

THE VILLA VOICE

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Finding Your Purpose with Father Royce

Father Royce Thomas shares his calling of faith and inspiring journey to priesthood.

Maggie McHale '26

Reporter

From the Caribbean to Immaculata University, Father Royce has been touching lives through his service and work.

Royce was born and raised a Catholic in Trinidad and Tobago, where he began to consider stepping into the priesthood. Beginning at a young age and all throughout different stages of his life, he felt called to a religious path.

"At the age of twelve, I really admired my priest, the priest in my parish. I said, 'I want to be like him. I would like to be a priest,'" Royce said.

During his later teenage years, he pondered the idea of married life instead; however, by the time he had turned twenty, Royce heard his call to the priesthood again.

"I joined a group that would go around the country in Trinidad doing retreats for men, for young adults," said Royce. "I think that's when the idea came back that I could give my life to God and let my life totally be about retreats and ministry."

The fulfillment he received while running these retreats was the confirmation that led to his decision to become a priest.

At the time of his ministry in Trinidad, he met the Redemptorists, a congregation that is dedicated to missions like the ones in which Royce found his calling.

"I felt my life had a purpose that was much bigger than myself," Royce said. "It was giving myself to helping young adults, helping people, the same way I was once helped."

He firmly believes that without God's guidance, the purpose that he discovered would not have been found.

Royce said, "If I did not have that par-

ticular parish priest, I would not be here. My admiration towards him, my love for him at that time, not only as a priest, but as a father figure, was God saying you're going to do that in your life."

The impact of that singular individual was able to change the entire trajectory of Royce's life. In 2012, he came into formation with the Redemptorists in the United States.

Royce began his studies in the Bronx, New York and completed his undergraduate years at St. John's University. Upon graduation, he moved to Canada to complete his novitiate year, before his return to the United States in San Antonio, Texas.

On August 13, 2022, Royce was officially ordained as a priest in Trinidad and Tobago as a member of the Redemptorists of the Baltimore Providence. The group's work reaches from Florida to Boston to the Caribbean. He was assigned to the island of Dominica, where he would serve as a deacon, but was quickly given an opportunity to return to the United States. He received a call from his provincial, where he was offered a position at Immaculata University.

"I said yes. I said yes not knowing what I was coming to, what I was going to do. I just said yes," Royce said.

His leap of faith was well worth it, as his position in campus ministry at Immaculata fulfills him day in and day out. His days involve constant interaction with the student body, allowing him to be a sense of support for many individuals. The most rewarding part is "Being present,

and seeing the effect of being present, of listening, and of supporting," said Royce.

His work amongst the people at Immaculata has allowed him to view his role in priesthood through a different lens.

"Before I got into the role, I felt like being a priest is what I did. Now, with what I've experienced, it's who I am," Royce said.

He believes his position has given him the opportunity to continually be there for those in need, which he may not have been able to do on other life paths.

"My favorite part is the accompaniment of journeying with people in whatever they may be facing, of being there," Royce said.

One of the most powerful parts of this journeying is evident in his upbeat and interactive homilies, in which his singing and guitar playing skills shine through.

Royce said, "It brings something different to the homily. It allows people to also experience praying to God in song, which we need to do more of."

His belief in using music as a connection to the congregation is a key part of his mission to help youth expand their relationship with God. Young people's journey of growing in faith is not always an easy one, though Royce believes God is present along every step of the way.

"Don't believe that God is a mean, stern God that is only interested in what you do wrong. God is much bigger," Royce said. "God cares about you. God is invested in you, not because of what you can do but because of who you are."



Father Royce reading at Mass // Linda Ryan

"Don't be what anyone else is. Be who God created you to be. Know who you are is enough."

Royce knows during the trials and tribulations of life, people often find themselves feeling unworthy of God's love and choose to stray from Him. Nevertheless, he believes these times have the potential to be the moments we are closest to God.

"Those are the moments God wants us to come to Him. Be confident in the fact that God loves you. There is nothing that can keep you away from Him," Royce said.

Amongst the challenges and difficulties people face, he believes remembering God's love and keeping Him at the forefront of our lives is key. By reminding ourselves of this love, Royce believes we discover our purpose and worthiness.

"Be happy. Celebrate the fact that God loves you. Contemplate what God might be asking of you," Royce said. "Be different; be who you are. Don't be what anyone else is. Be who God created you to be. Know who you are is enough."

Villa Girls Catch the Spirit of America

The Spirit of America Youth Conference, a forum promoting leadership and civic engagement among students, invites Villa students to participate.

Sarah Duffy '25, Laura Esgro '25

Reporters

The Spirit of America Youth Conference is a forum for students in grades 10-12 that is committed to promoting civic engagement and leadership skills among young people. For the last two years, Villa has been offered the Tony DiPietro Scholarship, which grants any Villa student interested a full scholarship to the four-day event. Mrs. Jennifer Bowker, Chair of the Social Studies Department, coordinates Villa's involvement with the conference. "[It is a way of] getting kids out there, understanding American values, and encouraging them to get involved civically," Bowker said.

During the forum, students participate in many different discussions, heard from speakers, and ended the event with a historical tour of Philadelphia. It is also an amazing opportunity for students to



Students in front of the Liberty Bell // Annie Cellucci '26

connect with others from all over the nation.

"I had so much fun when I attended last year," Sophia Conish '24 said. "I even won the Most Likely to Become President award. It was fun to be surrounded by people who enjoyed learning about history and politics as much as I do."

Last year, six students signed up for and attended the conference. This year, fifteen Villa girls will be participating or have already done so, including Shyloh Dugan '25. She was among the first group of girls to attend the forum, learning valuable information about America's past and future.

"When going to Spirit of America, I was not expecting to learn as much as I did," Dugan said. "I not only learned about our founding fathers and the history of America, but also about how to think and how to become a future leader of America."



Students in front of a log cabin // Annie Cellucci '26

VILLA MARIA ACADEMY PRESENTS



THE SOUND OF MUSIC

MAY 17 - 19, 2024

MARIAN CENTER AUDITORIUM

www.vmahs.org/theater

Bob Kelly Visits Villa!

A first hand look into the planning process of Bob Kelly’s news segment with Villa Maria. Kendall Nevins ’24, Lauren Kurek ’25, Shay Gaglioti ’26

Reporters

Bob Kelly from FOX 29’s Good Day Philadelphia joined Villa Maria LIVE for a Spirit Week student-teacher volleyball game and to promote the ClassH-Room show featuring Villa students and teachers! This event highlighted the fun student teacher activities that Villa partakes in. The day included the volleyball game, live broadcasting with commentary, Villa’s orchestra, student artists, and a great fan section. This eventful day entailed a lot of planning by Ms. Harkins. Shay Gaglioti and Lauren Kurek interviewed Ms. Harkins to learn more about how she planned the day. To Ms. Harkins, the volleyball game was something everyone could

watch and enjoy without having to understand the game completely. Ms. Harkins stated, “Volleyball was something that people were less likely to get hurt when playing and allowed for more people to watch and understand”. However, this day was not only about showcasing just the athletics, but also illuminating Villa’s wonderful musicians and artists. Ms. Harkins shared “We wanted Villa to be highlighted in all aspects”. The cooperation needed to make sure the game was fun for everyone while also getting what Bob Kelley needed to capture. Ms. Harkins also described that it was crucial for the teachers to have flexibility with the shortened class times and special schedule.

To finish off the exciting day, Ms. Harkins organized a watch party at PJ Whellihans for Villa to cheer on their fellow students and faculty. Many friends and family came out to enjoy food and fun while also raising money for Villa through the dine and donate. In total Villa raised \$500 for our school. Not only did 106 of the faculty and students attend, the IHM sisters on campus also came to support as well. Ms. Harkins described “It was a great night and many faculty and students came out to support Villa.” This day for Villa was a success on and off the air.



Bob Kelly poses with Broadcasting students Emily Lange and Marita Irvine// Laurie Scaggs

Introducing Villa’s New Writing Center

Learn all about Villa’s new Writing Center with moderator Mr. Riggio Erin Mitchell ’25, Molly Manning ’26

Reporters

This year, Mr. Matthew Riggio was tasked with starting the Writing Center, an idea that Villa has had in mind for several years. With his help, this idea was able to come to life. Riggio explains that the mission of the Writing Center is to “develop student’s skills in writing and editing, so that they become better writers.” The writing center will help students to work on certain weak-

Did you know ... most colleges have writing labs where you can get paid to mentor?

nesses in their writing, and to develop “long-term skills.” Additionally, the Writing Center will help students find confidence within their writing and their written voice. At the Writing Center, volunteer mentors will provide feedback on how the student could improve their writing in the areas in which they need the most help. The Writing Center provides a welcoming environment for students to come and receive the

opinion of a peer on how to better their writing. Riggio said, “If a student feels as if she is lost in some way, this would be a good place for her to come in.” The Writing Center is a beneficial resource for students to improve their writing or to just have another person read over their work. Not only do students come to seek help, but students are also encouraged to become mentors in the writing center by contacting Mr. Riggio.



Mr. Riggio in Writing Center// Linda Ryan

The Ins and Outs of the World Affairs Club

New Club Alert! Experience Global Diplomacy in the World Affairs Club! Erin Foy ’26, Kara Mudrick ’26

Reporters

Have you ever wanted to debate about crucial global issues? Do you have dreams of being a diplomat? If answered yes, then this new extracurricular activity is perfect for fulfilling those dreams! Villa student leaders, Emme Magee and Molly Butler, were interviewed about their new World Affairs Club. World Affairs Club is where girls can participate in Model UN-style simulations alongside Malvern Prep and compete in regional competitions. Emme Magee ’25 and Molly Butler ’25, and Sarah Duffy work to organize these joint simulations as leaders of the club. Ms. Negro of the social studies department created the club to provide students at Villa a chance to experience Model UN-style simulations. The World Affairs Club, it is a simulation of the UN General Assembly, where students are assigned a country and impersonate that country while debating important world topics like gender equality, climate action, global health, and more. “The girls gain experience

doing types of Model UN simulations and gain a better understanding of the world,” Magee said. Most recently, Villa’s World Affairs Club collaborated with Malvern Prep’s World Affairs Club to solve a hypothetical “zombie apocalypse,” with different teams representing countries around the world and their interests. As debate buzzed and alliances formed, students from both schools had a feel for what it would be like in the UN General Assembly, even with an improbable problem. With energy pulsing in the room, the Villa girls and Malvern boys learned how to demonstrate true diplomacy and cooperation throughout their fiery conversations. World Affairs Club meets twice a month on Tuesdays and will soon be participating in a full simulation at the World Affairs Council of Philadelphia Global Economic Forum on March 26th at Drexel University. The World Affairs Club is very beneficial to everyone and is always looking for anyone interested in meeting new people, competing, and debating about global concerns.

The Villa Difference

The Class of 2024 Experiences the Annual Business Etiquette Conference Margaret Flick ’24, Mackenzie Melcher ’26

Section Leader, Contributor

Organized by Ms. Cara Walsh, the Director of Capstone, Villa’s annual Business Etiquette Conference was held at the Desmond Hotel to prepare the seniors for college and beyond. This conference was a day for the seniors to sharpen their skills in a professional environment outside of school. They learned the importance of advocating for themselves and how to be respectful with potential bosses. Villa Maria seniors arrived at 7:30 a.m. in business casual outfits in order to be fully prepared for the day ahead of them. Many Villa Maria alumnae came back as guest speakers to answer questions about their careers and give advice to the Villa seniors. “Walking into the Desmond Hotel, I was a little intimidated at what was to come,” Kendall Gilce ’24 said. “I was excited to learn how to properly act at a business event.” The Etiquette Conference was composed of Villa Maria alumnae who presented on workplace etiquette including how to be respectful, how to dress properly, and how to act confidently in an interview. After the presentation on how to be interviewed, Villa Maria alumnae conducted a mock interview. Megan Ronan ’24, appreciated hearing personal career stories from the alumnae. “My favorite part was hearing from the different alumnae,” Ronan said. “It was interesting to hear from different career fields. I liked their takes about the workplace and how to act appropriately.” Various stations were run discussing important aspects of business etiquette, including body language, posture, and more. “[The conference] taught me valuable lessons on how to be polite and show respect to others,” Gilce said. “It also taught me to think on my feet in stressful situations.” The day was memorable, and gave



Villa students with Capstone coordinator Mrs. Walsh ’04//Laurie Scaggs

great insight on how to stand out in interviews and the workplace. “Everyone stressed in their presentations the importance of self advocating,” Ronan said. “It’s important to seek out opportunities and to speak up for yourself.” This experience gave the seniors a new perspective on life after high school and their first steps into adulthood.



Sister Regina greets students // Linda Ryan



World Affairs Club// Linda Ryan

Editorial

Caffeine: Friend or Foe

Villa certainly runs on caffeine. But upon researching the effects of it, maybe having a cold brew coffee or a Celsius to start our day has lasting consequences.

Anonymous

I can confidently say that every single Villa girl has a caffeine obsession. No one can tell me otherwise- it's a Villa thing. If you walk down the path before 7:58 a.m., you're sure to find someone holding a Celsius can, Dunkin, or Starbucks. I decided to go on a deep dive of whether caffeine is our friend... or our enemy. Let's get started.

I first became Starbucks obsessed when I was in about fourth grade ("Can I have an iced decaf caramel macchiato with skim milk please?"). That was my initiation into the world of caffeine... and it was literally a decaf coffee. I remember my sixth-grade science teacher explaining that caffeine is, in essence, a legal addictive drug. I was freaked out when he said those words, and I vowed to never drink caffeine in my life. Womp Womp.

Now that I drive to school, I pass two Wawas and a Starbucks. I'm guaranteed to stop once a week to any of those locations (between us it's typically a lot more than that...please don't tell my dad). Just like most Vila girls, I fall victim to Starbucks and their blonde lattes. I was shocked to find out my non-coffee go to (grande strawberry açai lemonade refresher with light ice and no strawberries) indeed has caffeine. So I am left wondering, does the rest of America run on caffeine the way Villa seems to?

So what is caffeine actually? Funny you would ask that question! Caffeine is a drug, both natural and man made, that basically speeds up your entire nervous system. Consuming it typically increases alertness and awareness. More colloquially, you won't fall asleep! According to the American Medical

association, around 85% of adults consume 135 milligrams of caffeine daily. This is equivalent to 12 ounces of coffee. Most adults get their caffeine intake from coffee mostly, sometimes even soda. I could definitely spit out several more facts about caffeine and throw a bunch of numbers at you, but here's the thing that stuck out to me the most: caffeine has actually become a marketing concept in our society.

Let's look at Celsius. This cool and hip drink that's only been around for a few years draws buyers in. Why? The "Vibes."

The special flavors all have fun and jovial names. "Tropical Vibe"? Sign me up! Of course I want to feel like I'm on a beach when I'm actually in Malvern on a gloomy morning at 7 a.m. When you first pick up the bottle, it seems so healthy. There's very few calories, and no sugars. It even burns body fat. But then when you read the fine print... BAM! There's close to 300 milligrams of caffeine. A standard cup of coffee has about 90 milligrams of caffeine. Let that sink in. One single can of Celsius is equal to three cups of coffee. The thing is though... no one seems to bat an eyelash at this number. 300 mg? Perfect for studying all night long. But no. 300 mg is absolutely hazardous to your health.

I think it also needs to be addressed that there have been very recent deaths linked to over consuming caffeine. The specific culprit? Panera's charged lemonades. I need to say it... I loved that drink! I used to drink a large one any time I went to Panera. But not anymore! After a 21 year old and a 46 year old sadly passed away after drinking them, I'm too scared to do so anymore. In fact, after both families filed a lawsuit against Panera, you can longer self-serve the drink. I



Graphics by Sarah Nardone '25

also need to say that both people had underlying heart conditions. The absurd amount of caffeine alongside known heart conditions was sadly lethal.

My official and final take is this: caffeine when consumed in healthy moderation, there's absolutely nothing wrong with it. The issue is created when we drink caffeine in crazy and unhealthy numbers (such as 300 mg). I would say the exact same thing about carbs, sugar (aspartame, too), even carbonated drinks. I really wouldn't recommend taking health advice from me, but my closing statement is that balance is key!

I've definitely laid out some facts for you. So next time you're at Wawa or Starbucks, do me a favor and see how much caffeine is in the drink you're holding.

The Hills are Alive with the Sound of Villa Theater

Villa's theater program, the Marian Masques, is excited to embark on a new theatrical journey in their upcoming production of the "Sound of Music" this spring.

Siena Fontana '26, Madelyn DiBonaventura '26
Section Leader, Contributor

Led by Mr. Robert Cucinella, Villa's Marian Masques have put on a number of memorable theatrical productions over the years and are currently preparing for their upcoming spring show:

"The Sound of Music." The theater program has developed significantly over the past few years in particular, and the decision to perform "The Sound of Music" reflects the tremendous progress the program has made.

"We chose this show because we thought it was a great fit for the girls we knew we were going to have this year," Cucinella said. "We wanted to do a show [that] showed the growth of the program."

This show in particular has a deep connection to the Villa community, as nuns play a substantial role in the musical. Similarly, the IHM sisters at Villa are a special part of our campus life.

"We're trying our hardest to give homage to the IHMs throughout the production," Cucinella said.

"Not only will the musical showcase the immense hard work and talent of the girls, but will it highlight an aspect so close to Villa's heart as well."

As the musical draws closer, the girls have been rehearsing and getting into the mindsets of their characters.

"A lot of the girls over the years have found a new passion inside the theater program."

Possessing a theater background himself, Cucinella has taken pride in helping Villa students grow and develop as actresses and explore their love of theater.

"A lot of the girls over the years have found a new passion inside the theater program," Cucinella said. "I am very proud of [this]."

In addition to rehearsing together, the members of the cast have had the opportunity to grow closer together as a group through activities outside of school.

"This year we're doing a lot of new things, like cast bonding," Mooney said. "For instance, some of the Marian Masques went to Philadelphia to see "Mrs. Doubtfire" last weekend. That was definitely a bonding experience."

Through participation in this excursion, the students have been able to meet girls from other grades they otherwise would not have had the opportunity to meet, and have created friendships over a mutual interest.

The Marian Masques are set to perform their first show on May 17 at 7 p.m. The girls have put in an enormous amount of effort into preparing for this production, and it promises to be a night to remember.



SHOWTIMES

FRIDAY, MAY 17 @ 7 P.M.
SATURDAY, MAY 18 @ 7 P.M.
SUNDAY, MAY 19 @ 12 P.M.

For more information and ticket sales visit vmahs.org/theater



Spring musical reveal// Mr. Cucinella



Marian Masques at Mrs. Doubtfire// Mr. Cucinella

Esports at Villa: Fun, Friends, Firsts, and Future

Mr. Erik Magness discusses the first-ever Villa Open.
Kyla Gallon '25, Monica Young '25

Section Leader, Reporter

The Villa Open took place in the dining hall of the Theresa Maxis Student Union. Students were asked to sign up to participate in this first-time event.

Since its creation in 2018, the Esports program, after a collaboration with the Tech Club and the Marketing Club, has begun to grow at Villa. Starting with Minecraft competitions and expanding its reach in recent years, Magness has always been thinking of new, innovative ideas that would help the program thrive.

“Last year, after we had another successful year, I thought, ‘Let’s try to grow it one more time,’” Magness said, referencing the numerous Flex Time events in the 2022-23 school year that featured games such as Just Dance and Super Smash Bros. “With the help of Mr. Polsz, Mrs. Ryan, and Mrs. Scaggs, we brainstormed this past fall to figure out what we could do. We came up with the idea of having a winter season of esports, where we have three intramural events at Villa and end it with the big Villa Open as a grand finale.”

Mario Kart is a highly popular racing game series that has been out since the 1990s. It has been played for decades and is recognized worldwide. When asked why Mario Kart was chosen for the Villa Open, Magness mentioned the fact that even if a person is not the most skilled player, they can still have lots of fun playing Mario Kart. Magness said, “Mario Kart is well known, is nostalgic... and it is free and available in many different formats.”

There were multiple prizes that both competitors and fans could win. Fans could make posters to cheer on the competitors and had the opportunity to receive door prizes. Competitors also

received prizes such as plushies, gift cards, and stickers. Additionally, the winner of the tournament was awarded a trophy.

The Villa Open tournament had members from the Villa community and was also opened to students from Devon Prep, Malvern Prep, and Shanahan high schools.

The tournament followed a “Swiss-style system” of competition. “We’ll create a draw, and people will get matched up and start playing Mario Kart,” Magness said, describing the logistics of the competition. “If you win three races, then you’ll be put up into the finals, and once you lose three, you are out of the term.”

The future of Esports at Villa is bright. One hope Magness has for the coming years is to add the game of Fortnite as part of the winter league for Esports, along with the continuance of many aspects of the program that have already found great success.

“I want to grow Esports at the rate that the members of our community want to participate in it,” Magness said. “I always want to make available the next thing...The Villa Open could continue and possibly grow, and I would like to see interscholastic sports where we bring some competitions from other schools.”

Mario Kart fans were very excited for the first Villa Open. Villa founding an Esports team has been greatly anticipated among the Tech Club and Esports team, and the Open truly fulfilled expectations.

It was an event filled with fun and energy. Magness said, “I’m looking forward to the energy and excitement of having a bunch of people come together and play, plus having people come together and enjoy an activity they love.”



Winners Circle / Darren Polsz



Game Day / Darren Polsz

Spring Prom Prep: Dresses, Tans, Nails--- Oh My!

A look into how Juniors and seniors are preparing for the anticipated day in April.
Maura Gallagher '25 , Payton Denny '25

Reporter, Section Leader

To most, prom is more than just a singular night involving dancing, food, and memory making. It is instead an event that can encompass weeks of planning. Juniors and seniors are preparing leading up to April 12.

“I do not [have a dress],” Ella Durante '24 said. “I am a major procrastinator and will probably end up getting a dress the week before.”

McCollum said, “I do not have a dress yet but will most likely get one from Bloomingdale’s or Nordstrom.”

Meyers, however, is prepared to wear a very special dress. “I am very excited about [my dress].” Meyers said. “I will be wearing my mom’s senior year prom dress. I am very excited to be wearing my mom’s dress on my senior prom night.”

Each senior has their own plans for tanning. Durante and McCollum will make an appointment at a tanning salon while Meyers decided to do it herself.

“I like to get my tan at Luminosity,” said Durante. “I get it either the night before prom or 2 days before.”

“I am not planning on getting a spray tan,” said Meyers. “I may self-tan with Jergens, my favorite!”

Meyers is also planning on getting her hair done and doing her own makeup. Durante and McCollum are both doing their own hair and makeup for the upcoming prom!

Even though the seniors all prepare in their own ways for prom, they all are very excited.

“I am excited for everything,” Meyers said. “Especially the music and party bus rides.”

“I am looking forward to our last

dance as a class,” McCollum said. “Of course, I always look forward to seeing my friends in the junior class.”

Annabel Shin '25, Claire Devine '25, and Willow Holloway '25 have also been in the process of making prom every bit worthwhile. An organized schedule to ensure everything runs smoothly is crucial for these juniors.

“I am getting my nails done a few nights before,” Shin said. “I am getting my hair done Friday morning, doing my makeup, and then making sure I arrive at pre-pics early.”

“I think getting ready will definitely be a whole day affair,” Devine said.

“I’m getting my hair colored two days before prom, and I’m also getting my hair done,” Holloway said. “Obviously I am going to get my nails done.”

Holloway does not plan on doing a full spray tan but rather a soft tan herself.

“I am most excited for hanging out with my friends, making memories, and just having a good time,” Holloway said.

Each junior is looking forward to what the night has in store and they are ready to experience their first Villa prom.

“I am looking forward to our last dance as a class.”



Allie and Emily Lange pose for a picture / Lifetouch



Prom magic/ Lifetouch



Dancing with friends/ Lifetouch

The “Sephora Kid” Epidemic

Increasing numbers of young children in Sephora stores are sparking nationwide conversations about beauty standards.

Annabel Shin, Sophia Snyder, Siena Fontana

Section Leader, Reporter

The popular makeup and skincare store, Sephora, has recently been overrun by a different demographic than its usual target: girls under the age of twelve. This trend of “Sephora kids” is making appearances on social media platforms, especially on Tiktok.

The videos portray young girls, some even at the elementary age, “flooding” Sephora stores. Some are even seen making rude remarks to Sephora employees, provoking negative reactions from viewers.

There’s even speculation on the internet that the company will put in place rules to bar these kids from coming and into the store.

Stephanie Shin, a parent from the class of ’25, has noticed this epidemic. “As a frequent Sephora shopper who is often running errands, I have noticed a

significant difference over the past year in the amount of younger children I see in the stores.”

With the rise of influencers, girls are being exposed to the world of makeup and skincare at a younger age than usual.

Did you know... Investment banking company, Piper Sandler shows teens spent 23% more on cosmetics, skin care, and fragrance in 2023 compared to 2022?

Regardless of age, we are seeing the rise of the “Clean girl” and “no makeup makeup.” Both aesthetics have been endorsed by both celebrities and makeup artists alike. Beauty standards, such as having clear skin and picture-perfect makeup, have prompted young girls to flock to Sephora in pursuit of gaining the looks they view online.

Riley Meriwether ’25 said, “My sister owns more expensive make-

up and skincare than me, including many products from Drunk Elephant. She’s twelve; she doesn’t need that.”

Due to the influence of social media, many children, including Meriwether’s sister, are growing up much faster than previous generations. Meriwether said, “I think [the trend] will make her grow up way too fast, taking away her childhood a little bit and making her seem older than she

is. Live your 12-year-old life, please.”

This trend of younger children shopping at Sephora stores not only affects our current beauty standards, but it poses potential health risks as well. Many popular products, from brands such as Drunk Elephant and Glow Recipe, use strong ingredients, such as retinol and hyaluronic acid. These products can be harmful for young skin, causing irritation and leading to long term effects.

As stores a

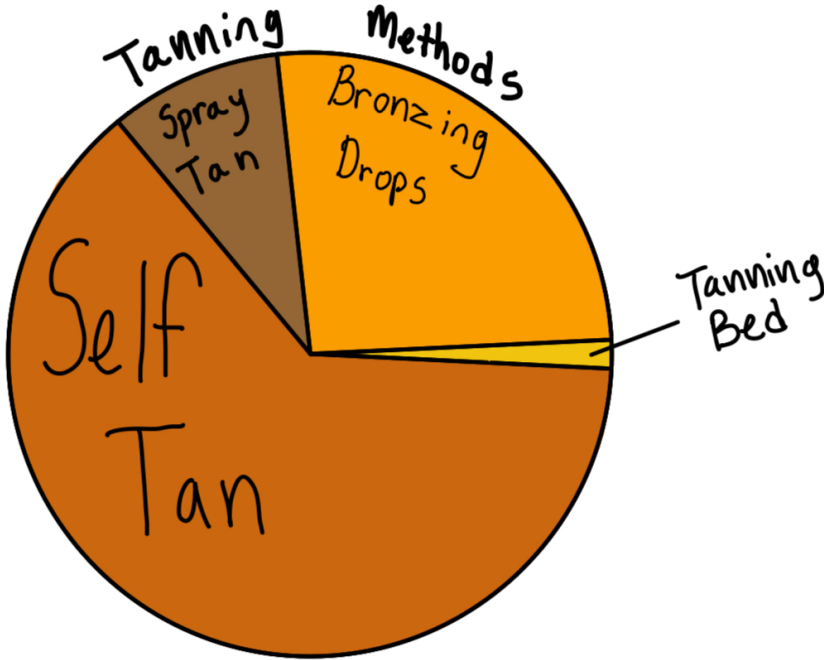
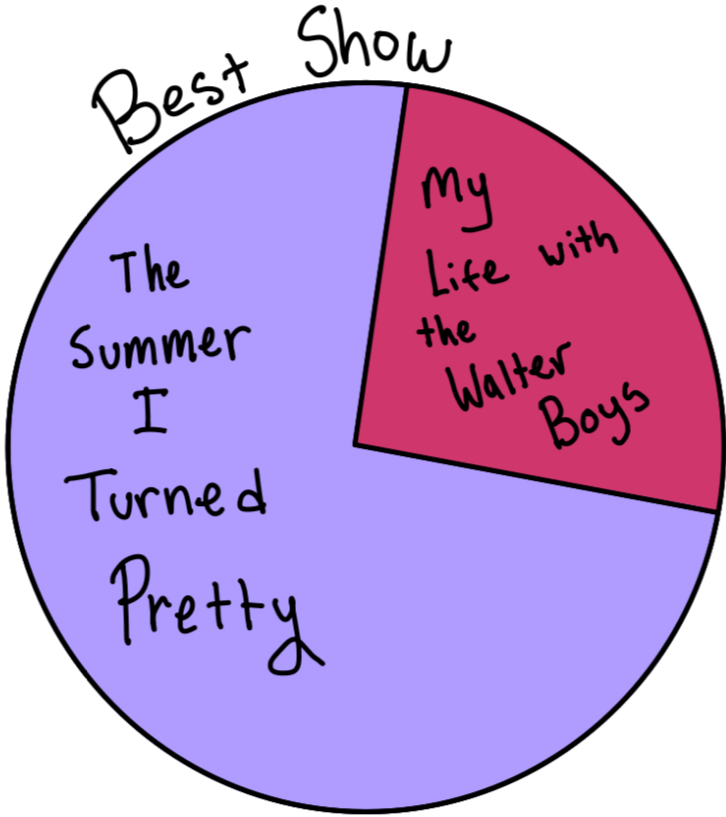
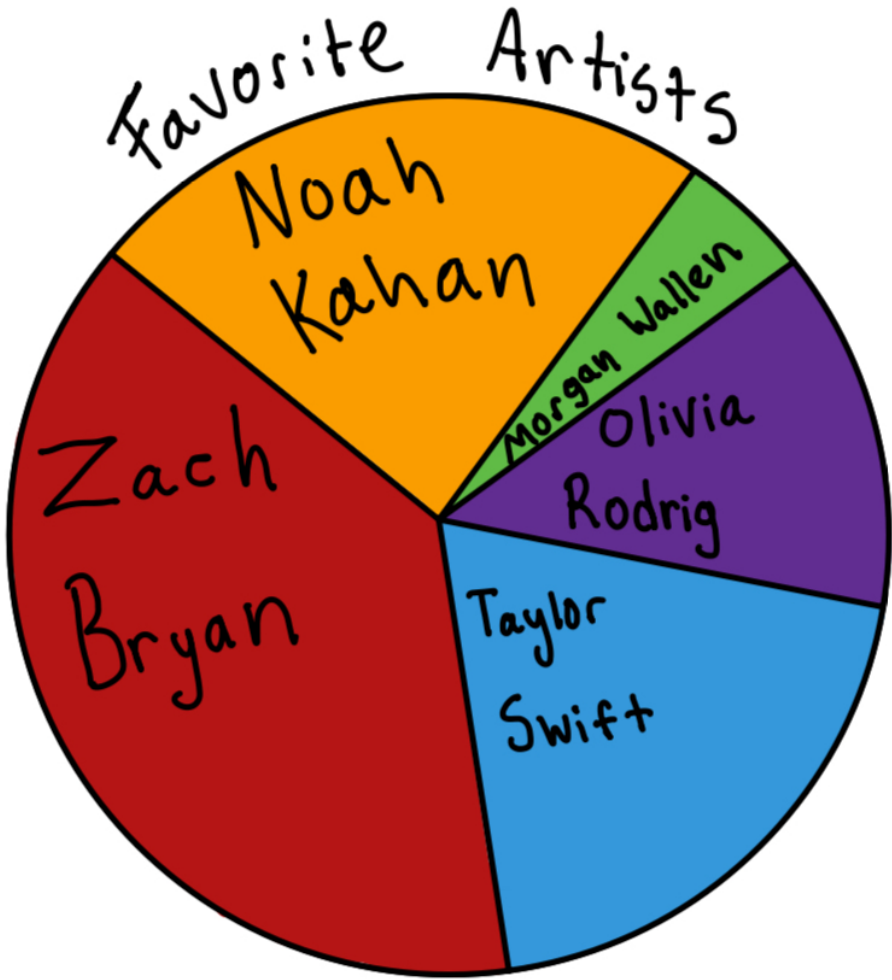
Sephora welcome new demographic, this situation raises bigger questions beyond the potential of imposing age restrictions in their stores. Is there a point where employees and parents should intervene? It is clear that this trend is more than just about makeup; it shows how society and beauty standards are changing.



WHAT'S THE BEST TANNING METHOD? WHO'S OUR FAVORITE ARTIST? SITP OR MLWTWB?

Mia Ceritano ’25
Section Leader

Graphics //Paige Devine



But Did You Read the Books?

Juniors Rosie Dugery and Emma Cassalia share their opinions on the new Percy Jackson TV show and how it compares to the original books.

Rosie Dugery '25, Emma Cassalia '25

Reporters

Spoilers Ahead!

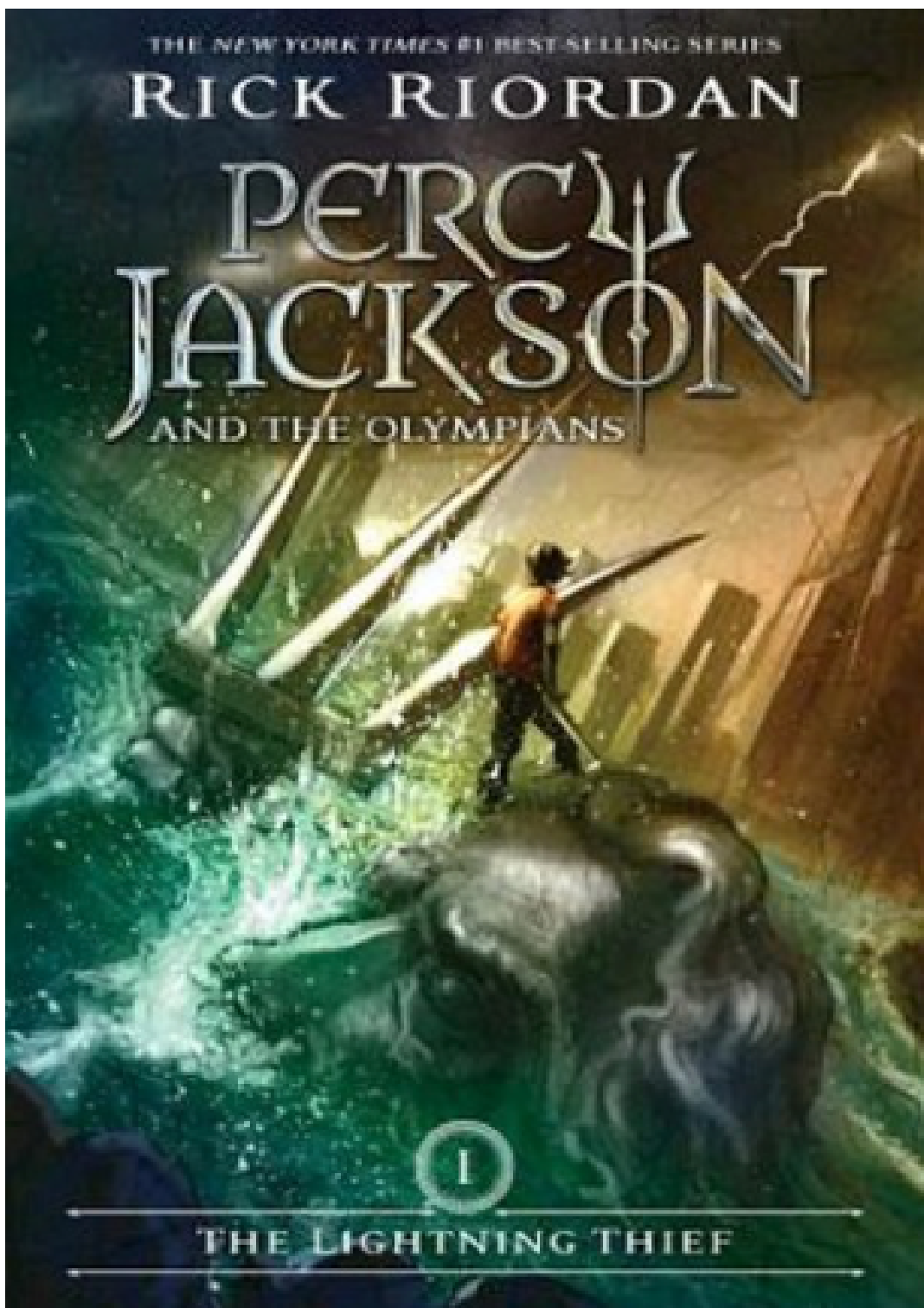
While Percy Jackson and the Olympians is a wonderful display of characters and world building miles ahead of the Percy Jackson movies, it left fans like ourselves, who had read the books, wanting more and altogether disappointed.

The first issue was that the show was not entirely book accurate; it missed huge aspects of characters, plot lines, and world aspects. For example, Annabeth is supposed to be a massive supporter of architecture. As Athena's child, she has a deep desire for perfection and precision that one can only find through architecture. The show never explicitly mentions her love for architecture and leaves that aspect of her character out. This is a detriment to her and her character development as it plays a large role in other books.

Another aspect of the book that was missing from the show were parts of Percy and Grover friendship. Percy and Grover were supposed to be best friends, which to its credit, the show portrayed well. However, there are aspects of their relationship that are missing. For example, after Percy falls out of the Arch, it is supposed to be Grover that hugs him. This was a sweet portrayal of their friendship in the books that showed how much they cared for each other, and how worried Grover was about Percy. Furthermore, it is supposed to be Grover who tells Percy that his mother is still alive, not Ares. Although these switches are small and seemingly unimportant, they both showed how much Grover loved Percy and how he would do anything for him. They showed the true value of a satyr protector who is also your best friend. This aspect was lost in the show, and it will be needed later on.

The next issue with the show was that it was too fast paced to truly capture the magic of the books. The immense detail and beauty that is portrayed in the books was somewhat skipped over and not portrayed correctly in the show, simply because of a lack of time. Each episode ranged from 30-50 minutes with only 8 episodes. The book, however, is 416 pages long with 22 chapters. The details and mastery that is written on each page cannot possibly be shown in such a short amount of episodes. Therefore, there is a lack of world building and introduction to the magical world of the half-bloods.

Furthermore, due to its fast pace, the fight scenes and interactions with mythical creatures are much shorter, making it impossible to fully grasp the magic of the world. For example, the fight with the Minotaur in the beginning is much longer, as well as the fight with the Fury at Yancy. The descriptions of these monsters are packed with details and mystery, building a perfect myriad of mythology on a page. The show is simply unable to capture that, regardless of the CGI budget. The fight with Ares at the end is also longer in the book, it includes more moments of Percy learning to use the ocean. Our last qualm with the series is that it changes little things. The book was amazing the way it was, albeit some things needed to be changed in order to adapt it to the screen. For example, the water nymph gave Percy four pearls in the show, but in the book Percy was given three. It later works out so that no plot points were changed, but it made it so that details,



such as Annabeth not being present when Percy and Grover meet Hades, were altered.

Another aspect that was changed that was not necessary was the fact that Percy and Annabeth's relationship is supposed to be a "slow-burn." Percy and Annabeth in book and season one are 12 year olds and are not looking for any sort of romance. While this is true in both the book and show, the show exhibits many aspects of feelings that are starting to build for each other. As sweet as that was to watch, it isn't accurate to the books. In the first book, they are friends and nothing more. In fact, it is known that Annabeth

had strong feelings for Luke at that time. Therefore, as the show made seemingly minor changes, those changes put together created an alternative to the book that was truly not as good as the source material.

Percy Jackson and The Olympians is a captivating show that brought an entire world, loved by many, to life on the big screen. Despite any issues we had with the show, we have high hopes that it will continue to get better. It has a very talented cast with clearly fantastic source material. As long as it sticks to said source material, it will be a show to remember.



Percy Jackson// Disney Plus

Adventures at Devon Prep: An Observation

Four Villa students recount the fun things they learned and witnessed while spending the day at Devon.
Sophia Conish '24, Dani Strid '25, Ainsley McCollum '24, Dakshta Arora '24

Copy Editor-in-Chief, Editor-in-Chief, Reporter, Contributor

Board members of the Quill and Scroll Honor Society, Dakshta Arora, Sophia Conish, Ainsley McCollum, and Dani Strid had the opportunity to visit Devon Preparatory School. Once inside, they were greeted by their hosts for the day and the Devon Dialogue moderator, Samantha Desch. After a brief introduction and some photos, they headed off to their first periods. Throughout the day they heard the motto “I thought you guys would be more composed when there are girls here, but nope,” several times from both teachers and our tour guides.

The first thing we learned is that Devon operates on an eight period schedule, as opposed to Villa’s 4 blocks. That took a while to get used to. The schedule is the same every day, so students see all their teachers in one day. Periods are 45 minutes long, with a three minute break in between. Devon’s campus is one main building, so it takes less time to walk to class in comparison to Villa’s four buildings.

During third period, they have advisory, which is similar to Villa’s FlexTime. It is not necessary to sign out to a teacher; students can seek academic help from whomever they wish, socialize, or go to a club meeting. This period is 30 minutes long, and it seemed that most students used it to either hang out with friends or participate in an activity such as Star Wars club (We planned on attending, but it was canceled!). After the advising period, Sophia, Dakshta, and Ainsley were fortunate to have gotten a campus tour from another senior who had a study hall (shoutout to Luke for showing us the beautiful campus). One interesting part of Devon’s campus is the Chemistry lab and the Creative lab. Both are housed outdoors, with a cottage-like structure. From what we have heard, these are places that the students enjoy the most.

Fifth and sixth periods are each an hour long because lunches run simultaneously. Sophomores, juniors, and seniors eat during 6th period. We enjoyed the longer lunch period, which was twice as long as Villa’s. The cafeteria food was good, all of the boys seemed to really enjoy it, some even remarked that it was their favorite part of going to Devon. All of us unanimously agreed our favorite was the strawberry lemonade! Unlike Villa, students were allowed to eat in many different places. Popular locations included “the 500s” (the Art and Music wing) and the student lounge in the mansion.



Switch Day Students at Devon Prep// Sophia Conish '24

Very few students actually ate in the cafeteria. Another crazy thing we learned was the fact that at Devon Prep classrooms aren’t specifically assigned to a subject area, as Dakshta attended an English class and an economics class in the same classroom.

Dakshta did accidentally sit in on her opposition class for the Devon symposium, however she was discovered quickly so no harm was done. She even quoted that the Calculus class she attended helped her prepare for an upcoming test in her class, but it was also the funniest class she attended all year. Ainsley’s most memorable class was Music production. The class was very engaging and fun. The students shared written observations from poems, and began to create lyrics. The class helps students create their own music.

Dani and Sophia headed to a Writers You Should Know Class. This was by far their ultimate favorite class of the day. The material was very interesting and they thoroughly enjoyed the popcorn reading, which they participated in (“Popcorn Villa girl one”).

The school day ended at 2:45 p.m., and then the girls headed home. Overall, they had a lot of fun experiencing a day in the life of a Devon Prep student.

In each of the classes they attended, every teacher was welcoming and excited to have us there. All of the boys, especially our tour guides, were extremely helpful in including us and navigating through each class. We would all like to thank Pierce, Dom, Austin, and Charlie for a fun and awesome day. 10/10 Hospitality.



Switch Day Students at Villa//Laurie Scaggs

Senior Sophia Conish Answers Your Questions! YOU ASK... I ANSWER!

Can I still have fun at prom without a date?

Hey girl! Long story made short... YES! Prom is very fun with a date don't get me wrong...but there's so much more to prom! You have the fun part of dressing up, getting your hair and nails done, and then all the fun you'll have dancing on the bus and on the dance floor. Prom is a great time to spend with your friends. It's easy to seem left out if you don't have a date. In the wise words of Miley Cyrus, "YOU can buy YOURself flowers."

Hi Sconish, my sister is graduating (definitely not you), and I am going to miss her a lot. What should I do??!?

Hello random stranger who I probably don't know. You could probably call her a lot. She's probably going to miss you a lot too. For the time being, maybe try to spend some extra time with her (like when she sends you funny TikToks...you should watch them and respond). Your sister probably won't be too far, so you can always visit her in person. She'd probably like that as much as you!

I've got a joke about construction... but I'm still working on it!

Ok I really like this one!!!! When I cut my hair in December, so many people were like, "Omg, Sophia, did you get a hair cut?" In return, "I was like no... I actually got them all cut!"

...And that's what Sconish says!

Winter Sports Recap

Over these past few months, winter sports at Villa have seen continued success as a result of their hard work.

Abigail Ferry '25, Kiley Delfra '26, Sophia Tray '26
Reporters

The Villa basketball team defeated West Chester East High School in the district semi-finals. This win allowed them to advance to the district championship. The big win got even better when the clock ran down and the team ran over to Coach Kathy McCartney to celebrate her 700th win. This feat also commemorated her 35th year coaching the basketball team. The early morning practices for swim and dive were enjoyable as the team was able to spend time together laughing, learning, and making memories. Junior Payton Denny '25 the hard work of all her teammates. "It was a very good season. We got second in our league championship and third at districts. We have a strong group of swimmers, but our freshmen really added a lot to our team this year," Denny said. The swim and dive team started and ended their season strong. The 200 and 400 freestyle relays are moving on and will be competing in States. This season, many participants of track and field achieved many goals and made remarkable progress. Junior captain Ra-



Emma O'Hare '24 on court // Lifetouch



Villa diving // Linda Ryan



Ella Tacelosky '26 competing in high jump // Lifetouch

chel Metzger '25 is proud of the entire team and all their accomplishments. "The season was very fun," Metzger said. "My favorite memory was going to the meets with my friends." The team is looking forward to their spring season and cannot wait for it to start. The paddle team, led by senior captains Leah Machita, Charlotte Bohnenberger, and Tess Land, recently finished up their fun-filled season. "The season went well," Machita said. "A lot of our girls had great individual wins and we definitely had tons of fun spending time with each other and getting to know each other better." Not only did this paddle team grow as a team, but also as friends, which makes playing sports worthwhile. "Our first season, we had about 12 girls, and two years later, we had over 50," Machita said. "It was so exciting to have so much interest and so many girls come together."



Villa cheerleaders at a basketball game // Lifetouch



Student Spotlights



Steps Towards Victory: Molly LaRosa's Marathon Journey

LaRosa, a senior bound for the University of Alabama, ran her first-ever marathon in Gulf Shores, AL.

Dani Strid '25, Emerson Harmatuk '27
Editor-in-Chief, Reporter

On January 28, 2024, Molly LaRosa '24 ran The Big Beach Marathon in Gulf Shores, Alabama. After weeks of training and hard work, she finished her race in just over five hours and placed third in the Females 1-19 group. "I finished in five hours, instead of my goal of four and a half," LaRosa said. "That was because in the last month [before the marathon], I didn't train at all, which is why the marathon didn't go the way I wanted it to, but I was proud of myself for finishing." This was LaRosa's first-ever marathon, but she wasn't unfamiliar with what it took to run 26.2 miles. "My mom is a marathon runner," LaRosa

said. "After soccer season, I wanted something to keep me in shape." A demanding training program consisting of varied distance runs, lifting, and a half-marathon helped LaRosa prepare. "I started training 18 weeks out, where I ran three days a week and would go to the gym once a week. I had two days where I would run four to five miles, and one long," LaRosa said. "The farthest I ran in training was 20 miles." For LaRosa, running has always been an enjoyable way to focus. "I love running because it helps me to

clear my mind and not have to think about everything so much," LaRosa said. LaRosa's time and dedication to her sport were evident in her performance and the Villa community could not be prouder.



LaRosa crossing the finish line // Molly LaRosa '24

Did you know...

According to Run-repeat, approximately 0.05% of the United States population has completed a marathon?

Student Spotlight: Sophie Mesiarik '26

Reaching new heights as a student athlete, Sophie Mesiarik has accomplished amazing things with a positive mindset and hard work

Riley Meriwether '25, Eleni Kalisperis '26
Editor in Chief, Contributor

Villa Maria's diver, Sophie Mesiarik '26, broke Villa Maria's diving record with a score of 247.88 points at the swim and dive meet against Merion Mercy Academy in this winter's swim and dive season. The previous record of 242 points was set by Mary Cate Doughty '23. Mesiarik, a student athlete, who also dives for Germantown Academy Dive Club, showcases a balance of school and diving while maintaining a positive attitude that aided in her success. "I was shocked! I was very excited as I was hoping to do well at the meet. I

am so happy to get to be with such a great team and great coach" Mesiarik said. Mesiarik faced a challenging season as she advanced in the difficulty of her dives; nevertheless, she kept a positive attitude when competing under stress. "I was a bit nervous because this season I have learned some harder dives," Mesiarik said. "I get a little bit more nervous competing them, but I wasn't expecting anything different; I just was trying my best and whatever happens, happens."

Mesiarik also balances life as a student athlete and stays organized during the school week. She feels staying organized is just as important as training in season. "It's very busy, but you have to stay very organized and definitely prioritize what's important," Mesiarik said. "When I get home and in the time I have before I leave for diving, I use that time for my school work and to be as productive as I can." "If you put your mind to it you can do anything; you just have to believe in yourself," Mesiarik said.



Skye Malloy, Kaleigh Wagner, and Sophie Mesiarik // Linda Ryan



Submissions

Submissions from any students in the Villa Maria community are encouraged, specifically letters to the editor and feedback. Submissions must include name and email verification, and anonymous submissions will not be accepted. Not all submissions are published.

Mission Statement

The Villa Voice is a student-run publication created to inform the Villa Maria community with truthful and relevant information. We strive to give students a safe outlet for their opinions and accurately represent the student body of Villa Maria.

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