

the **western** **carolinian**



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Catamount on the loose: a fierce new statue roars

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By Abigail Quinn



Photo by Liam Bridgeman.

The catamound statue located at the roundabout at the entrance to campus has been removed to make way for a new statue that boasts a fresh design and massive size difference from the original.

The new statue, designed by Jon Hair, will have a new fierce pose and design voted on by a panel of staff, alumni, students and WCU's Public Art Committee.

When talking about the old catamound statue let's be clear, it is not being replaced, only moved.

Dr. Melissa Wargo, chief of staff in the chancellor's office described the process of finding the new member of the cat family in depth. Wargo described that the original cat was very small for the space

that it takes up in the traffic circle at the entrance to WCU's campus. That was only the beginning of the process.

After deciding that a larger statue was needed, plans for its design began. Wargo acknowledged that students and alumni liked the sweet passive cat statue that has guarded the entrance to the campus for years. However, it was just that, sweet and passive.

"How can we have a new cat that would be larger, more visible and have the representation of a more competitive spirit of the Catamount?" Wargo asked.

The new statue has been planned for about a year, with extra time taken to make sure that the new statue was going

to be unique for WCU and hold the spirit of the catamount.

"One of the things we spent a lot of time talking about is, what is a catamount? If you ask 100 people what is a catamount, you'll get 100 different answers. We spent a lot of time on that because we needed to communicate that vision to the artist," she said.

Diving into the rabbit hole of WCU history shows the catamount has been represented in many ways. Anywhere from a long-tailed mountain lion all the way to a small bobcat-like feline. The vision of a catamount has evolved greatly over 134 years.

"It's not like we are a bear or mustang or a cougar which actually exists in the world. A catamount isn't a biological thing, it's in the eye of beholder, if you will. It's a cat of the mountains. It's a concept of different kinds of big wildcats that one might find in the mountains," Wargo said.

She also used a quote from professional golfer and WCU alumni J.T. Posten to describe the catamount design dilemma.

"He was on one of his first tours with the



Photo by Liam Bridgeman.

PGA and he was giving an interview. The journalist said to him, ‘so you know, you went to Western Carolina University,’ he’s like ‘yes ma’am.’ She said ‘so [WCU’s] mascot is a catamount. What is a catamount?’ He said ‘I don’t know, ma’am. All I know is I am one.’ It was so good... we kind of adopted that spirit of J.T. Poston’s answer. We don’t know, but we know we are one,” Wargo said.

Though no images could be shared at this time, Wargo was delighted to explain some of the new design features.

“It’s about twice the size of the old cat. The new cat is in a fiercer pose, in a crouch with one paw up and it’s got claws that you can see. It’s got teeth and in more of a pounce pose with a sense of movement to it, which is some criticism that the old cat had,” she said.

After the plans were finalized to bring a new statue, soon the question of ‘where should the old statue go’ soon arose.

“One of the things that we heard frequently is that around our primary athletics facility over around Ramsey, there’s no statue of our mascot,” Wargo said, “so, we thought why not kill two birds with one stone? We would move the old cat to a new location where it would still get lots of love and have an opportunity to have a new location for the current cat.”

Wargo also expressed the importance of having the statue accessible to all students.

“We deliberately looked for a new location that could be fully accessible to all students,” Wargo said.

“Everybody wants a picture with the cat, and so, we wanted to have the opportunity to keep that tradition in a place that was safe and have an opportunity for a new

tradition near our athletics facilities. Even students that have mobility issues can still get to it.”

“We wanted to make the process inclusive, and we knew it was going to be a piece of public art. And so, the first stop we made was talking about how we could have that be an orderly and inclusive process to pick a new cat. We talked about it with the public art committee, and we decided we needed to have a selection committee,” she said.

Wargo said, it was equally important to have the director of the local Cherokee center on the selection committee. Under her direction, the statue gained a few significant details to bring some representation of a sense of place. She was an advocate for wanting to make sure the new statue embodied a sense of place and connection to the Cherokee spirit. The wi symbol was designed into the rockwork

that the new cat stands on.

An open call was released for artists to design the statue. Over 100 artists reached out with their ideas for the statue. Artist Jon Hair rose above the vigorous vetting process. Hair is often called America’s most highly commissioned monumental sculptor. He has a long list of credits to his name including the US Olympic Committee, the US Air Force Academy, Computer Sciences Corporation, the Cities of Beijing and Shanghai and the Emmys Hall of Fame.

“We were able to talk to people who worked with [Hair] and so we felt really comfortable. He had great references, and great examples of his art on display in North Carolina,” Wargo said.

The new cat statue is expected to be installed on October 16th.



Photo by Liam Bridgeman.

Deep dives in Jackson County

By Stewart Butler



Jackson County is currently constructing a 30,000 square-foot aquatic facility at the recreation center on Tilley Creek Road in Cullowhee. The facility will provide service to county residents who currently must travel long distances to swim. Construction is expected to be complete by spring 2024 at a cost of \$22 million.

When completed, the recreation center will feature two pools, multiple party rooms and an outdoor patio. There will be an additional lobby area, men's and women's locker rooms and improvements to the parking lots.

Jackson County Parks and Recreation director Rusty Ellis said the facility will impact the community in meaningful ways.

"Jackson County residents will now have

their own indoor aquatics facility and won't have to travel to Waynesville or Franklin," he said.

The aquatic center will house two pools. One, a six-lane 25-yard competition pool will feature diving boards and a climbing wall. A leisure pool will be built adjacent, with a zero-depth splash pad and vortex therapy pool.

Sara Long, local resident and frequent visitor to the recreation center said the new facility will have a positive impact on the community.

"It will provide the kids of the community with professional swimming instruction which ultimately will save lives, and the senior community with the health benefits of swimming and water aerobics," Long wrote in an email.

In November 2020, Jackson County residents approved a bond referendum for \$20 million to fund construction of the facility. Construction began shortly after.

"I would like to commend Rusty Ellis for his outstanding leadership for seeing this enormous project through all of the problems to see it finally nearly completed. I'm not sure it would have ever been completed without his professionalism and dedication," wrote Long.

"I am thrilled that Jackson County approved allocating funds for this project and kept the site at the Cullowhee Recreation Center," Long said. "It has been amazing watching this facility being built."

Ellis hopes the changes in parking will ease traffic during critical hours of the day. "I believe the new traffic flow will help during high volume program days and nights. The front parking lot will be [designated] for indoor activities and the back parking will be used for outdoor programs..."

Ellis looks forward to an opening celebration next spring.

The Jackson County Recreation Center is open to all. Membership and pricing are available online.

To learn more, visit rec.jacksonnc.org.



Contact our editors at
westerncarolinian@wcu.edu

Want an Ad?

Celebrate WESTERN

Homecoming 2023

Monday, October 23

3:00 PM - 6:00 PM | UC Lawn
LMP's Annual Pumpkin Patch
Paint a pumpkin with Last Minute Productions!

7:30pm | Bardo Arts Center
Coco Live-to-Film Concert!
(In Spanish with English Subtitles)

Tuesday, October 24

3:30 PM - 6:30 PM | Blue Ridge Lawn
Homecoming Giveaway
Hosted by Campus Activities, Athletics, Alumni Engagement, Center for Community Engagement & Service Learning, International Programs, and Campus Recreation and Wellness.

12:00 - 5:00 pm | UC Grand Room
Homecoming Blood Drive
Sign up for an appointment at redcross.org using code: WCUHOMECOMING

7:00 pm | Ramsey Center
A Night in the Wheel
Come out and meet our Catamount Men's and Women's basketball teams! We will be giving away pizza before the event and prizes throughout the night.

7:30pm | Bardo Arts Center
Coco Live-to-Film Concert! (In English)
Coco in Concert on Tour features a screening of the complete Disney Pixar film with Oscar® and Grammy®-winning composer Michael Giacchino's musical score performed live by the 20-member Orquesta Folclórica Nacional de México.

Wednesday, October 25

4:00pm-9:00pm | Central Plaza
Homecoming Carnival
WCU Students can enjoy the carnival for one day for free! If WCU Students want to attend both days, an additional day of admission is \$10. Faculty and Staff admission is a \$12 pass. Community admission is \$15 for a pass. Student can pre-select tickets on mydca.wcu.edu. All other admission may be purchased at the UC Guest Services Desk on day of the carnival.

Thursday, October 26

12:00 - 5:00 pm | UC Grand Room
Homecoming Blood Drive
Sign up for an appointment at redcross.org using code: WCUHOMECOMING

4:00pm-9:00pm | Central Plaza
Homecoming Carnival
WCU Students can enjoy the carnival for one day for free! If WCU Students want to attend both days, an additional day of admission is \$10. Faculty and Staff admission is a \$12 pass. Community admission is \$15 for a pass. Student can pre-select tickets on mydca.wcu.edu. All other admission may be purchased at the UC Guest Services Desk on day of the carnival.

Friday, October 27

6:00pm | Downtown Sylva
Homecoming Parade
Join your fellow Catamounts, alumni, and friends as community and student floats, the WCU cheerleaders and dance team, Homecoming Nobility, Alumni Award Winners and the Pride of the Mountains Marching Band parade through downtown Sylva.

8:00 pm | Ramsey Center
Wild 'N Out Comedy Show
Featuring Conceited, Emmanuel Hudson, Rip Micheals, and Ocean from the hit TV show, Wild 'N Out. Tickets are free for WCU Students, \$8 for Faculty/Staff, and \$10 for Community. Purchase tickets at mydca.wcu.edu.

Saturday, October 28

2:30 pm | Whitmire Stadium
WCU vs Mercer
Cheer on the Catamounts as they take on the Mercer Bears at E.J. Whitmire Stadium and Bob Waters Field.

Sunday, October 29

10:00 am | Bardo Arts Center
Inspirational Gospel Choir

More information at homecoming.wcu.edu

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Fall weather stifles turnout for the CMN motorcycle ride

By Mackenzie Atkinson



Bikers ready to put their kick stand up to start their ride through the Blue Ridge Parkway.

In the crisp morning hours, bikers around Sylva joined together to raise money for the Children's Miracle Network (CMN) Hospitals Saturday, Sept. 23. The ride started in the parking lot of the Sylva Walmart and went through the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Leo Craig, the organizer, has hosted the CMN bike ride for roughly 20 years. He got involved in the bike ride because he works at the Sylva Walmart.

"It is a lot of work, but I enjoy it, I enjoy the ride, I enjoy the people," Craig said. "We do this for the kids."

Craig was expecting a higher turnout. In years past, roughly 20 bikers would come out for the ride compared to the 12 participants this year.

"I was expecting more people to come out,"

Craig said. "It's a bit chilly this morning, so I understand."

The charity event brought out new faces this year. Connie Lundgren and Richard Leonard are first-time attendees.

"Leo convinced me it was going to be a fun ride and we've haven't done much of the parkway," Lundgren said.

Lundgren values charities that aim to help



Connie Lundgren (left) and Rick Leonard (right) ready themselves for their first CMN ride with hot coffee and warm conversations.



Leo Craig's wife registers riders for the motorcycle ride and runs raffle purchases.

children because of her own children. "I had a child with special needs, so I know this money is going toward children in need," Lundgren said.

Motorcyclists paid a \$20 cover fee to participate in the bike ride and raffle prizes were offered at the beginning of the ride. The winners of the raffle were announced at different stops along the Parkway.

Lundgren said it was so cold that the planned 15-minute stops were shortened to three minutes due to the frigid 49-degree air.

CMN and Walmart have worked closely together since 1987 and have raised more than \$1 billion over the 36 years. The Sylva Walmart raised roughly \$5,500 over the course of the annual CMN campaign and bike ride.

'Respiratory viral season' is on its way

By Liam Bridgeman

Fall marks the beginning of "respiratory viral season," when viruses like influenza, Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) and now, COVID-19 are prominent. Knowing what to do during this time of the year can help prevent the spread of these potentially harmful viruses.

On Sept. 12 the CDC approved an updated COVID vaccine for anyone 6-months and older to help protect against new variations of the virus. These vaccines have been distributed to local pharmacies across the U.S.

Patients are eligible for the booster two months after their most recent vaccine. Patients are allowed to receive the booster and flu shot at the same time.

WCU's Health Services plans to work with Walgreens to make the updated vaccine available to any student, faculty or staff member on WCU's main campus. According to Pam Buchanan, Director of Health Services, the clinic is planned to take place before fall break (Oct. 16-20). Buchanan also plans to have flu shots available at the clinic.

New COVID-19 variants

New variants of the COVID-19 virus have begun spreading at a rapid rate across the world. Dr. Susan Kansagra, North Carolina's state health officer and the assistant secretary for public health at the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) says the variant that is spreading the most, called "BA.2.86" has



more mutations than previous variants.

This led to many questions surrounding current measures and their effectiveness toward rapidly changing viruses like BA.2.86. Kansagra says we can rest assured that current measures are still effective.

"Everything we have available to us, including testing, treatment and vaccines are still effective against this variant," Kansagra said.

According to both Kansagra and Buchanan, symptoms of COVID closely resemble seasonal allergies or flu-like symptoms. A light cough, runny nose, and fatigue are common symptoms of the virus. Kansagra urges patients to stock up on at-home tests so you can know for sure if you have COVID.

Tracking COVID-19

Although preventative measures are still effective, BA.2.86 and the other variants are spreading rapidly.

Since May, NCDHHS has halted tracking individual COVID cases and has shifted to tracking COVID hospital admissions, emergency room visits for respiratory viruses and COVID particles in wastewater.

Hospitalizations and emergency room visits track the severity of the illness, while wastewater tracking shows the spreading of the virus throughout communities. While hospitalizations and emergency visits in the state have slowly begun increasing since the start of August, wastewater monitoring of the virus has increased slightly but has since levelled

out as of Oct. 8.

Wastewater monitoring of COVID was developed to track trends within communities rather than focus on individual cases. According to Kansagra, this becomes an especially important source of information now that a majority of testing is performed at home.

Kansagra says, SARS-CoV-2, the virus responsible for COVID-19, is present in the waste of infected individuals. Individual wastewater treatment facilities then test the water for that particle showing the trend for the community as a whole.

The entity that controls WCU's wastewater, the Tuckasegee Water and Sewer Authority, was part of the initial pilot project testing wastewater for these particles.

Current COVID-19 Guidelines

The current CDC guidelines state the first five days of COVID are the most contagious, so patients are instructed to isolate at home. The next five days following isolation, patients are recommended to wear a mask.

According to Kansagra, those that are immunocompromised against COVID should still be cautious.

According to the CDC, COVID-immunocompromised people "have a weakened immune system [and] are more likely to get sick with COVID-19 or be sick for a longer period." The full list of medical conditions that can deem a person at-risk can be found on the CDC's website.

If an immunocompromised person contracts COVID, medications are available to treat the symptoms and prevent severe disease, particularly when treatment is started early. Paxlovid is an antiviral medication used to fight COVID. Kansagra says Paxlovid is currently being stocked by pharmacies around the country.

WCU health services does not have the medication, but Buchanan says health services can write a prescription for those that need to medication to be picked up at a local pharmacy.

COVID-19 at WCU

Buchanan says if a student calls health

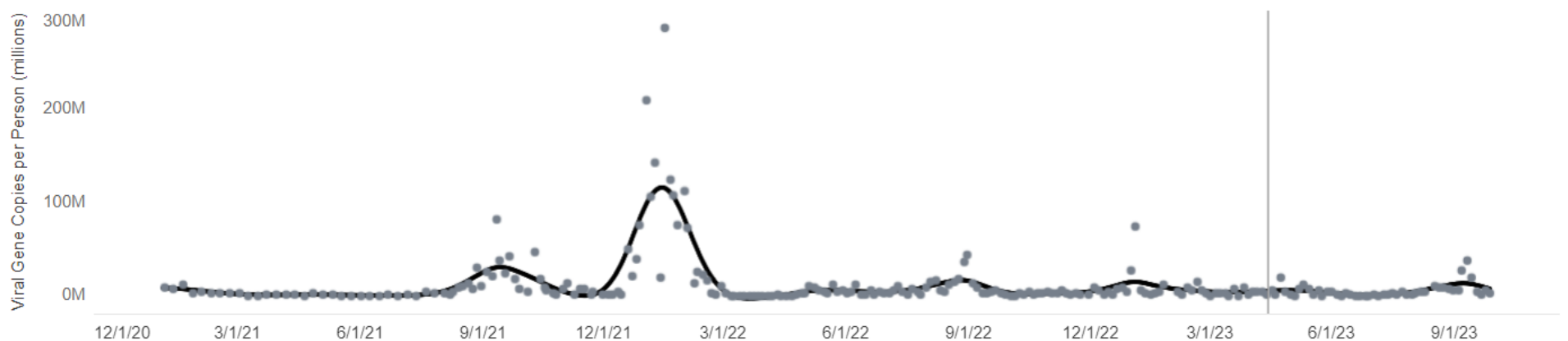


services with mild, allergy-like symptoms, they will recommend an at-home test from Bird. These tests can be found on the first floor of the building just outside of the reception desk. Many at-home test expiration dates were extended by the FDA so students should not be concerned with the expiration date on the tests at Bird.

If a student tests positive for COVID, documentation of a positive test needs to be sent to student affairs so that an email can be sent out to the students' professors, acknowledging they are dealing with a health-related issue.

Buchanan, like many other health officials, is urging students to get vaccinated against viral illnesses like COVID and the flu.

COVID-19 Virus in Wastewater Samples - Tuckasegee



Traces of SARS-CoV-2 in the wastewater samples taken by the Tuckasegee Water and Sewer Authority began increasing in late August but has since leveled out.

Students displaced by lease gap

By Abigail Quinn

Every year, misaligned housing leases cause students to be displaced. In the period between one lease end and another lease beginning, there is a consistent 20-day gap among local apartment complexes.

During this time, students who cannot return home are effectively homeless and have no choice but to float couch to couch for nearly 3 weeks. Additional issues arise in the storage of personal belongings. Storage units are booked weeks in advance, and some include a policy where units can only be rented on a day-of basis.

Caroline Hufnagle, a senior at WCU moved out of the University Suites on July 16 and

moved into Rabbit Run Apartments on Aug. 1.

“My family lives 8 hours away and I’ve become independent from them, so I didn’t have much of a choice,” Hufnagle said.

“I’m also the color guard instructor for Pisgah High School and within those 17 days was our 3 weeks of band camp which sometimes went from 11:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m. so I just did what I had to do,” Hufnagle said.

Though Hufnagle understands that it takes time to renovate apartments between



Photo by Liam Bridgeman.

tenants, it doesn’t make the situation any less inconvenient.

“It was pretty frustrating; I also was trying to work full time when all this had happened. So, the whole process was probably the most logistically stressful thing I’ve had to do since being in college. I thankfully had the help of a really kind friend, who had a big enough car and a great attitude which made a huge difference,” said Hufnagle.

Hufnagle was fortunate to have a Sylva local open their home during the displacement period, though not everyone can be that lucky. She also had to find an alternative means of storage for her belongings.

“I had to use another one of my friend’s apartments this summer while she was away working at a camp. Every single storage unit in Cullowhee and Sylva were taken. The closest storage units to be found were in Cashiers, Waynesville or maybe Franklin,” she said.



Photo by Liam Bridgeman.

The most stressful part for Hufnagle was finding a temporary home for her items. She insisted that more storage space needs to be accessible for student use.

“There needs to be more storage unit availability for students. Whether it’s provided by apartments or the community of Cullowhee or Sylva. Places insist to make people wait so long to move into their new homes, there needs to be more resources available.”

Reagan Manning was also struggling to find sleeping arrangements and storage solutions with her move from Riverwalk Apartments to Prospect Cullowhee. She was lucky enough to find a storage unit for her displacement period spanning July 30 to Aug. 5, but she still had to commute to Waynesville for a storage opportunity.

“It was stressful because I wouldn’t have a place to live for a week and didn’t have funds to spend on a hotel or anything. I couldn’t go home; my parents live 7 hours away and I have a job up here,” Manning said.

She was fortunate to stay with a friend during that time but was held back by having to lug around her clothes and personal items. “I didn’t want to feel like a burden by staying with a friend so that weighed in on the stress.”

Though many students see this fate approaching when they sign a lease, few know what happens at the apartments during the displacement period. A member of a local apartment office staff, who wished to remain anonymous, pulled back the curtain on the work that occurs during those 20 days.

“This allows us the time to fix any damages: broken doors, broken windows, holes in

walls, etc., replace any broken furniture or appliances, put down new carpets if needed, paint the apartments, have the apartments cleaned. Carpets that were not replaced are then cleaned, then final inspection,” they wrote in a text.

This takes up most of the time as each apartment needs to be inspected rigorously before a new tenant can move in. “If one of the vendors missed something, we have to contact them and send them back.”

The process repeats for every apartment until all spaces have been prepared for move in.

“We then ensure all paperwork for the new residents is completed, everyone has paid, everything is correct in our system, move-in packets are made. With the amount of rooms/apartments we have to get ready it’s super busy. At the end of the day, it’s a lot of prep work before the end of

the lease,” they wrote.

While this is an incredibly time-consuming process, many tenants enter leases unaware of this period which has led to confusion and anger.

Following a conventional housing model may be the answer. Conventional housing prices typically cover the whole apartment with no utilities. When tenants decide to leave, they give anywhere from a 30-day to 90-day notice before moving out.

With a 30-day to 90-day move out notice, more apartments would be available to rent at different periods of time. This would theoretically eliminate the displacement time gap.

When signing a new lease, students are urged to pay close attention and prepare for possible struggles before the eventual bliss of a new apartment.



Photo by Liam Bridgeman.

WCU men's golf searching for consistency to begin the season

By Mackenzie Atkinson



Senior Magnus Pedersen putts at the Golfweek Fall Challenge finishing in a two-way tie for third place over the weekend of Sept. 10. Photos courtesy of Catamount Athletics.

The men's golf team has started their season with the Golfweek Fall Challenge, the JT Poston Invitational, and the Badger Invitational in Wisconsin.

The team has a packed schedule throughout the season, traveling to Georgia, South Carolina, Texas, Tennessee and returning to Wisconsin.

Head Coach Tim Eckberg sees potential with the young team and is looking to establish consistency.

"Our roster this year is young," Eckberg said. "This year is going to be about growth and gaining experience. Finding the consistency is what the goal is for the year."

With the season still young, Eckberg has the team focusing on changes that can improve the immediate performance.

"Each player has some specific things to

work on during the off-season," Eckberg said. "However, as we prepare for the final two events...we will be focusing on wedges, short game and lag putting. Our crew can play. We've played 9 rounds so far, half have been spectacular, and half have been less than stellar, not much middle ground."

Golfweek Fall Challenge (Sept. 10-12)

The golf team finished 3rd at the Golfweek Fall Challenge in South Carolina setting a WCU school record score of 822 over the three-day event.

Fifth-year senior Magnus Pedersen excelled at this event setting a career-best with a score of 201 for the three rounds. Pedersen was shy of the school individual record of 200 set by Dylan MacQueen in 2017.



Freshman Dalton Payne tied for 13th place at the JT Poston Invitational. Photos courtesy of Catamount Athletics.



Josh Lendach carded the best final-round tally for the JT Poston Invitational Sept. 26. Photos courtesy of Catamount Athletics.

JT Poston Invitational (Sept. 25-26)

The men's golf team finished 11th at the JT Poston Invitational. The Catamounts finished with a score of 836 for the event.

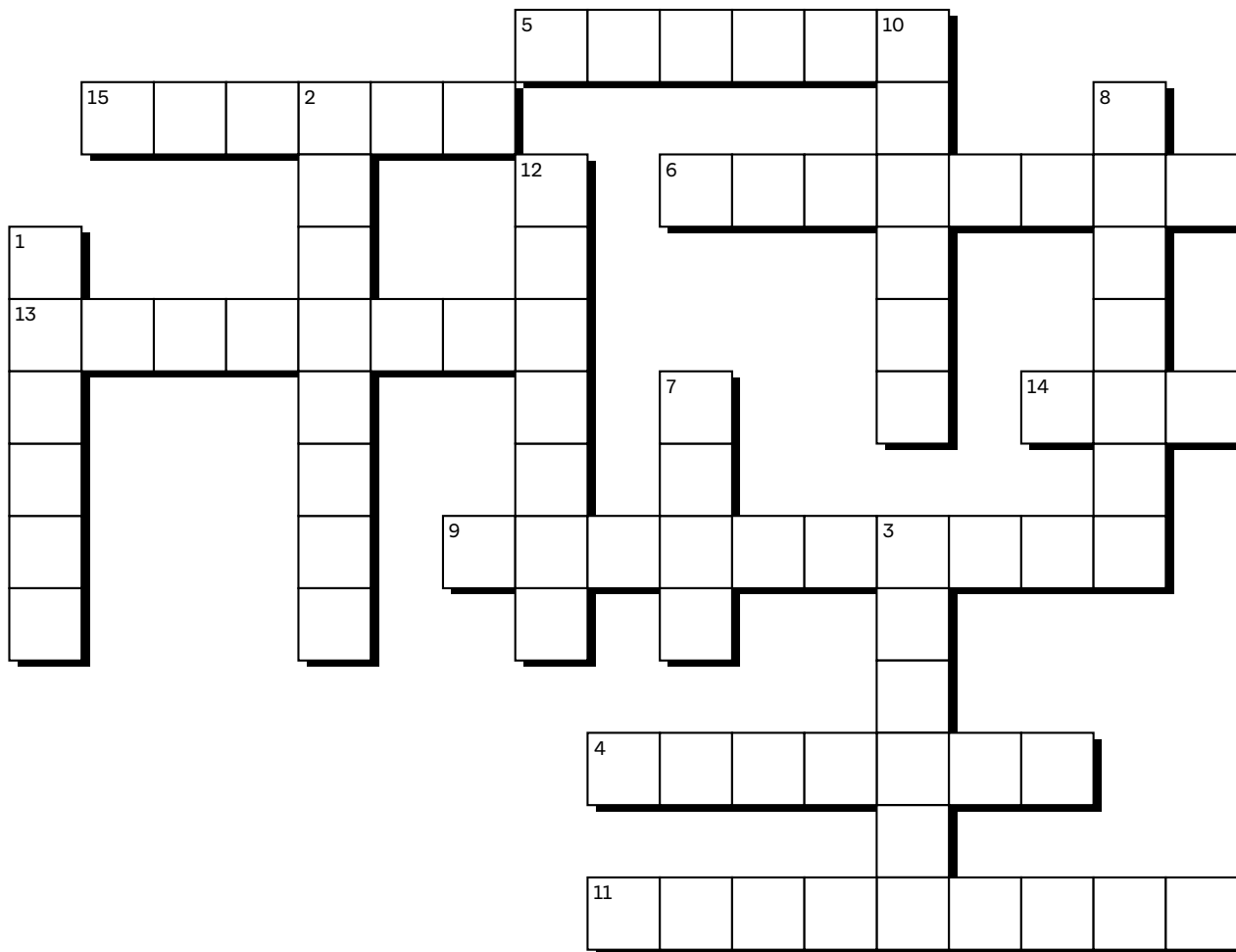
Sophomores Ivan Ninkovic tied for 16th place overall finishing with a three-round score of 210 while Josh Lendach, competing on his own unattached from WCU, finished with the best final-round tally.

Badger Invitational (Oct. 1-3)

The golf team finished 15th overall with a score of 886 in the Badger Invitational hosted by the University of Wisconsin Sunday, Oct. 1 through Tuesday, Oct. 3.

Redshirt senior Pablo Hernandez tied for 61st place with a score of 223 while Ninkovic tied for 69th with a score of 225.

October Crossword



Across

- 4. fall flavor in many desserts
- 5. oak trees drop these
- 6. well known or easily recognized
- 9. ornamental
- 11. a fall candy
- 13. produced by an evergreen tree
- 14. sticky tree fluid
- 15. turkey sound

Down

- 1. frightening, unsettling
- 2. superstition of bad luck
- 3. served during Thanksgiving
- 7. a hen's place
- 8. leafy vegetable
- 10. used to roast marshmallows
- 12. warm attire

Community, Latin culture, and sisterhood: ideals of Lambda Pi Chi at WCU

By Cora Haste



Current President Ashley Rodriguez (left) and Vice President Jennifer Garcia-Juarez (right) had a table at Valley Ballyhoo 2023 to grow interest in their organization and meet new faces.

La Comunidad, la cultura Latinas, la hermandad.

Latinx students make up the largest minority group at Western Carolina University. According to the 2022 WCU student body profile, 7.7% of students were Hispanic. This number has grown exponentially in recent years. According to the Fall 2012 Enrollment Survey, only 297 students claimed a Latinx background.

During Hispanic Heritage Month The Western Carolinian wants to highlight programs on campus that are empowering and strengthening Latinx voices. Hispanic Heritage Month starts Sept. 15 and ends Oct. 15. It began as a weeklong celebration in 1968 and was later expanded to a full month in 1988. The celebration spans across two months to align with the independence celebrations of various countries including Costa Rica, Mexico,

Honduras and more.

Through sororities, clubs, and programs of study there are many avenues by which Latino and non-Latino students can get involved and learn more about Hispanic heritage.

Latinas Promoviendo Comunidad/ Lambda Pi Chi Sorority, Inc. is a Latina-based sorority founded at Cornell University in 1988. The organization was founded with the goal of Latinas promoting community and the cultural legacy of Latina women. The organization also seeks to magnify and create opportunity for women and people of color with an emphasis on Latinx community.



Members of the Alpha Eta chapter met four of Lambda Pi Chi's founders at the 2022 national convention.

In February 2020, thirteen women founded the Alpha Eta Chapter of Lambda Pi Chi at WCU. They joined hermanas, or sisters, across multiple universities including NC State and High Point University. The Alpha Eta Chapter is the most recent to join the sisterhood.

Ashley Rodriguez is the current president of the Alpha Eta Chapter of Lambda Pi Chi at WCU. She joined in fall of 2021, finding a community within the sisterhood.

“Being around people who had the same ideals as me, looked like me, definitely made me feel a little bit more comfortable being here at Western,” Rodriguez said.

Western is a PWI, or predominantly white institution. It can be difficult for people of color to find a sense of belonging. Lambda Pi Chi offered a feeling of inclusion for Rodriguez.

“Joining Lambda Pi Chi, I’m just even more proud to say I’m a Latina at a PWI and I’m able to wear those letters and represent the organization itself,” she said.

Not only does the sorority provide a safe space for Rodriguez, but it has also helped her develop a personal network. Chapters from across the country come together for regional meetings and national conventions. These events provide an opportunity for hermanas to get to know other chapters and create connections across different universities. Like many Greek organizations, Lambda Pi Chi helps women develop their skills as professionals and networkers.

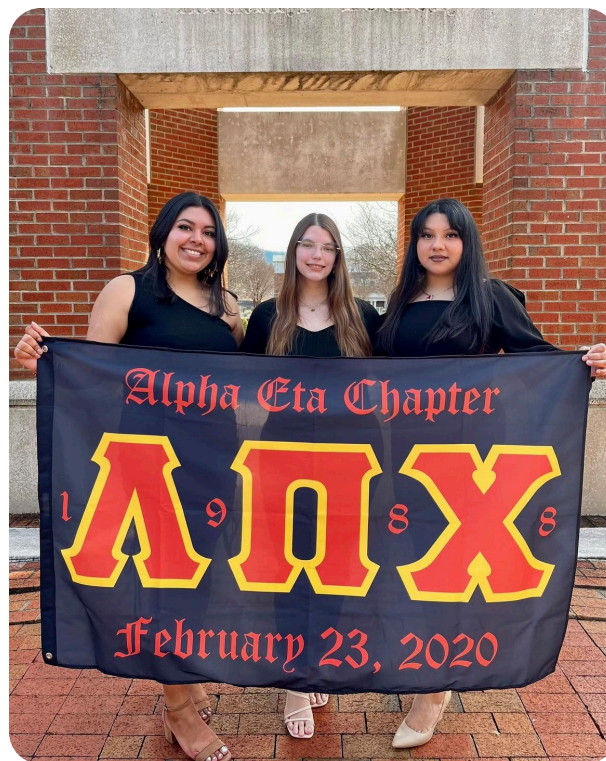
Rodriguez’s main priority is bringing more women into the sorority. The COVID-19 pandemic halted the chapters recruiting efforts. Now, Rodriguez is looking to grow their numbers this year and spread word

about the organization.

To become an hermana in Lambda Pi Chi, one must begin with a learning program called IÑACAS (Individuals Networking for the Advancement of Community, Academics, and Service) Program. This is a way to learn about the history of Lambda Pi Chi as a whole and more specifically the WCU chapter. The program has a focus on professional development and team building.

Students must complete IÑACAS in the spring semester. They can then receive and complete an intake application in the fall.

While Lambda Pi Chi is Latina-focused, it is not Latina-exclusive. All women are welcome to join. The goal of the organization is to bring cultural awareness and unity for women regardless of their background.



(Pictured left to right) Ashley Rodriguez, Cruz Adams, and Jennifer Garcia-Juarez display their chapters flag in celebration of the anniversary of its establishment. Photo courtesy of @lpc_wcu on Instagram.



“I would say that Lambda Pi Chi is my home away from home because once I actually joined the organization, I felt a whole bunch more comfortable,” said Rodriguez. Photo courtesy of @lpc_wcu on Instagram.

Lambda Pi Chi is working this semester to get their name and image out on WCU’s campus. They hosted a Lotería Game Night and Paleta sale during September to kick off Hispanic Heritage month. Lambda Pi Chi also hosted Owning Your Latinx Story where they discussed the experiences of being Latino at a PWI and sharing stories about being Latino in higher education.

“Just getting to learn more about each other is definitely important. Not only about each other but our different cultures,” said Rodriguez.

Lambda Pi Chi will also be hosting an event Nov. 1 to celebrate Día de los Muertos, Day of the Dead. There will be crafts and a discussion about the meaning of Día de los Muertos.

For Rodriguez, Hispanic Heritage Month is a time when she places extra emphasis on her Latinx roots. She is always proud of her heritage, but this month allows her time to learn about other Hispanic cultures.

Halloween Madlib

The following was (partially) created by generative AI.

In the small, forgotten town of _____, there stood an abandoned mansion atop a hill, shrouded in an _____ that never seemed to _____. Locals whispered tales of the _____ that haunted the decaying structure, and few dared to approach it after dark.

Legend had it that a wealthy family once lived there, the _____. The _____ were known for their _____, but one fateful Halloween night, during a _____, tragedy struck. A _____ consumed the mansion. No one survived, and the _____ were never seen again.

Decades later, a _____ named _____ ventured into _____. She was drawn to the mansion and its haunted history. Armed with their _____ and a

determination to uncover the truth, they arrived at the mansion on a moonless Halloween night.

As _____ explored the _____ mansion, they felt an unnatural chill in the air. They reached the _____, still adorned with tattered, ghostly _____ from that fateful night decades before.

Suddenly, they heard _____, as though the _____ had never left. A chill ran down their spine. They _____ towards the door, but were stopped...

Then, in the dim light, they saw a _____ in a _____. The _____ terrifying _____'s heart pounded as the _____ slowly approached.

Without thinking, _____ grabbed a _____ from their bag and _____ with the object. The _____ was even more terrified than _____ had been just moments before. It quickly disappeared faster than the eye could see. _____ took the chance and ran out of the mansion.

They never returned to _____, haunted by the memory of that night. The legend of the _____ mansion persisted, a chilling reminder of a tragedy that was never laid to rest.

To this day, locals avoid the mansion at all costs, for the memories of the _____ continue to lure unsuspecting souls into the deathly halls of the mansion. Maybe some horrors are best left undisturbed.



Smoky Mountain Geek Expo returns to Waynesville for 2nd year

By Liam Bridgeman



The 2nd annual Smoky Mountain Geek Expo, hosted by Geek Mountain and Red Finds Games, will be held from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday Oct. 21 at the Smoky Mountain Event Center in Waynesville. The entrance fee is \$5, and kids 12 and under enter free. Bringing two cans of food or a bag of Halloween candy grants free admission.

This year the Smoky Mountain Geek Expo will bring new vendors, artists, food trucks and a secret cosplay contest continuing the family-friendly atmosphere from 2022.

The secret cosplay contest will have

participants “secretly judged” at the expo from 1-2 p.m. To participate in the contest, at the entrance, ask for the cosplay contest sticker, then you are free to roam around the expo. Participants are asked to stay within the event center so the judging can continue without interruption. The 1st place winner will receive \$100, 2nd will receive \$75 and 3rd will receive \$50.

Food will be provided by Valley Dog of Maggie Valley and Hit the Pit BBQ.

Before opening Geek Mountain, Lee White, owner of Geek Mountain, along with Jeremy and Emily Trimnal, owners

of Red Finds Games, were dreaming of the idea of creating a comic expo for western North Carolina.

For 10 years, White and the Trimnals travelled to various ComiCon’s and pop-culture conventions around the nation.

White first got the idea in 2018 when he set up a comic book stand at indoor flea markets across western North Carolina. At the flea markets, White had the opportunity to gauge how extensive the



love for comics was in the area.

“If I saw somebody with an Avengers shirt on, I would ask, ‘how would you feel about a comic book expo somewhere in Waynesville’ and they would lose their minds,” White said. He considered those types of reactions as positive feedback from the community, so he continued his research.

After a few years of researching Haywood County and western North Carolina, White knew there was an interest, but he still wondered if people would travel for an expo.

“[Last year’s] expo humbled us. We had no idea we would receive as much positive attention as we did. It showed us that building a community for our geek

culture is needed,” White said.

The expo saw over 1200 people from 13 counties and 3 states according to White. He only expected 500 attendees.

At last year’s expo, it was common for attendees to pay more than the \$5 admission to entice White into bringing the expo back in 2023.

White sought to create a community-based convention where everyone felt safe to “let their inner geek out”.

“People need to be able to break free from the daily and put on a cape occasionally,” he said.

If the 2023 expo is as successful as last year’s, White plans to continue into 2024

and expand the size of the expo to include space for gaming and additional vendors.



2ND ANNUAL **Smoky Mountain**
GEEK EXPO
10-21-2023
WAYNESVILLE, NC

Athlete Spotlight



Nicole Azar

What does the game of basketball mean to you?

To me basketball is so much more than just a game. It has given me lifelong friendships and relationships that I would have never made if it hadn't been for basketball. It has also taught me many lessons that will help me in my life after basketball like how to deal with adversity, how to manage my time, and how to work hard. Playing the game has always been an escape for me as well. When life gets hard, basketball has always been there. When I play, I can forget about everything else going on and just enjoy being on the court.

How did your passion for basketball begin?

My mom has been a very successful high school basketball coach for over 30 years; she actually has won the most state championships in the state of Georgia and has coached many nationally ranked teams. I grew up in a gym because she was coaching. Because of that, I was always around the game, and I got the advantage of being around a basketball constantly at a very young age which helped me become a great player. I grew up watching her teams and practicing with her high school players when I was in elementary and middle school, and because of that, all I ever wanted to do was to play basketball. It is because of her that I am the player that I am, and she is where I found my love for the game.

Why did you choose to transfer to WCU?

I chose Western Carolina because I wanted to play for a coach who would bring out the best in me on and off the court and I knew Coach Hill would do that. He and the rest of the staff push us to be our best, are always available if we need them, and care about us as people and not just athletes. I love that I can be involved in many different things at WCU, get a great education, and the campus is beautiful!

What are you looking forward to in your first season as a Catamount?

I'm looking forward to getting back out on the court, after redshirting my freshmen year and having to sit half of last season since I transferred mid-year, I'm really excited to get to play again. I'm also excited to play with my teammates. We have a chance to be really great this year and I'm excited to get to play with this group. Lastly, I'm excited to represent WCU as a student athlete. I have had an incredible experience so far and am so grateful to be at this school.

What do you hope the women's basketball team accomplishes this year?

My hope is that we win the SoCon and have the opportunity to play in the NCAA tournament. We have a really great group, and I think we are definitely capable of making it to the tournament.

Answers provided by Grant Snyder, captain of the club lacrosse team.

How did you get interested in the Men's Club Lacrosse team?

I got interested in the lacrosse team before I was here. I saw that western had a club team, but it wasn't as known throughout the club sports here on campus. Then when I did get to campus, I went our table at valley balley my freshman year and signed up. Then I got elected to vice president last year and this year I got the job of president. I love it and I'm always glad I can play for this team at this beautiful university.

When does your season start?

The main season for lacrosse is in the spring but we have practices and scrimmages in the fall to see where the team is at before heading into the spring season. We have one game on October 7th and a couple scrimmages/joint practices this fall. Most of our games are in the spring and this year we will have a conference tournament at the end of the season in April.

What are you looking forward to this season?

I'm looking for to playing with these new group of guys and to see what we can accomplish this year. Also, I'm looking forward to traveling with the guys to away games and getting more home games. I am beyond excited for our conference tournament at the end of the season, But what I really look forward to is making spaghetti for team dinners on the road.

How can someone get involved with the Men's Club Lacrosse team and how much experience is needed to join?

Anyone can join the team regardless of experience or not. We have a couple guys who haven't played prior, and they have worked at it. If you come out to practice ready to work and want to learn more about lacrosse, then I think you should try it. To get involved just shoot us a DM on our Instagram or come out to the IM field 1 on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays at 5:15 to 6:45.

I would like to leave one final message. Join clubs here at WCU, there are so many opportunities to join something new and meet a group of people with the same love that you have. Whatever it may be, put your all into it and make it better than when you found it.

Club Spotlight



Men's Club Lacrosse

Student Spotlight



Elijah Lautzenheiser

Why did you choose WCU?

I chose WCU because I wanted to have a change of scenery; I live down in Wilmington, NC, and frankly, I'm not a big beach guy. I have lived there for about seven years now and have been to the beach a handful of times. But I have always loved the mountains, especially during the fall. I also already knew some people up here, which made the choice easier.

What clubs and organizations are you apart of?

I am the Secretary for WHEE-TV Catamount Entertainment, a broadcasting club here on campus. We produce bi-monthly newscasts and student-made TV shows. The types of shows vary from interview shows to game shows. We also did a dating show once. We are always encouraging our members to develop their own ideas for shows they want to make. We are working on doing a live debate show in partnership with SGA (Student Government Association), and that will be broadcast live on our YouTube channel WHEE-TV: Catamount Entertainment.

What is your job with Catamount Athletics and what do you do at your job?

I work for Western's football team as an equipment manager. What I do is set up the field for practice and

games, set up the Intercom system for the coaches on the sideline and in the press box, ensure that the players have all the gear they need, and repair broken equipment such as helmets or the cart we use to move pads around with. I also work with the special teams during practice to ensure their drills go smoothly. I travel with the team for away games and prep the locker room, take all our gear off the truck, and set up our sideline.

Where did your passion for photography come from?

My passion for photography came from my enjoyment of capturing moments in time. That's why I like doing sports photography so much; I can capture one frame of a huge play or the joy on the players' faces after a win. Those moments are what I love about the medium of photography; I can stop time in an instant and allow others to relive a moment and feel the emotions of it.

What do you want to do after WCU?

I don't have an exact plan for what I am going to do after I graduate from WCU. I want to work in live broadcast production doing audio mixing and directing, be that for sports, concerts, events, and things like that. But I will most likely start working at a news station somewhere directly after graduation. But I will also try to do freelance photography work whenever possible.

What is your job and how do you do it?

My job at Western Carolina University is Housekeeping. I keep common areas and public spaces in residential halls clean and tidy for the students and make any minor repairs needed. I work with my great team of coworkers to help keep the areas we are responsible for, the best we can!

How did you find your way to Western?

I found my way to WCU after growing up in Sylva and seeing that WCU provided great opportunities and options for me to grow for the future. Western has helped me realize how I want to steer my future and has given me the tools to accomplish it.

What are your personal interests?

I am extremely interested in cooking and baking! I do it all the time and went to school for it and plan on going back in the future to continue! Sitting down with a hot cup of coffee or tea is one of my favorite ways to wind down, especially with a book in hand. I also enjoy painting, writing my own book, taking care of animals and plants, playing and learning musical instruments

and playing video games. I also always enjoy traveling to new places and learning more about the area and people that I have traveled to.

What is your favorite aspect of WCU?

My favorite aspect of WCU is the sense of community. There is always something going on around campus and the friendly faces that will help those that need it and stand up for what is right really make WCU feel friendly and open. I have met quite a few students who are always so friendly and try to help out and make my day better where they can, and it's really nice to see that.

What advice do you have for students?

Some advice I have for the students would be to keep at it even when it's tough. I know that getting your degree can be extremely frustrating and challenging but in the end it will be worth it. Keep at it and you will eventually look back and be proud of yourself for sticking with it. Keep an open mind and help those that need it, you never know what someone else is going through so try and be as friendly or nice of a person that you can be!

Staff Spotlight



Austin Cameron

The bridge between Parking Operations and students

By Marrah Ste. Marie



Spring 2023 Inauguration. From left to right: Lauren Kerker, Maddy Blankenship, Jedediah Calveert, Alyssa Moreau, Simon Gugerli and Amelia McKinny.

Everyone makes mistakes and Parking Operations at WCU is no exception. Luckily, the Student Government Association's traffic court offers redemption.

Traffic court is made up of eight students in the judiciary branch of SGA. Their main responsibility is to reverse unfair parking tickets received by students.

Students who wish to dispute their ticket have the option to appeal online or in-person.

Online appeals are sent directly to chief justice Alyssa Moreau. According to Moreau, SGA receives about 30 appeals a week, three to five of those being in-person. When receiving an online appeal, Moreau can see what is written on the ticket, any comments left by the ticket writer, if the student has an active parking permit, a picture of the offense and any prior citations the student has received. She uses this along any written statement from the student to determine whether to reverse the citation or not.

When an in-person appeal is received, the entire traffic court reviews the same information as the online appeal, and the student is brought in to discuss their citation and answer any questions the court may have for them. Afterwards, the student is dismissed, and the court further discusses the case and votes whether to reverse or uphold the citation. Students will receive a decision via email

24 to 48 hours after the vote.

According to Simon Gugerli, clerk of court, both the court and the student benefit more from in-person appeals. “A lot of the time it just helps to have you in-person so we can understand, and we can ask questions if we’re confused about anything,” said Gugerli.

Gugerli understands how intimidating it can be for students when there’s only one of them and eight justices. “It’s not meant to be intimidating, it’s just we have to have multiple voices to make sure it’s not biased in any way,” said Gugerli.

Another way traffic court avoids bias is by having justices abstain from a case if they know the person appealing their ticket. According to Gugerli, every justice has had to abstain at some point.

Both Moreau and Gugerli agree the best part of being on traffic court is being a

bridge between students and parking operations. They both enjoy hearing students’ voices and assisting as much as they can. “Whether we reverse or uphold, we do try and help students,” said Gugerli.

In addition to ticket appeals, traffic court has other opportunities to assist students as well as parking operations. Moreau recalls the time she assisted in changing the Judaculla parking lot from commuter to residential. She appreciates how this was able to give more parking for on-campus students and reduce parking offenses.

Gugerli enjoyed the ride-alongs that parking operations offered traffic court. According to him, it was a good way to understand what goes into their decision when giving out tickets, and he was able to witness interactions with students.

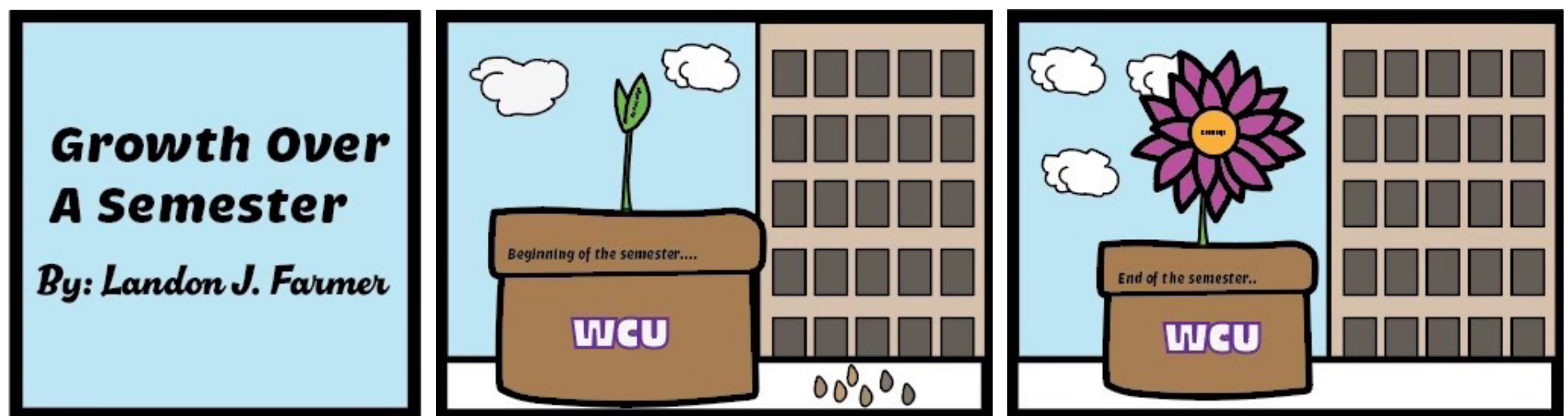
“It’s really unfortunate to hear their stories of how they’ve been berated and

treated by students. It really sucks because they’re people too,” Gugerli said.

According to Gugerli, there have been appeals refused due to the way students treated the person giving them their citation.

Moreau believes the most important way a student can prepare for their appeal is by being kind and professional when filling out their appeal and addressing the court. Though it will not change the outcome, the justices are students too and want to help however they can.

Students interested in challenging a citation must visit WCU’s citation portal. It is available through myWCU or at wcuparking.t2hosted.com. Students must enter their ticket information and select if they would like to fill out an online appeal or have an in-person appeal. Students may file an appeal within seven days of receiving the ticket.



Want an Ad?

Contact our editors at
westerncarolinian@wcu.edu

Housing issues at UNCW not a cause for concern at WCU

By Liam Bridgeman

As enrollment rates continue to rise following the COVID-19 pandemic, many UNC System schools have been forced to find alternative housing solutions for their students.

According to a 2023 study by the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, there has been an 11.2% increase in freshman enrollment at public four-year universities since spring 2021.

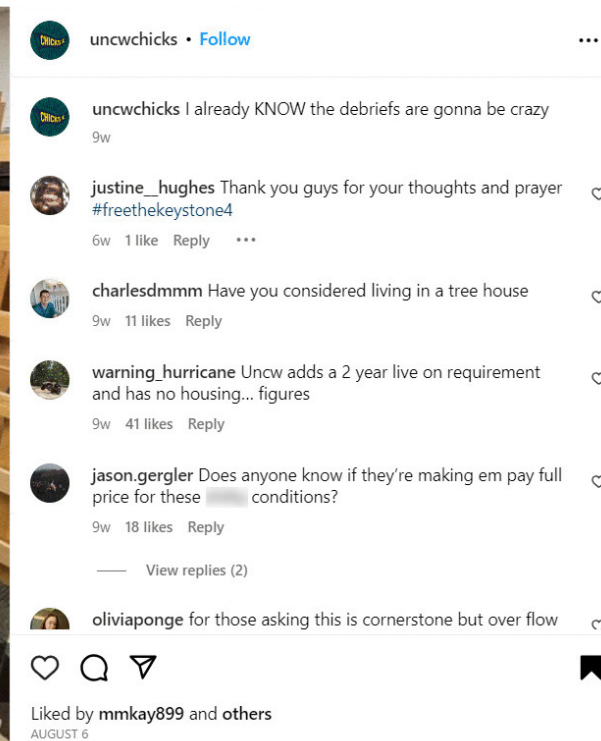
This places stress on admissions and residential living offices alike.

At the beginning of 2023, UNC Charlotte was forced to relocate about 450 students to temporary housing because of a delay in housing construction. Most students were placed in on-campus buildings with another 100 moving into a local hotel. In 2022, around 100 NC A&T State freshmen started the school year from a hotel nearly five miles away from campus.

The University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW) saw their own housing problem in fall 2023. Put simply, too many freshmen were admitted to the school.

This left Kevin Meaney, UNCW director of housing and residence life in a tough position. The university had too many students for not enough beds.

Meaney explains that universities reach their peak applicants after July 4th. After



that, the number usually declines until you reach May and deposits are filed. That decline is called a “melt”. In 2023 at UNCW, that melt never occurred.

UNCW’s next steps

When Meaney was first made aware that UNCW would have more students than beds, they reached out to juniors and seniors to entice them to live off campus to make room for the incoming class. UNCW went as far as offering rebates to students that live locally to commute to campus.

Placing students in a hotel was also an option for UNCW but Meaney disapproved

of the option because it took students away from the campus community. Moving students to a hotel also would not have made sense financially. Hotels in the Wilmington area can easily exceed \$200 per night in the summer months. Typically, Meaney said, if schools choose to place students in hotels, their best-case scenario is achieving net-zero, meaning they don’t lose or gain anything financially. This likely would not have been a possibility for UNCW.

The final course of action was to convert study rooms and TV lounges into livable rooms with beds, desks and wardrobes. From this, space for 240 students was

created. As of Oct. 3, 93 UNCW students are still living in one of these rooms.

“It’s not ideal by any stretch of the imagination,” Meaney said, though he explains, it was the best course of action for the students and the university.

How the problem occurred

The problem for UNCW happened during the admissions process.

To gain context, The Western Carolinian spoke with WCU’s Director of Undergraduate Admissions, Mike Langford.



Photo by Liam Bridgeman.

Langford said the admissions process isn’t as simple as getting applicants and hoping for the best. Langford says many admissions offices, like WCU’s, use formulas or data to predict patterns of student enrollment.

“It’s a numbers game. It’s not an exact science,” Langford said.

In UNCW’s case, the formula just didn’t work in 2023.

Meaney explained, usually, some students accept their offer letters and later decide they no longer want to attend



Photo by Liam Bridgeman.

their respective university. During the first weekend of move-in at UNCW, 28 students didn’t show up to campus. By the following Monday, that number fell to only two students.

“It’s a really strong class and they really want to be here,” Meaney said.

He said there is a concern that students in overflow housing may not enjoy their time at UNCW because they aren’t in the most ideal of living situations. In response to this, Meaney said staff are constantly checking in on those students.

When asked about UNCW’s two year on-campus residency requirement, Meaney was adamant about keeping the requirement in place.

“Any time they do research about it, the longer you stay on campus, the more likely you are to persist and graduate on-time,” Meaney said.

Meaney is referencing is a 2021 study by the Association of College and University Housing Officers, finding that first year on-campus residents remained at their university at a 2% higher rate than students that lived off campus.

Meaney had a piece of advice for other UNC System schools that could find themselves

in a similar situation as UNCW.

“You should be talking about overflow housing at first year summer orientation. Just be honest about it. Say, ‘we’re a popular school and a lot of students want to come here. There might be a situation where we have too many students and not enough beds and this is the way we handle it,’” he said.

Meaney said UNCW didn’t talk about the possibility of overflow housing during the summer because they didn’t see a reason to. This situation was very unexpected.

In response to Meaney’s advice, Langford said, WCU is not concerned about this issue occurring in Cullowhee.

“I don’t think we have to warn them about it because we won’t let it get there,” Langford said.

Langford acknowledged that the admission numbers as of May 1st were alarming but he was, and remained confident, that the number would eventually drop. It did.

As of the end of September, WCU has space for 4,760 students with 4,566 currently living on campus.

The bright spot for the UNCW students living in these rooms is a reduced price. For students staying in overflow housing in the newer residence halls, the semesterly price tag falls between \$500-\$700 less than the regular rate in that residence hall. For older residence halls, students in overflow housing are given a rebate of \$150 per month they stay at the residence hall until they are offered the chance to move out of overflow housing. No matter where they are staying, students in overflow housing are getting the cheapest rate in their building.

What a waste: the journey of uneaten food at WCU

By Marrah Ste. Marie



Imagine this, you're at the dining hall after a long day, feeling especially hungry. You load your plate with extra food, grab a salad and some ever-essential dessert. You're halfway through your food when you realize your stomach was bigger than your eyes. You finish what you can and leave the excess on a plate that is sent to the dish room. You leave with your friends, the leftover food far from your mind. It's just trash anyway, your leftovers couldn't have made much of a difference, right?

Between the dining hall in Courtyard and the dining hall in Brown, about six thousand pounds to 10 thousand pounds of food waste is produced every week.

According to Jeffery Marshall, resident district manager of Aramark, there are two kinds of food waste, pre-consumer and post-consumer.

Pre-consumer waste is produced predominantly by the kitchen during food preparation. Each food station is given a clear container for its waste so workers can see just how much food is being wasted.

Occasionally those containers will be weighed, and the wasted food will be given a dollar amount so it can be understood from a business standpoint, according to Marshall.

Post-consumer waste is created either by

food served and not eaten or by food that is uneaten at the end of the day.

At the end of a shift, the chef must determine whether food can be reworked.

If it is determined the food can be reworked, the chef must act quickly to meet the standards of critical hazard points. This means the food must immediately be chilled and brought to the proper storing temperature until it can either be served the next day or incorporated into a future meal.

Aramark calculates what is known as an acceptability factor when designing its menu. There is a 4-week menu that runs four times a semester. Each day workers calculate how much of each menu item was eaten and how much was leftover to determine how much should be served in the next cycle. Marshall said workers can accurately predict the correct portions that allow minimal leftovers after just one menu cycle.

Food that cannot be reworked is stored with the pre-production food waste in large walk-in coolers. There is one cooler at Courtyard and one cooler at Brown. The food is saved to be donated to a pig farm as feed for the pigs. “We have this pig farmer that during COVID, had some really skinny pigs,” Marshall joked.

Aramark gives back to Jackson County in more ways than one.

At the end of the semester non-perishable food is donated to local food banks including United Christian Ministry, Cornbread and Roses, Community Table and Homebase. Students are also able to contribute to donations at the end of each academic year. Those with remaining declining balance from meal

plans are encouraged to shop at the Noble convenience store and place the items in a donation box.

According to Marshall, most food waste comes from students. “If you saw the amount of... plates of food and bowls of salad untouched that gets wasted,” he said, “it has an effect.”

To show students the effect of this waste, Aramark works with Sustainable Energy Initiative to run its Weigh the Waste program once a semester. During this time students are encouraged to dump their leftover food into containers which

are weighed to show how much food is wasted. After being weighed, the food is added to a bagless trash can with the rest of that day’s waste so students can witness how much builds up. According to campus dining’s marketing manager Isabella Senatore, the voluntary program is not to shame students, but to make them aware of how much waste is produced when they don’t finish their meals.

“Don’t be ashamed from picking the food up,” said Senatore, “just be mindful of if you do pick it up, enjoy the food, consume it and try not to throw it away.”



MyWCU revision planned for spring 2024

By Stewart Butler

MyWCU is the backbone of student life at WCU. It provides a host of services for active students, ranging from registration and advising to scholarships and billing.

Recently, as explained by Chris Baxley, WCU IT lead architect and developer, myWCU will be getting rebuilt.

“The current version of myWCU is being retired by the vendor, and this retirement offered the myWCU team an opportunity to speak with students, faculty, and staff about what they wanted to see in the next generation myWCU experience,” Baxley wrote in an email.

He said the most important difference lies in the student-focused design of

the program.

MyWCU will soon offer an “action center” which acts as a dynamic to-do list for students, faculty, and staff. The “my profile” section will provide a snapshot of student records such as #920, academic program, and mailing address. “My files” will give students quick access to recent files to ease submissions and editing.

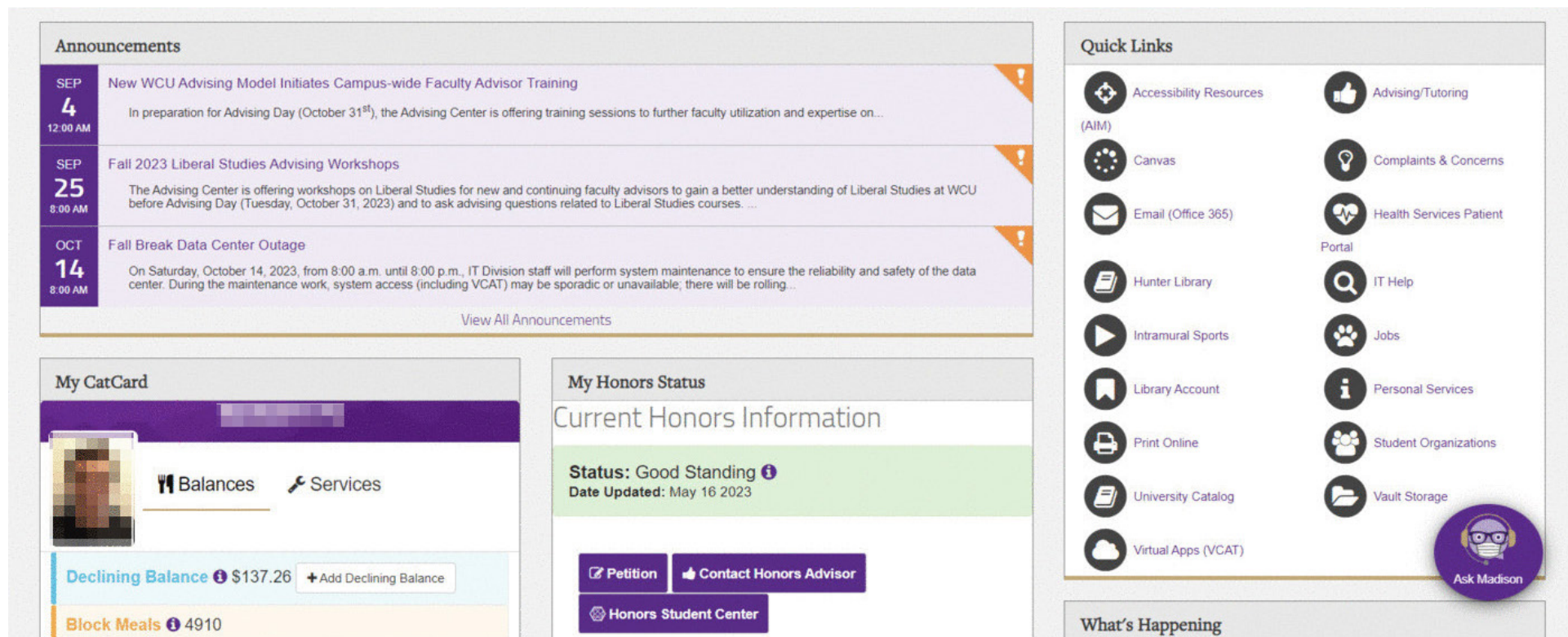
“...The new Action Center may take some time to get university processes on board. We believe, however, that once it’s established, the Action Center will become an essential communication tool across campus,” Baxley wrote.

Sophomore Erik Rich hopes the update

will improve functionality of the service. “MyWCU feels a little cluttered, maybe the update will simplify things,” Rich said. Baxley expects the next generation of myWCU to go live fall 2024. Beta versions will be accessible to select audiences during fall 2023 and spring 2024.

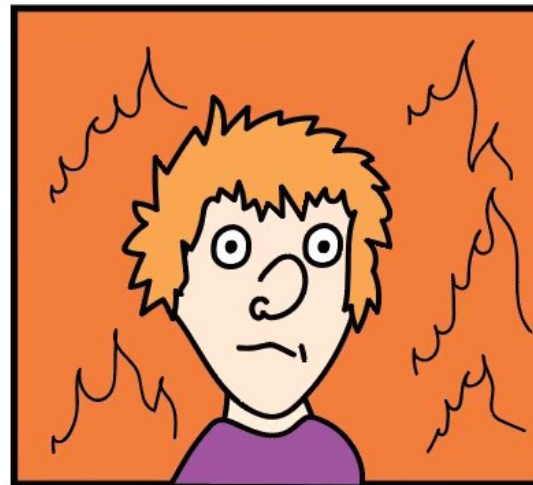
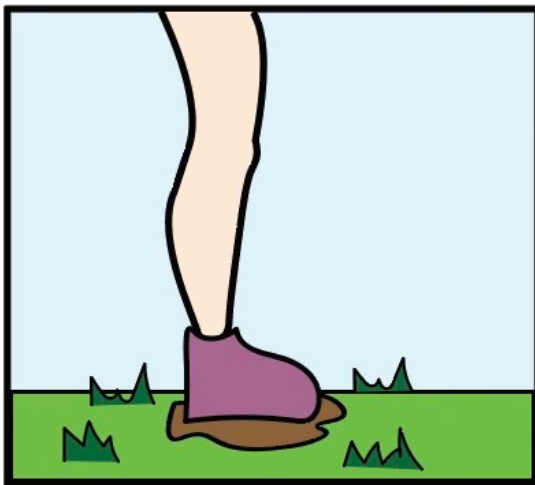
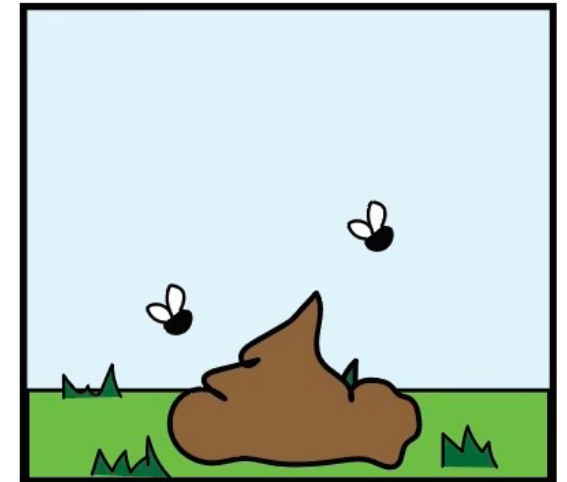
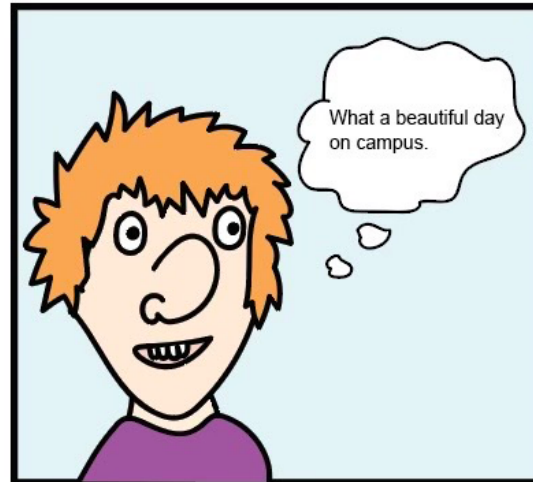
Baxley is hopeful for the future of the program. “With the next generation of myWCU, we expect enhanced efficiencies with daily tasks, additional responsiveness to items requiring attention, and generally being easier to use and more customizable,” Baxley wrote.

The WCU Division of Information Technology searches for student input to help shape the future of the service.



Pet Peeves

By: Landon farmer



Pet Peeves

By: Landon farmer

Letter Editor

from the

By Liam Bridgeman

Happy (almost) Halloween! This is one of my favorite times of the year but it's also one of the busiest, just as I'm sure it is for you as well. Hang in there. I hope you had a fun and relaxing fall break. Now we're setting up for the home stretch. It may be a sprint to the finish line but remember to take care of yourself and your mental health.

From all of us at The Western Carolinian,

we hope you enjoyed the edition! As we continue to cover the news around WCU and the surrounding areas, keep in mind you can always contact us. We are grateful to have been contacted by several students with story ideas. We like to highlight hard-working individuals and we will continue to do so. We also appreciate feedback on our work so that we know what you think!

We also enjoy ensuring everything on campus and around the area is being followed lawfully and ethically by all individuals. Although we like to keep our

eyes and ears open to everything, a staff of eight can't catch everything. If you have a story for us to investigate, please call our tipline at 828-227-2694. If we are able to help, you have my word, we will.

If you have not done so yet, please follow our Instagram @thewesterncarolinian. This is the best place to stay up to date on things happening on campus and abroad.

Have a happy Halloween and good luck to all the members of the Catamount Nobility. As always, thanks for reading!

Biblical showdown at Catafount between pastors and students

By Brandon Dover

Originally published in The Western Carolina Journalist



Crowd surrounds pastors during their visit on Sept. 26. Photo by Brandon Dover.

Screaming loud enough to hear from heaven and hell.

That was the experience when two Christian pastors associated with the YouTube channel “ChristTrekker” came to campus Tuesday, Sept. 26 to preach against, the LGBTQ+ community, and other behavior they considered sinful.

ChristTrekker describes itself as a “street preaching ministry aimed at preaching the gospel and bringing the truth to those who need it.” They regularly go to college campuses to preach their message which often spark counter-demonstrations from students.

“We public evangelists are the lightning rods,” said the pastor Rich Suplita in a livestream the following day.

Students used several methods of protest to show their disagreement with the

pastors. One student began building a “Lego Star Wars” set, which one of the pastors described as “beta behavior.” Several students broke out into a dance routine to an unknown song based off of a “Just Dance” YouTube video. Other students wore flags representing their place in the LGBTQ+ community.

“The reason why we’re here today is to protest this man and his teachings of hellfire. He is not welcome on our campus, and he is not a good person,” student Anthony DeFlorio said.

ChristTrekker has been to WCU several times and has, according to students, allegedly been involved in fights on campus, though the presence of security prevented any violence on Tuesday.

“I’m here today to show people that all Christians are not negative. I’m a Christian and I identify as LGBTQ, that doesn’t mean God hates us,” DeFlorio’s



Man builds “Star Wars” Lego sets in front of pastors. Photo by Brandon Dover.



WCU students Anthony DeFlorio (left) with the pansexual flag and Madison Overturf (right) wearing the Demigirl flag during the student protest of the ChristTrekker pastors on Sept. 26. Photo by Brandon Dover.

girlfriend Madison Overturf said.

The pastors have access to campus through WCU’s status as a public university. This allows them to use its public spaces.

“Western Carolina University prides itself on being a public university committed to institutional values, including the free and open interchange of ideas. As a public institution we have an obligation to uphold the freedoms of expression and speech guaranteed by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and N.C. Constitution. Finally, free speech is central to our educational mission,” Interim Dean of Students Betty Aspinwall said in an email.

The university is aware of the potential for violence at these types of events and keeps security personnel close by during the events.

Things heat up at Panda Express

By Marrah Ste. Marie

First responders answered a call about a gas leak at Panda Express in the Courtyard dining hall at 9:30 p.m. on Sept. 12.

According to Jeffery Marshall, residential district manager of Aramark, the gas leak occurred when the burners at Panda Express were being replaced. One new burner was not attached securely with Teflon tape causing some of the gas to leak.

A student worker turned on the burner which created a small flame to flare up. The worker immediately put out the flame using a fire extinguisher and called the fire department. No one was injured by the flame.

That night, and the following day, Panda Express was shut down for inspection and repairs. Freshens stayed open longer in its place.

Fire marshal Chris Moore inspected Panda Express that night and discovered the leak. He returned the next day after repairs to approve the restaurant's



reopening.

“We take safety seriously,” said Marshall. He assured The Western Carolinian that an incident report was filed when the event happened.

“Everything was triple checked before we started operations so no one would possibly get hurt again,” said Isabella Senatore, campus dining’s marketing manager.

According to student worker, Emma

Sellers, who worked that night, workers were startled by the incident, but management responded immediately and appropriately.



Marrah's quiz corner

What should you be for Halloween?

How will you spend Halloweekend?

- A. Partying
- B. Horror movie marathon
- C. Hanging out with friends

Choose a Halloween color.

- A. Orange
- B. Black
- C. Purple

Pick a classic scary movie.

- A. Halloween
- B. Friday the 13th
- C. The Shining

Pick a modern scary movie.

- A. IT
- B. Saw
- C. Midsommar

Which Halloween treat?

- A. Reese's pumpkins
- B. Gummy eyeballs
- C. Candy corn

Describe your style.

- A. Comfy and casual
- B. Dark and edgy
- C. Stylish and hip

You find an unguarded bowl that says take one. What do you do?

- A. Take a handful of candy
- B. Steal all the candy (and the bowl)
- C. Take one piece of candy

Backup Halloweekend plans?

- A. Pumpkin patch
- B. Haunted house
- C. Apple orchard

What was your childhood costume?

- A. Animal
- B. Zombie
- C. Superhero or princess

Mostly A's
something classic

Halloween is all about the traditions. You should go for the iconic costumes: a vampire, zombie, mummy or even Ghostface. You like it easy and recognizable.

Mostly B's
something scary

You don't play when it comes to spooky season and your costume doesn't either. You'd be best getting some sfx makeup and going as a gory clown, twisted character or a classic horror movie villain.

Mostly C's
something cute

Halloween is more about fun than being scared for you. You'd be best as something cute and recognizable like a princess, a cartoon character or even Barbie.