

Students informed of counterfeit drugs

Mecosta County Sheriff's Department sends out public service announcement



Graphic by: Harmony Goodman | Production Manager

Kendall Phillips
Culture Reporter

On Jan. 11, a school-wide email was sent out to students informing them of dangerous counterfeit drugs being sold within the community.

The email included a public service announcement from the sheriff's department stating that pills were seized during a recent search warrant that had pharmaceutical markings on them and looked like Adderall pills. After testing them, the department found traces of methamphetamine.

According to the Mecosta County sheriff Brian Miller, deputies had been made aware of some suspicious activity happening at Northland Flats, where they arrested two individuals. They then gath-

ered some information about the individuals which led to a search warrant of their apartment where they found the drugs.

Miller said this is the first time they have come across these pills. They hope to identify a major distributor in the future and that Ferris State students shouldn't stress.

"You shouldn't be worried at all if you are getting your medication from a proper manner," Miller said. "If you are doing things legally and lawfully, then you shouldn't be worried. You are always playing with fire when you start purchasing illegal substances from individuals in the public forum."

Chief of the Department of Public Safety, Gary Green, was also involved in the incident. According to Green, the initial thought of the investigation was that the subject

had been making the pills, but they later discovered that he had been receiving them through the mail.

Both DPS and the sheriff's department are doing what they can to prevent any more of these incidents from occurring.

"We are being diligent in our patrols and we are making routine patrols through these parking lots," Green said. "When we find drugs on these traffic stops we work with those individuals that were involved to try and determine where they are getting them from, and trace them back to the source so that we can make sure that they are not ending up on campus anymore."

Green encourages all students to call if they are witnessing any suspicious behavior happening on

or off campus. All students also need to be aware of the dangers of taking non-prescribed pills and to only take pills that are prescribed by a reliable pharmacist.

"A lot of students I know, especially during exam time, like to take Adderall pills so that they can stay awake to study," Green said. "The problem is, first of all, it is illegal, but number two, you don't really know what you are getting. That's a dangerous place to be, you know this time it was methamphetamine, but what if it's fentanyl which is highly toxic if taken without being monitored by a physician."

The email to students was sent out by the Dean of Students Lina Blair, and they want everyone to be aware of the resources that are available to them if they are strug-

gling with drug or alcohol usage.

"We have the Counseling Center in the Birkam Health Center that is available, and we also have a website that is called the Collegiate Recovery Education and Wellness, or CREW for short," Blair said. "They can help students who struggle with even just low-level simple stuff like drugs and alcohol, and students can be supported in making healthier decisions. I think that is something that not a lot of students know about, which is important, especially in a situation like this."

Blair hopes that the email was a way of making the students more aware of how dangerous these situations can be.

News

Ember St. Amour | News Editor | stamoue@ferris.edu

Caffeine chronicles

Panera's caffeine conundrum and Ferris students' relationships with caffeine



Photo credit: Jack Starkey | Torch Photographer

Welding engineering freshman Ellis Meloche drinking the Mango Yuzu Citrus Charged Lemonade at Panera Bread.

Nate Mathewson
News Reporter

In light of the recent Panera charged lemonade lawsuits, caffeine consumption is on the minds of many, including Ferris students who shared their experiences with caffeine.

Panera is facing lawsuits regarding their charged lemonade products for contributing to the death of two individuals and lasting heart health issues of another.

The basis of these lawsuits rests on a lack of proper warning regarding the caffeine content as well as misleading marketing surrounding the drinks. The caffeine content of a 30-ounce large Panera charged lemonade can be as high as 390 milligrams, even when excluding the ice.

Big Rapids Panera manager Alexandra Lenahan explained that all caffeine totals provided by Panera for charged lemonades are with ice. With ice in the picture, the caffeine totals reach a maximum of 236 milligrams.

These lower caffeine totals are what Panera uses in their marketing for charged lemonades. Lenahan declined to comment on the lawsuits, citing Panera company policy.

With an abundance of caffeine in such proximity to campus in mind, Ferris students spoke on their relationship with caffeine.

"I wasn't aware [of the side effects of caffeine] when I started drinking coffee," pre-pharmacy freshman Casey Marek said. "I started when I was a little kid. It was kind of a thing we did with our

family to be social."

Marek explained how caffeine has affected his life.

"[My relationship with caffeine] is love hate, easily. When I have access to it I'll always get it," Marek said. "When I can't get it, I'll have a splitting headache."

Marek drinks a cup of coffee daily and rarely strays from it. He does not plan to change his caffeine habits.

Healthcare systems administration senior Jayley Streeter spoke on her "addictive" relationship with caffeine.

"If I don't have caffeine, at about 2 p.m., I get a migraine or a headache," said Streeter. "Unfortunately, I have to use more caffeine or pain relievers to get [the headache] to go away. I have not found a method to avoid this. It's a

vicious cycle I struggle with."

Streeter drinks a Red Bull or cup of coffee every morning upon waking.

An Instagram poll conducted on Jan. 25 puts Marek and Streeter squarely in the majority of respondents. The poll garnered 92 responses from Ferris students. This gave the results that 40.2% of students drink caffeine daily, 18.5% drink caffeine 4 to 6 times per week, 25% drink caffeine 1 to 3 times per week and 16.3% almost never drink caffeine.

Part of the 16% that almost never drink caffeine, data analysis senior Ryan Cicalo has been through caffeine withdrawals associated with daily use before.

"I used to drink a cup of coffee every morning," Cicalo said. "At first it helped me get through

rough mornings, then it turned into a necessity every morning."

Cicalo cites the crash after the caffeine wears off as his main gripe with drinking coffee.

"I didn't have headaches until I stopped drinking it completely, the reason I wanted to stop was because of how tired I felt when it would wear off," Cicalo said. "The up and down every day was really wearing on me I think."

Caffeine is a drug that can be toxic if used incorrectly. It never hurts for someone to make sure they know how much caffeine is in their beverage, as well as making sure to find the dosage and interval of consumption that works for them.

FLITE flood aftermath

How FLITE is looking almost a month after it flooded



Photo credit: Jordan Wilson | Multimedia Editor

The view in FLITE after some areas were subject to water damage.

Ember St. Amour
News Editor

Repairs continue to be underway in the Ferris Library of Information, Technology and Education

after a water line burst at the beginning of January.

The line burst while HVAC was replacing a heating coil on the first floor of FLITE on Jan. 3. The cause of the burst was a faulty coupler,

according to Facilities Management Associate Vice President Joe Haupt.

“It’s a 24-year-old system, and there was a coupler that came loose, that burst which then you

know, allowed all the water that was in those lines to drain in the area,” Haupt said. “So my crew the [facility management] crew, sprung into action, was able to isolate the water and isolate I’ll say the power to that space to get it shut down as quickly as we could, but water whenever there’s a leak in the system, water tends to find its way down to that hole.”

While the facility management crew and HVAC workers were able to isolate the flooding before it spread, there was still some damage. This includes ceiling tiles, drywall, lighting fixtures and carpet on the first and basement floors of FLITE. Some of the furniture was damaged as well, including the printing sign that hung from the ceiling.

Business administration senior Bailey Edison, who works at FLITE, explains some of the damage that affects students.

“It got all over our printers because the water main burst when they were working on it, so the water was pouring down, went all over our printers and our little workstation over there so we don’t have printing at the moment,” Edison said. “So, that’s our biggest challenge right now because we have to send students to the David L. Eisler Center to print because those are the only printers like near here.”

Edison explained that the printers were covered by insurance, however until the repairs are

done, students won’t be able to use printers at FLITE. Students can still use the computers to connect to the printers in the D.E.C. while FLITE is still undergoing repairs.

Haupt explained that the damage was not as significant as it could have been, due to the swiftness of those who were working in FLITE. Tarps were placed over the floor to prevent further damage. Items in the Jim Crow Museum were also moved away from where the flooding occurred, and according to Haupt, no items from the museum were damaged.

Haupt has a crew working in the library with plans to complete the project on Feb. 29. They have completed several of their steps in this plan including extracting the water, drying the carpet and demolition.

“We’ve started the restoration activities, where then we went through demoed wherever we had, I’ll say drywall in the ceilings because anything that was wet and a drywall surface or anything or a ceiling tile,” Haupt said. “You know, we wanted to make sure that we got those removed so that there was no potential for any mold growth down the road.”

The crew is currently working on replacing the damaged drywall, with plans to have that completed by Feb. 15, with plans to move on to the final step, painting.

Cold water in dorms

Three resident halls go a full day with no hot water

Tate Zellman
News Reporter

On Jan. 17, the university had an issue regarding a heat exchanger, causing three of Ferris’ resident halls to have no warm running water.

Housing and Residence Life were notified first thing that morning from Facilities Management that there wasn’t any warm water in Ward Hall. The three halls that were affected by this issue were Pickell, Ward and Miller Hall. They weren’t able to find a solution that evening, but they were able identify what the problem was and get the warm water running by the next day.

Housing Facilities Coordinator for Housing Residence Life Greg Eichenberg was able to give the reason behind the situation.

“The issue was a heat exchanger that kept tripping a breaker,” said Eichenberg. “Facilities Management bypassed the heat exchanger that kept tripping the breaker and had water flowing from a different heat exchanger

in Knollcrest Commons to make sure that there was warm water in the halls. After using this other heat exchanger Facilities Management found that there were two pumps that had failed, and they replaced those Thursday the 18 in the morning.”

When the new pumps had been fixed, all three halls had warm water and not just lukewarm water anymore according to Eichenberg. He also mentioned that Facilities Management is still waiting to hear back from a vendor to get a replacement actuator for a valve on the heat exchanger so that the warm water can be controlled more feasibly.

This incident has not been the first time the university has had to deal with something like this. During the semester of fall 2023, Travis and Merrill Hall did not have warm running water for approximately two full days. This led to students living in those dormitories having to take cold showers and having colder temperatures coming out of their bathroom sinks.

Digital animation and game design sophomore AJ Simon, a Ward Hall resident, gave his perspective on how he discovered what had happened and how he had to cope with no warm water.

“I heard about it on January 16, when I received an email from my RA,” Simon said. “Not having hot water wasn’t too big of an issue until I needed to shower, which I ended up taking a cold one.”

Besides talking about the situation fixing the pumps, Eichenberg gave his input on it being important for students who didn’t hear about the incident to be aware that it occurred.

“I think it is important that students know about this because it shows that our Facilities Management team was quick to respond to the situation and made sure that all residents had warm water,” said Eichenberg.



Photo credit: Harmony Goodman | Production Assistant

A shower located inside Pickell hall only provided cold water on Jan. 17

Tiny Breakfast serves up laughs

Interactive improv group comes to Ferris



Photo credit: Kate Babel | Freelance Reporter

Members of the Tiny Breakfast Improv Club perform at the Quad

Kate Babel
Freelance Reporter

For the first time in seven years, an improv show was hosted at Ferris State on Thursday in the Quad Café.

Tiny Breakfast Improv Club paid a visit to Ferris showing their hilar-

ious hands-on acting put together with help from the audience, bringing in a new take on comedy. The show featured various games that required help from the audience, which had about 35 people.

Entertainment Unlimited advisor Ben Avery provided some background on the improv group

that used to be on campus.

"I've been told that there used to be an improv group on campus," Avery said. "A quick search through my records tells me that they were established in 2016, but they haven't been active in several years. Anyone interested in reviving or starting a registered student organization focusing on improv can reach out to the Center for Student Involvement."

Avery decided to add a little bit of local touch to the events on campus by reaching out to Tiny Breakfast. The group is native to Grand Rapids, spreading their talent and spark everywhere they go.

"Tiny Breakfast is one of several improv groups local to Grand Rapids," Avery said. "This group is known for their high energy, hilarious characters and bits and topical humor. The great thing [about] working with local talent is that they're almost always familiar with the area and Ferris State University. They know what kind of audience to play to when it comes to a college campus and that works in everyone's favor. Tiny Breakfast jumped at the opportunity to come to Ferris!"

Fueled by suggestions from the audience, the actors reenact places, people, actions, personalities and many more and create a scene with humor tailored to all audiences of many age groups. One of the group's lead members, Jake Mate, did improv throughout his college years with the rest of

his fellow members.

"We just kind of came together one night and decided that why don't we put on something, and we all have a background in improv? Why don't we put something together so that's what I ended up having," Mate said. "We just had a night where we all came together and started throwing ideas around for names for the team and figured out which one made us laugh the most and then Tiny Breakfast. Kind of what blossomed out of that evening, and then we just kind of set up a night for our first rehearsal which is at our house and took it from there."

Not only did Mate start by performing in his college years, but he also had past connections with Ferris. With his parents being Ferris alumni and his childhood friendship with Ben Avery, the emotional connection to the campus sealed the deal.

"We're all Grand Rapids natives, but I'm affiliated with Ben Avery, who was my childhood best friend," Mate said. "So, we grew up together, and what's even more crazy is my parents are alumni here. So, without Ferris I would not exist, so I owe a lot to it."

It was a new experience everyone can be a part of. Tiny Breakfast Improv caters to audiences of all kinds whether it's for first-timers or people who have been before, with the goal being to come up with scenes on the spot to make as many people laugh as

possible.

"If you come to the show, you're the type of audience, because you've made the choice to come and experience something that you have never experienced before and will never experience again," Mate said. "Because that's the magic of improv is we're going to create scenes and moments based off of suggestions from the people that are in the room with us. We're going to create the magic and then it will never be seen again."

Students loved the funny and delightfully entertaining group. As the show went on, they grew more and more invested in the games which caused participation by audience members to grow. Laughs continued throughout the show as smiles grew wider and wider.

Other people who have experienced improv in the past also found the show hysterical. It was a great way for students to unwind from their assignments.

Diagnostic medical sonography junior Addy Buntjer commented on how she would like to see future acts.

"I think it would be really fun and bring a lot of people together," said Buntjer. "I love improv. I think it's so fun."

EU's next event will be a hypnotist, who will be performing in the D.E.C. ballrooms on Feb. 3 at 7:30 p.m.

MICHIGAN NEWS UPDATE

Ember St. Amour
News Editor

Detroit: Theodore Toloff of Northville plead guilty to submitting false statements to a financial institute in connection with bank loans.

Toloff worked for a pharmaceutical wholesaler called Frank W. Kerr Company, a Novi-based company, as chief financial officer according to the Detroit News.

Through an FBI investigation into the company, it was found that the company had a credit agreement to borrow \$60 million from two financial companies.

Special Agent Cheyvorvea Gibson of the FBI in Michigan commented on the situation.

"The defendant admitted to providing false documents to a financial institution, undermining the law and integrity of our financial systems," Gibson said in a press release.

In the admission of falsifying documents, Toloff stated that he had submitted false documents that

included \$18 million ineligible accounts receivable.

He also stated that the company took out more loans on additional funds after he submitted the falsified documents.

U.S. Attorney Dawn Ison commented on how the case went in the courtroom.

"Today's guilty plea reflects my office's continued commitment to ensuring that our banking and lending systems are not distorted through false financial information," Ison said a statement.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Andrew J. Yahkind, according to the Department of Justice.

Toloff faces a maximum of 30 years in prison on these charges for falsifying these documents.

GLOBAL NEWS UPDATE

Ember St. Amour
News Editor

Argentina: A fire broke out on Jan. 25 in Patagonia in Los Alerces national park.

The national park is filled with alerce trees, which span 150 feet or more. These trees are the second longest living trees.

Gov. Ignacio Torres blamed the fire on arsonists, as they have burned over two acres of land. He also stated that the smoke was causing limited visibility for firefighters, making their job difficult, according to BBC News. The smoke was at its worst on Jan. 28 due to the poor weather conditions.

"Those responsible for starting the fire will have to answer to the courts," Torres said.

Torres also alleged that the indigenous group Mapuche Ancestral Resistance may have had something to do with the fire, as they claim land that was taken for logging, in the 1800s.

Park director Danilo Hernández Otaño said that the fires started in

two separate locations, but that they were close together.

Firefighters are currently trying to stop the flames from reaching Esquel and Trevelin, two nearby towns.

In addition to the firefighters, there are also two hydrant planes, two water-bombing helicopters and an observation aircraft according to Phys.org.



Culture

Giuliana Denicolo | Culture Editor | denicog@ferris.edu

Student Spotlight

Taylor Spidell's leadership on campus



Photo courtesy of Taylor Spidell

Taylor Spidell speaks in the Interdisciplinary Resource Center.

Brook Blausey
Culture Reporter

As an activist and a leader, Taylor Spidell keeps herself busy as she spreads her knowledge around the Ferris community.

Spidell is an integrative studies senior. She prides herself on her extracurricular activities, as she's the founder and president of Ferris' new gospel choir, head

of a youth ministry, president of Bulldog Radio, a student success coach, a small business owner, a member of the MLK committee, the campus climate committee and the student belonging committee.

"It all kind of happened by accident," Spidell said. "I don't regret where I am. Some people work their whole lives to be in this position, it was just something that

I wasn't actively looking for. But I love being a leader. I definitely wouldn't change what I do for the world."

Spidell is also the student representative for activism and social justice. It's important to her to represent and spread Black women's empowerment on campus. Because of her dedication to activism, Spidell was the first Black female student to have received

the MLK Social Justice Award.

As she's proud of all she's done and accomplished, she feels her experience has taught her valuable life lessons.

"I've learned to not be afraid to step out of your comfort zone because you never know what change you can bring until you decide to be changed," Spidell said. "Not everybody is going to like you, but do not let the words of man discourage you from doing the work of the kingdom."

Even though Spidell wasn't looking for these positions, she found her true passion through them. She loves to be the boss while also being in a position where she can help others at the same time. She gives credit to God for putting her in the position she is today.

"I tell everybody, I'm a woman of God first and businesswoman second because at the end of the day, the lord allowed this to happen," Spidell said. "He gives me the strength to continue what I do, and I keep him first so that I stay sane."

Psychology sophomore Alaya Hunter is a coworker and friend of Spidell. The word she would use to describe Spidell is ambitious.

"The second she gets an idea

in her head, she runs with it and she never stops," Hunter said. "I don't know how she has time for anything."

According to Hunter, Spidell received four awards during the MLK celebration week and is already planning a new event for February.

"I am proud of all the work she has done," Hunter said. "Whenever she asks me to do anything, I always try to help out and get her to relax. That woman goes hard for everything. She is truly passionate about what she does."

Similarly to Hunter, former Ferris student and long-term friend of Spidell, Nakisha Floyd spoke on how she feels about Spidell receiving these awards and is proud of all of her hard work.

"I couldn't think of a better person to receive the awards," Floyd said. "She truly does put 100% into everything she does, and it shows."

Both Hunter and Floyd have seen Spidell's potential and are excited to see what else she will do in the future.

"She really changes the whole atmosphere of campus with everything she does," Hunter said.

E&E Tropical Fish

New pet store opens in Big Rapids

Isabelle Marks
News Reporter

On Sunday, Jan. 28, the grand opening of E&E Tropical Fish brings exotic pets to Big Rapids.

E&E Tropical Fish is a new store in Big Rapids that has a large selection of fish and reptiles, as well as all of the supplies to care for them. This store is the only fish and reptile store in town.

Eric Maxon, a dedicated enthusiast from the Big Rapids area, has cultivated a profound love for fish since his involvement in the Grand Valley Aquarium Club. With a decade-long board membership, Maxon recognized the need for a store that carries tropical fish and reptiles, as well as all of their needed supplies in the Big Rapids area so he decided to be the one to open it.

As he's enthusiastic about the selection of fish he carries, he has a large range from guppies to tropical stingrays which he breeds. From food to tanks, he carries many supplies for the animals.

Maxon emphasized the significance of thorough research for potential buyers, urging them not to make choices based solely on appearances.

"They should just do a little bit of research on what type of fish they want and don't just go buy how pretty it is. Some of [the fish] that you're buying that are only one inch can get up to 10 - 12 inches," Maxon said.

Choosing Big Rapids for his storefront was a deliberate decision for Maxon. While he recognized the community's potential, he felt driven by a desire to contribute. He envisions his store not just as a business but as a vital community asset.

CONT ON PG. 7



Photo Credits: Jordan Wilson | Multimedia Editor

A tank of juvenile Chichlids inside the newly opened pet store.

Big Rapids paints the town in art

The 17th annual Big Rapids Festival of the Arts



Photo Credit: Jack Starkey | Freelance Photographer

Signs located around Big Rapids showcasing the upcoming Festival of Arts, along with the Artworks sign outside 106 N Michigan Ave.

Kendall Phillips
Culture Reporter

The town of Big Rapids will be filled with music, art and joy during their annual Festival of the Arts taking place from Feb. 2 to Feb. 25.

This year's festival has a long lineup of artists from all over, who are coming to share their work with the town. The festival will also include musical performances from Ferris students as well as Big Rapids High School and Middle School bands and choirs.

As this festival has been around for years, the original festival was only spanned from 1958 to 1994. In 1994, the festival was cancelled due to a big enrollment and funding decline happening at Ferris. Just 14 years later, in 2008, Bruce Dilg, a former architecture professor at Ferris, recruited other board members to bring the festival back to Big Rapids in hopes of bringing the arts back into the community.

Professor of music and director of Instrumental Concert Ensembles Dr. Richard Scott Cohen is a board member of the Festival of the Arts and is looking forward to this year's events.

According to Cohen, the festival provides a lot of important opportunities for students to experience many different types of art at a very affordable cost.

"The festival is a good way to experience different kinds of arts where almost everything is free," Cohen said. "That has been a big thing for us, sometimes there are some specialized courses with limited participation where they have some sort of small fee associated with it, but for the most part we want this to be free and accessible to everybody."

Cohen also states that this festival can be an opportunity to grow and try something new.

"That's what this is all about, just trying to show people that art is a big wide world," Cohen said.

"The arts make our lives better, they enrich our lives in lots of different ways."

Big Rapids City Manager and board member for the Festival of the Arts Mark Gifford says that the festival was designed as a way to bring Big Rapids and Ferris communities together.

According to Gifford, one of the most special things about this festival is how well it can accommodate to anyone's interests.

"There really is something for everybody," Gifford said. "Anybody from any walk of life could find something here that intrigues them because it's so broad. There are performing arts, authors, learning how to make food, learning how to arrange flowers and cooking things, there are just so many different things that everybody can find a home in this."

Gifford encourages students to attend the festival because it's a way to get to know the community of Big Rapids.

"Through the event itself or through the people you will meet there, you will find that Big Rapids is better by getting involved," Gifford said.

University president Dr. Bill Pink is very excited about this year's festival because of the growing connection between Ferris and the community of Big Rapids. Even though it's only his second festival, he has already grown a very strong appreciation for it and the people who put it together.

"Ferris has always had a strong relationship with the Festival of the Arts," Pink said. "[With] last year being my first year here at Ferris, getting to engage with and understand more of what the relationship with the community was is very pleasing, and to know how Ferris State has been connected to the festival."

Pink believes that this festival and other organizations in Big Rapids help to create a focus and appreciation of the arts in a rural

community.

"Sometimes rural areas do not have a very robust arts community for various reasons," Pink said. "This festival puts a squash to that theory. You have a festival that pulls together not only artists from the visual and creative arts, but also from the musical sides of things, and that is so important to this community."

Pink said it's important for Ferris to explore ways they can continue to make the connection between Ferris and the festival even stronger for the benefit of both the students and the community.

The festival will span throughout the town of Big Rapids and explore various kinds of arts. From music, theater, visual and cinematic arts, to culinary, architectural and textile arts and many more.

Look to future editions of the Torch for coverage of the upcoming events during the Festival of the Arts.

Upcoming Festival of the Arts Calendar

2

- Vintage 78 Record Listening Session
- FOTA Opening Concert with Rollie Tussing Trio

3

- Artworks Artist Demonstrations
- Quilts of Valor National Sew Day
- Evangeline

4

- An Afternoon of Jazz Piano & Percussion



Scan here to see the full event calendar

E&E CONT.

His goal is to make a positive impact on the lives of local pet owners. By offering a diverse range of fish, from exotics to college-friendly options and a selection of reptiles, Maxon is determined to establish his store as a convenient and accessible resource for pet care needs in Big Rapids.

His commitment to the com-

munity extends beyond providing quality products, aiming to create a welcoming space for enthusiasts and newcomers alike.

“What I am looking forward to is meeting new people, but also bringing a store to the community that people can enjoy and they don’t have to make a long trip just to get feeders or supplies for their pets,” Maxon said.

Around 30 people attended the grand opening as the store

showed off their selection of bearded dragons, geckos, toads and snakes.

Big Rapids local Sarah Lehecka said she planned to rekindle her hobby of taking care of fish because of the opening of the store.

“We used to have big saltwater fish tanks and we are looking to try to bring that hobby back into our lives,” Lehecka said. “We’re really thrilled a store like this was opening, as your only other option

around here is Meijer to get fish.”

Because of the lack fish stores in the town, members of the community had a need for a place for them to conveniently get pet supplies and fish.

“We usually have to drive all the way out to visit Grandville to go to places like this,” Lehecka said.

Ferris criminal justice senior Lily Vella has a leopard gecko at home and a couple of fish tanks. She now doesn’t have to drive to

Grand Rapids to get food or other supplies for her animals anymore.

Both Lehecka and Vella were happy with the selection of fish, supplies and other animals.

This store shortens the drive for all Big Rapids locals. E&E Tropical Fish is on 10495 Northland Drive and is open seven days a week from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.



Photo Credit: Jordan Wilson | Multimedia Editor

Although some tanks and cages were empty due to shipment delays, they will soon be filled with various species.



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Opinions

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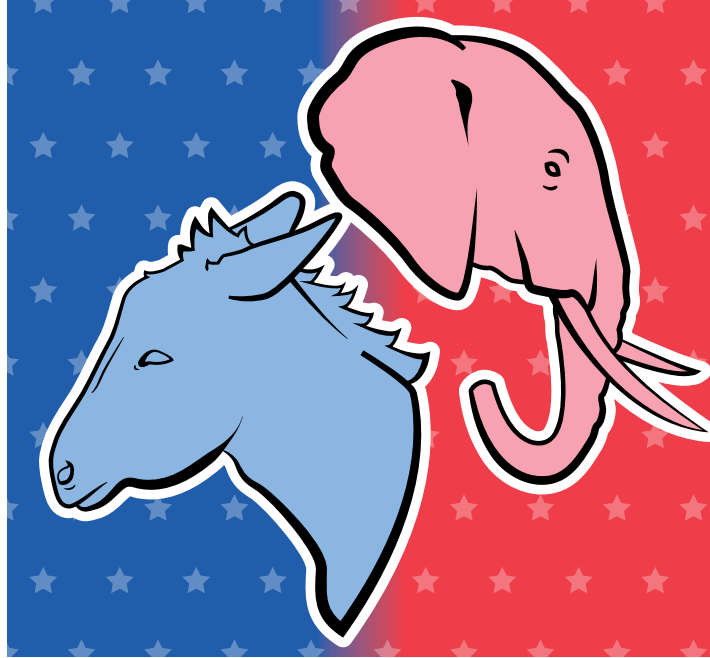
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EDITOR'S COLUMN:

Back where we started

The disappointment of a 2024 rematch



Graphic by: Hailey Nye | Production Assistant

Jessica Oakes
Editor-In-Chief

My second presidential election as a voter is looking identical to the first, and I could not be more disappointed with both parties.

The New Hampshire primaries took place last week. Donald Trump was the reigning Republican, despite two impeachments and two indictments. Joe Biden

took over 60% of the democratic votes despite not being on the ballot.

As of Saturday, Jan. 27, Republican runner-up Nikki Haley seems to think that the race for the nomination is far from over. However, after her two losses in double-digit margins, it is only a matter of time until Trump is the only remaining conservative in the running.

New Hampshire Democrats led

a write-in campaign for Biden that resulted in nearly 80,000 votes. Writing in an 81-year-old incumbent with such force is a perfect snapshot of the Democratic Party and its genuine inability to make any meaningful change.

This year's political environment certainly feels different than it did four years ago. COVID-19 and the Black Lives Matter movement instilled a real sense of urgency during the last election cycle, especially for young people. We may not see these two hot-button issues in headlines anymore, but there was no satisfying resolution to either.

Systemic racism still exists. Millions of Americans refused the COVID-19 vaccine. Trump and Biden will soon grace our ballots once again.

To me, this rematch reinforces a lot of cynicism I feel towards national politics. They just don't go anywhere. It is broadly disappointing to feel like I am inheriting a system that only spins in place, which is in turn personally discouraging when I think about the change I can make on my own.

If it were not so painful it might be poetic. The 2020 election saw the highest percentage of eligible voters at the polls in 120

years. The Trump presidency and its fallout were ruinous. Millions still believe he won in 2020 and should again in 2024.

All the while, the best thing the Democratic Party can put in the White House is an octogenarian who continues to increase defense spending and failed to protect abortion on a national scale.

If we don't have any real comfort or individual power in the capital, where do we? As trite as it sounds, politics really begins with the people around us. While reading Matt Taibbi's 2008 book "The Great Derangement," I was struck by one concept. We see ourselves in demographics rather than communities.

Following the donkey and elephant circus of national politics too closely will either bore or exhaust a perfectly capable human being into submission. It will convince us to vilify the people next to us instead of working with them, the only way anything works at all.

The message of this is not that we should all ignore what politicians do during an election year. Far from it. Voting in the big elections and staying informed is the least we can do, not the most.

Wildfire for wild flowers

Fighting fire with fire

Nate Mathewson
News Reporter

Breaking news, the Earth is getting hotter and wildfires are getting bigger and burning longer, and it feels like there is nothing we can do about it, but there is.

Shocker, I know. This is what we have heard from every major media outlet for the last several years. Every summer, like clockwork. Climate change is only half of the reason for the wildfires we've been beholden to as of late.

In the last few decades, wildfires have worsened by every metric imaginable. Acres burned per year, monetary damage done and length of fire seasons to name a few.

The main reasons presented by most major platforms for this occurrence are climate change and global warming. Both of these are correct as they cause massive and frequent wildfires is correct.

Climate change encourages more intense wildfires. The Washington State Department of

Ecology showed that even a one degree Celsius temperature increase could increase the median burned area by 600% in some forest types.

Increased temperature, stronger winds and drier conditions are all symptoms of climate change that help to promote fires that burn hotter, last longer and travel further. The powers have not handled climate change well. The damage done may be irreversible.

As I alluded to, there is another reason for these bigger and stronger wildfires: poor forest management.

This is the half of the equation that needs to be talked about more, the solution being actionable and within reach.

For a long time, the United States had a sort of no-tolerance policy for fire. When you are a young and ignorant country that is mostly constructed with wood, that makes sense.

Unfortunately, this policy stuck around longer than it should have. It took until the 1960s to get a

slightly more nuanced policy than the all-out termination of fire with no questions asked.

The problem with this is that fire is natural and necessary. Many ecosystems rely on periodic fires to regulate invasive species, replenish soil nutrients, clear forest floors of debris, underbrush and dead standing trees. Some tree species even require fire for their seeds to germinate.

For a long time, the United States government did not allow these ecosystems to self-regulate.

This allowed invasive and non-native species, that did not evolve to withstand fire, a free pass to take over whole swathes of land. With nothing to regulate them, the native species that relied on fire got outcompeted by non-native species.

Many native species have gone extinct or their numbers dwindled all across the country.

Ecosystems are delicate. Every niche is equally important.

This is the type of disruption over time that renders forests qui-

et and barren.

Well, one of the types of disruption anyway.

Without the periodic cleansing of natural fires, brush and debris pile up. Think of the fire triangle. There's always oxygen in the air, we're increasing the temperature annually and now there is plenty of fuel across forest floors nationwide. That is why wildfires have been so bad.

Prescribed or controlled burns are set purposefully for the function of essentially doing what would have been done naturally. They are planned and managed by professionals and are fairly cheap.

These burns are monumentally beneficial for ecosystems and brilliant for wildfire prevention. I do not know of a better bang-for-buck deal for tax dollars. Everything we do as a people depends, ultimately, on the health of our planet.

CONT. ON PG. 9

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Graphic by: Hailey Nye | Production Assistant

WILDFIRE CONT.

The culling of invasive and harmful non-native species with a controlled fire does wonders for natural flora and fauna. Fire is the filter that makes room for native species to thrive. Diversity and competition are encouraged. Imagine a world without monoculture fields of Queen Anne's lace. In its place, a field of native wildflowers buzzing with pollinators.

These more intense wildfires are signs of an engine on its last legs.

Prescribed burns are preventative maintenance, like changing your engine oil.

Vote for the environment. Make noise about this issue. Decide how your tax dollars are spent. Donate to environmental organizations that do prescribed burns. Identify and cull invasive plants with some friends. Buy 25 acres of wild land and commission a controlled burn. Change your oil. Do what you can do.

The movie was so fetch

How the "Mean Girls" remake stood it's ground



Graphic by: Hailey Nye | Production Assistant

Ember St. Amour
News Editor

The following contains spoilers for the 2024 "Mean Girls" movie.

Like most people I know, watching "Mean Girls" was a key part of my middle school experience, so when they announced that they were remaking it, I had to go see it. For the most part, it did not disappoint.

Through the cast including original Broadway cast member Reneé Rapp as Regina George, Tina Fey and Tim Meadows returning as Mrs. Norbury and Principal Devall, the movie reimagined its original with a musical twist.

While the movie may be similar to the original, some parts were changed in a way that felt drawn out. Specifically, the Halloween party scene.

While the scene in the original played a crucial part in explaining not only how the main character, Cady Heron, grew up home-schooled, but was also a crucial plot point for the beginning of her revenge, it felt drawn out in the remake. With three songs taking place during the Halloween party, the scene felt overly explained. While catchy to listen to, I think that the scene could've done away with the song "Sexy."

While on the topic of music, I was disappointed in the talent show scene. Anyone who has seen the original "Mean Girls" knows that they dance to "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree," however, that was not the case in the remake. Instead, they danced to "Rockin' Around the Pole Again" with the dance from the original, making the vibe feel off.

They also changed the plot of Gretchen Wieners knocking down the CD player to Regina tripping and messing up the talent show. The degree of humiliation that happened was different from the

original. The plot after this point could've been less extreme, as the embarrassment was worse after the incident in the remake compared to the original.

The narration was also changed. Instead of Cady narrating the story and viewers looking into Cady's thoughts, the story is narrated by her friends, Janice Sarkisian and Damian Hubbard.

While the story's narrative stays on point for the most part, the storyline relies on song to explain why Cady is having a different high school experience, and what happened on Oct. 3. While this change isn't major, I preferred the humor of the story being told from Cady's perspective.

The other major thing that disappointed me about the movie was the loss of jokes from the original.

There was no incident of a bus almost hitting someone after Regina was first hit. While some jokes make sense to no longer be included, we miss the joke of the movie opening with Cady being told about school as though she is five. These are a few of the quirks that I liked about the original that were missing.

While it has its faults, the movie overall was spectacular, especially the songs. When I got home from the theater, I had the soundtrack on repeat. "World Burn" tells the plot of Regina getting her revenge, and the passion shown throughout the song gets the point across in a spectacular way.

As someone who grew up watching the original, I feel that the remake hits the plotline well in this retelling. They still have the overall plot with a few scenes changed, but it is still the story I know and love. They still have Cady going to the math tournament and coming back just in time to be announced as prom queen. She still breaks up the tiara, which is a key part

of the plot.

They also kept some key jokes which I appreciated including, fetch, gruel and Damion's famous line, "She doesn't even go here." The film knew its target audience well and appealed to their needs while also including a more modern spin on things, such as Cady growing up with a single mother. I liked the change, as the film was able to become more relatable to this demographic.

The final thing I loved about the movie was the surprise guest appearance. With the movie almost over and my faith in anyone else from the original showing up gone, it was a happy surprise to find myself staring at Lindsay Lohan as the host of the math tournament. With references to her role as Cady in the original, the appearance did not disappoint.

The movie is rated 70% on Rotten Tomatoes and I would agree with that rating. The movie was spectacular with catchy songs, nostalgia for the first one and new ideas that expressed a more modern take on the original.

I would encourage anyone who likes musicals, as well as the original, to head to the theater to watch it. If you're lucky, they'll still have Burn Book souvenir cups and popcorn buckets left.



Graphic by: Hailey Nye | Production Assistant

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Sports

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Czech Mate, Vikings



Photo courtesy of Ferris Athletics

Senior forward Stepan Pokorny fires the puck in a game against the St. Thomas University Tommies on Dec. 1.

Stepan Pokorny scores five goals in weekend sweep of Augustana

Connor Grypma
Sports Reporter

Senior forward Stepan Pokorny's five-goal weekend helped propel Ferris State hockey to a series sweep of the Augustana Vikings at Midco Arena on Friday, Jan. 27 and Saturday, Jan. 28.

In their first-ever series against the Vikings (7-14-3) and the first-ever series at Midco Arena, the Bulldogs (10-16-1, 6-11 in CCHA) were victorious with a 5-2 win on Friday and a 4-3 overtime win on Saturday, courtesy of Pokorny's four-goal game. The Bulldogs have now locked up back-to-back sweeps and have won four games in a row.

Head coach Bob Daniels is ultimately pleased with the weekend's result but understands that the Bulldogs need to keep working.

"Yes, we've won four straight, that's great. But it's not as though there are not areas we need to

work on," Daniels said. "There's [always] an area we can get better at. I thought in some ways, our faceoff play was not great on the weekend. So there are areas that we can tighten up and get better at. As long as we don't get too caught up in wins and losses and get caught up in the details of playing good hockey instead, we're going to be okay."

In Friday's matchup, the Bulldogs struck first midway through the first period, as they claimed the lead with a goal from senior forward Austin McCarthy. The tally was McCarthy's first of the season. Ferris quickly added to their lead, as sophomore forward Caiden Gault scored to go up 2-0 in the first period. The Vikings got on the board with less than a minute to play in the second and tied up the score 2-2 in the third. The Bulldogs didn't allow a goal from that point, while freshman defenseman Jack Mesic scored his second goal of

the season to make the score 3-2 with eight minutes remaining. Ferris continued its offensive attack, as Pokorny scored his first of five goals on the weekend. After the tally, freshman forward Emerson Goode sealed a 5-2 win with an empty-net goal late in the third.

McCarthy's goal marks the first goal ever scored at Midco Arena. The Ludington, Mich. native won't be forgetting the goal anytime soon.

"It's super special. It's something that I remember for the rest of my life," McCarthy said. "It was just an awesome experience to be a part of that night. We're lucky that it was our team that got to go down and play them in their home opener and getting a sweep made it even better for our team."

Pokorny led the Bulldogs to the series sweep on Saturday, despite the close result. The Vikings scored first to take the lead midway through the first period, but

Pokorny scored his first goal of the night seconds after and found the back of the net again early in the second period to go up 2-1. Each team traded another goal halfway through the final period with the Bulldogs falling into the short-handed situation and Pokorny accomplishing the hat trick. With just two minutes to play, the Vikings put the extra attacker on the ice and tied the score at 3-3, which sent the game to overtime. Roughly three minutes into the extra frame, Pokorny scored his fourth and final goal of the night to give the Bulldogs the 4-3 win.

Pokorny, who received CCHA Forward of the Week honors, remains humble about the four-goal night, as he credits his team for his success.

"It's obviously really exciting. It's been a long time since I've had a night like that," Pokorny said. "It's not just about me scoring the goals. It's all the teammates

around me that put me in those chances and situations where I could score a goal. Hopefully, I keep it going."

The Kolin, Czech Republic native has spent four years with the Bulldogs and has scored 18 goals and 42 assists with the team.

The Bulldogs currently sit in last place in the CCHA. The remainder of the season's seven matchups will be conference play and Ferris will look to improve their seeding heading into the postseason in early March.

The Bulldogs are back at home this upcoming weekend for an in-conference matchup against the Bowling Green Falcons on Friday, Feb. 2 and Saturday, Feb. 3. Puck drop is set for 7:07 p.m. on Friday and 6:06 p.m. on Saturday.

Men's basketball splits weekend series

Bulldogs beat Warriors, drop game against Cardinals



Photo courtesy of Ferris Athletics

Ben Davidson races across the court during a close game against Wayne State University.

Jeffery Walker
Sports Reporter

The No. 13 Ferris State men's basketball split the weekend inter-conference series on the road defeating Wayne State on Thursday, Jan. 25 and then suffered a loss to Saginaw Valley State on Saturday, Jan. 27.

Sitting as the No. 2 seed in the GLIAC regular season standings, the Bulldogs (16-4, 6-3 in conference) are three games back from the No. 1 seed and have a chance to win the GLIAC regular season championship and be the first seed in the GLIAC tournament.

In the first game of the road series, the Bulldogs took on Wayne

State, which they won with a final score of 79-75. The team was able to hold the Warriors off to avoid the upset and come up with the win.

Despite the victory, head coach Andy Bronkema was not pleased with the Bulldogs' defensive performance.

"[We] just didn't take care of the basketball," Bronkema said. "[We] didn't play defense down the stretch and [I'm] pretty disappointed in our defensive effort, just letting them get to the rim time and time again."

In the first half, the Bulldogs led by 10 with a score of 39-29, holding the Warriors to 29 points, 33.3% from the field and 9.1%

from the three-point line. In the second half, the Wayne State offense had better shooting rate of 44.1% from the field and 23.1% from the three-point line with 46 points scored. Clutch free throws made by the Bulldogs helped them hold off to win the game.

The Bulldogs had four players score in double digits. Senior guard Ben Davidson and senior forward Dolapo Olayinka with 20 points, senior forward Desean Munson had 18 points and senior guard Jack Ammerman finished with 10 points.

Munson explains how tough these conference games are despite what the team's record may be.

"Each and every night is going to be a battle it's going to be a fight," Munson said. "We obviously played harder to get the win, but you got to be better than the team that day of the competition in order to beat them no matter if you're first in the league or if you're last in the league."

Following the win over Wayne State, the Bulldogs would go on to face Saginaw Valley, which the Bulldogs would fall short of a comeback coming away with a loss of 99-89.

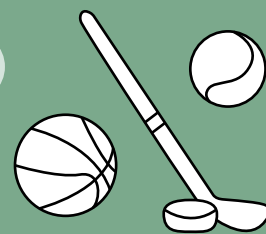
The Bulldogs' 10 turnovers in the first half played a part in the huge deficit at the end of the first half down by 22 points, with a score of 57-35. The team fought

back but a big second half was not enough for the Bulldogs to pull off the win.

Ferris was led by Davidson with 27 points and junior guard Ethan Erickson with 24 points both scored 18 points each in the second half to help the Bulldogs back into the game but it was not enough.

The Bulldogs will return home for an important series of inter-conference games. First, they will take on Northern Michigan, which is undefeated in the GLIAC play and holds the No. 1 seed in the GLIAC regular season standings, on Feb. 1. Following this, Ferris will go up against the Michigan Tech Huskies on Feb. 3.

Feb. Calendar: Ferris Athletics



1
M/W Basketball vs. Northern Michigan University

2 Hockey vs. Bowling Green	3 M/W Basketball vs. Michigan Tech	11 Men's Tennis vs. Western University (Canada)	15 M/W Basketball vs. Saginaw Valley	17 M/W Basketball vs. Wayne State
18 M/W Tennis vs. Northwood	23 Men's Tennis vs. Grace Hockey vs. Michigan Tech	24 M/W Tennis vs. Lewis Hockey vs. Northern Michigan	25 M/W Tennis vs. Hillsdale	29 M/W Basketball vs. Wisconsin Parkside

Women's basketball stays hot on the road

Ferris State blows out Wayne State, beats Saginaw Valley on the road for the first time in four years



Photo courtesy of Ferris Athletics

Sophomore Mya Hiram being guarded as she attempts a pass.

Jael Snowden
Sports Reporter

The No. 7 ranked Ferris State women's basketball pushed their win streak to seven games with wins over the Wayne State Warriors on Thursday, Jan. 25 and a narrow win against the Saginaw Valley State Cardinals on Saturday, Jan. 27.

Ferris has not lost a game since their 61-56 loss to Daeman on Jan. 3. Since then, the Bulldogs have a point differential of plus 155 in their last seven games.

Ferris (14-2, 8-1 in GLIAC) traveled to Detroit, collecting an 80-46 steamrolling of the Warriors (11-6, 4-4 in GLIAC). A smothering defense has been the identity of this team, holding opponents to

under 60 points on six different occasions this season. Former GLIAC defensive player of the year DeShonna Day thinks practice and individual player scouting have been the reason for the team's success on that side of the floor.

"This year, we have worked on defense a lot more in practice than last year," Day said. "Our help defense has been very active this

year as well, we game plan really well and pay attention to detail. This year we have done a better job at knowing the players and that just comes from paying attention to detail and knowing your scout like the back of your hand."

Day currently shoots three-pointers above 31% on the season while collecting two defensive stops against Wayne State, as she had a block and a steal.

The Bulldogs started the first quarter slow, then quickly took control of the game. Ferris took a 37-17 lead into the locker room at the half. Senior forward Chloe Ido-ni and senior center Amaka Unobagha combined for 19 points in the first half. After the break, the Bulldogs' offense picked up where they left off, scoring 26 points in the third and then 17 in the fourth. Ferris' defense held the Warriors to under 16 points in the last two quarters, helping the Bulldogs seal the 80-46 blowout.

Head coach Kurt Westendorp emphasized how important having fun is and how that leads to wins.

"They enjoy playing with each other, they have fun when they're out there on the floor," Westendorp said. "They don't believe that anyone's given them anything. Every game has that moment, every game has that opportunity that they can get to play basketball with their best friends for 40 minutes and compete. When you get people who just love to compete, they do a good job of not looking too far ahead or behind. They can just enjoy the day for what it is."

The Bulldogs continued their win streak with a visit to Saginaw, where the team came away with a 59-57 victory over the Saginaw Valley Cardinals (6-13, 3-6 in GLI-

AC). Coming into the contest, the Bulldogs have not beaten Saginaw Valley on the road since Jan. 12, 2020. In a very defensive game, neither team was able to run away with the game, as the lead changed hands seven times and the game was tied nine times. At the end of the half, the Bulldogs trailed the Cardinals 29-26. The close game continued into the third and fourth period, which saw the Bulldogs outscore the Cardinals by one in the third and then by four in the final quarter. Junior guard Kadyne Blanchard led the Bulldogs in scoring with 21 points. The Freeland, Mich. native's 21-point outing saw her break 1,000 points in her collegiate career.

Junior guard Kenzie Bowers attributes the extra energy the team has on the floor to the shorter practices.

"They are shorter than earlier in the season," Bowers said. "These are the types of practices where we need to be locked in so we can get through things and move on to another. I think it has had a great impact come game time so that we can be a little fresh and bouncier. I think it helps our mental health also. At this point in the season, it always seems like there is so much going on. So it helps give us time to lock into the moment."

Bowers had 11 points and two steals against Saginaw Valley.

The Bulldogs will return home for a two-game homestand against the Northern Michigan Wildcats on Feb. 1, followed by a contest against the Michigan Tech Huskies on Feb. 3. Both matches will be a rematch of the two Upper Peninsula teams they swept on Jan. 11.

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