moved to their new location. This new location allows them more space for the crystals and incense they sell.

When customers walk through the door, they are greeted by the kind staff who are always ready to help and answer any questions customers may have. The staff also make a lot of effort to connect and get to know their customers. The store has a wide selection of rings, necklaces, and bracelets that are set on display, and if customers want to try anything on, they can simply ask one of the staff members and they'll be willing to get the item out of the case for you. The staff are also well informed on the origin of the crystals and how the jewelry is made.



Inside the store  
Photography by Victoria Byers-Keegan

Everything in the shop is also fairly priced, and even if customers can't pay the price for something right there, they can make monthly payments by either making payments over the phone or coming in to pay with cash. The environment is friendly and welcoming, and it sells a wide variety of crystals and jewelry. I have never felt so welcomed in a store like I did there.

Charlottesville resident Blaeanna Woods stated, "We are so glad the store is still around. They are such great people and all the things they sell are so cute."

My only complaint with Minerals & Mystics is that they seem to have a bit too much space in their new location. Some of the walls were fairly empty, and at their old location they carried a wider variety of items such as bags and sometimes clothes.

Here at the new location, it was mostly just crystals, jewelry, and incense. Altogether, I enjoyed the environment of the shop and the kind people who work there. They sell beautiful jewelry and crystals, and the incense there smells amazing. I would recommend going to Minerals & Mystics because you can find great gifts for anyone.



The new storefront of Minerals and Mystics  
Photography by Victoria Byers-Keegan



# Robert Mac Performs Stand-up Comedy

Kristofer Jones, assistant editor

What would the first day in April be without some jokes and laughs? Robert Mac visited PVCC to provide the necessary jokes for April Fools' Day. I had looked him up on Google before going to PVCC because I never heard of him. I saw some of his stand-up videos on YouTube, so I sat in my seat and hoped to see a good show.

It started out with an opening act, just like a lot of comedy shows do. Colby Knight came onstage and told a couple of jokes that made me chuckle. Some of his jokes got laughs out of the crowd. His joke on inclusiveness seemed like jokes I have heard before because of the "Me Too" and "Black Lives Matter" movements. Plus, his jokes on making fun of how to pronounce Charlottesville were funny. When you tell people that are not familiar with Charlottesville that you are from here, they think it's the city in North Carolina. After the show, I asked Knight who he thought was funny, and he said, "Bill Burr."

Robert Mac started his act with what comics call one-liners, like "I went to a sperm bank in Alabama, now I have to fill out 3 million child tax credit forms." This group of short jokes might have been the best part of the act for me. He had a back-and-forth exchange with an audience member, an immediate response out of the crowd, and Mac randomly plugged his comedy special and website that were well placed.

After the show I asked Mac, who inspired him to be a comic, he said, "Steve Martin." I also asked him if there is any comic now that he listens to that makes him laugh, and he said, "No,



Robert Mac and Colby Knight after their show.  
Photography by Kristofer Jones

comedy has become too watered down, and I just don't see anyone that I think is funny."

There was no better event to go to on April Fools' Day than a comedy show. The trip to Dickinson Building was worth the trip. Mac and Knight had some good jokes with well-timed punch lines. This was one April Fools' that the audience will never forget.

# Grand Tour's "Sand Job" Special Review

Alex Warner, staff writer

When Jeremy Clarkson spoke to the press about the iconic *Grand Tour* series coming to an end, with only two more feature-length special episodes being aired, it was understandable that the three were beginning to want to wrap up their televised massive road trips. Clarkson, along with fellow co-presenters Richard Hammond and James May, have been at the forefront of presenting automotive television together since BBC's *Top Gear's* second series in 2003. They became inseparable friends while hosting *Top Gear*, and when Clarkson was fired from the show in 2015, Hammond and May followed suit to begin their new show, *Grand Tour*, now partnering with Amazon.

Hammond, May and Clarkson then hosted three series in a similar format to *Top Gear's* style, with a live audience and several segments with running gag segments on each episode like "Conversation Street" and "Celebrity Brain Crash," but they brought that format to a close to continue their own individual projects, as well as doing what the trio found most enjoyable: feature-length road trip episodes where Clarkson, Hammond, and May would purchase used vehicles to embark on adventures in some of the most beautiful places on earth, such as Patagonia, Vietnam, and Burma.

This brings us to their most recent special, "Sand Job," which throws the trio into the sandy Sahara Desert in the dry country of Mauritania, Africa, where the three must drive their homebrew modified exotic convertibles with taller rally springs to clear jagged rocks and puddles, auxiliary lighting on the vehicles' hoods and roofs, tents to sleep in and knobby tires to grip deep into the sand. Clarkson's Jaguar F-Type Convertible, Hammond's Aston Martin DB9 Volante and May's Maserati GranCabrio travel along the path of the historic and iconic Paris-Dakar Rally.

I felt these were great vehicles to use on the *Grand Tour* since they are all beginning to reach the age where they begin to have odd quirks and issues outside of normal maintenance. Hammond's continuous misfortune with the Aston Martin especially makes for great television, with the car's aging electronics being

the main setback to his progress in the trip.

The cars arrive on the back of a train which usually carries passengers and iron ore, and the three get crafty to remove the cars from the train car.

Once dismounted, the three begin their drive through the sand dunes, not without issue from Hammond's Aston Martin having already boiled over in the first 10 minutes of driving. When the three find a detour through a dark tunnel surrounded by a hill too steep for their cars to climb, Clarkson muses that they could go through the potential danger as fast as possible, a nod to "Scandi Flick," a special where James May did exactly that and couldn't stop in time before sideswiping a rock wall in a similar tunnel with his Mitsubishi Lancer Evo.

When Clarkson floors it through the bat-infested tunnel, he finds that what lies on the other side is a minefield.

He doesn't let the other side know in time though, as Hammond crashes through the gate, nearly blowing his untrustworthy Aston and himself sky-high. Similar antics like this are highly present in this special: crossing rivers on specially crafted rafts, accidentally knocking over a tower of Ferrero Rocher chocolates in the British Embassy, filling each others' cars with sand and using snowmobiles strapped to the front of the cars to flatten uncomfortable "washboard" roads.

Unfortunately, I think the ending leaves a lot to be desired. I wish all the build-up didn't hit such a hard low at the end, even if it uses Clarkson's send-off since starting the *Grand Tour*.

I think the special may not bring anything new from the trio, but that doesn't detract from the entertainment the three presenters bring to the table, with their slapstick antics and charming personalities.

I can't blame them for wanting to retire from automotive journalism stardom, however. They have been active members of the automotive journalism community since the 1980s, and they have proven time and time again that the cars may bring their audience to the screen, but their own personalities together on-screen keeps them there.

*Grand Tour* is available to watch on Amazon Prime Video.



# Taylor Swift's Eras Tour Makes History

Victoria Byers-Keegan, staff writer

*The Eras Tour* movie was released on Disney+ on March 5, allowing fans everywhere to stream the experience whenever they liked. The movie came out in theaters during October 2023, being marked as one of the most anticipated movies to watch.

Within the first week, the movie made over \$123 million dollars, making it the highest grossing concert movie released. When the *Eras Tour* movie was put on Disney+, it included five songs that were not found in the original theater release: "Death by a Thousand Cuts," "You Are in Love," "I Can See You," "Maroon," and "Cardigan."

The Eras Tour movie started with music from her album *Lover*, her first album after leaving her record label, Big Machine, where her catalog was sold somewhere between 2019 and 2020. The *Lover* segment of the setlist consisted of "Miss Americana and the Heartbreak Prince," "Lover," "The Man," "Cruel Summer," and two of my

personal favorites, "You Need to Calm Down," and "The Archer." The crowd was electrifying, and this marked the beginning of a journey of all the phases that Swift's music had been through.

The accompanying dancers on stage were one of my favorite parts of the whole movie. Dancers such as Kameron Saunders, Jan Ravnik, and Raphael Thomas have become a few fan favorites throughout the tour as they put their hearts into choreographing these iconic songs and carrying themselves with a great stage presence. The backup singers were also incredible, highlighting Swift's voice in every song. The overall energy of the movie was incredible, making you feel like you were actually right there in SoFi Stadium in California with the rest of the fans.

I would recommend watching it through Disney+ instead of just renting it because there are more movies and shows available to watch on Disney+ in addition to the *Eras Tour*. Whether it was Swift's vocals, her backup singers, her dancers, or the energetic audience, it was an incredible experience that any Swiftie should see.



# Spoiler-Free *X-Men '97* Review



Samuel Stevens, staff writer

The first five episodes of *X-Men '97* are out, and from my limited glimpses at *X-Men: The Animated Series*, its continuation is visually faithful. Spanning from 1992 to 1997, *X-Men '97* picks up where the original series left off. The viewer is transported into a world of retro-style animation, beautiful art, vibrant colors, and nostalgic characters.

The visuals feel like an old friend who you didn't expect to see, but are excited to see all the same. It reminds me of the animation styles of my childhood (which is the goal), and it succeeds, all the while taking advantage of the resolutions and quality that 2024 has to offer.

The stories and more serious themes (such as infidelity, death, and blood), help establish this show as not just another cartoon, but a show with lots of discourse between characters and how they handle events of the original series' ending. Throughout the show, the narratives have been intriguing enough to leave me invested, while also playing on my emotions. Happiness, excitement, and intrigue have been some of the things I've felt while watching, but also anger, sadness, and

anxiety while leaving me wanting more.

So far in the series, it's been hard to anticipate what will happen next. That's refreshing, a story mature enough that more serious things can happen, but not overly so. The characters feel faithful to the comics but human, well acted, and likable.

One of my favorite quotes so far was said by the character, Nightcrawler, a.k.a Kurt Wagner, "There is no love without sin. Love is best measured in what we forgive."

The musical score is no exception when it comes to quality either, with a theme similar to the original series but with a more modern edge and grit to it. (Fun fact: *The X-Men '97* theme was originally first heard in Marvel's *Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness* in 2022.)

With all that considered, my rating of *X-Men '97*'s first five episodes is 9/10. All around it is a faithful revival of the original series, in my opinion, that uses modern animation to bring an interesting story and beloved characters back from childhood.

*X-Men '97* will have 10 episodes in season one with the finale airing Wednesday, May 15.

You can stream *X-Men '97* now on Disney+.



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