Get Up to Dress Down

TESS VALKOVSKHI
Staff Reporter

Students attending Charlotte Catholic High School must wear a uniform consisting of khaki or navy pants or shorts, a polo, and a school-approved sweatshirt. Occasionally, administration will permit a “dress down day” where students are not required to wear the uniform.

Last school year, the administration refrained from giving students dress down days, in light of the 2020 presidential election. They were concerned that clothing featuring political content may cause conflict among students. This school year, dress down days will make a return.

On a dress down day, though students are not required to be in uniform, they still have to follow a dress code. Students are permitted to wear jeans; uniform-style pants of any color; sweatpants; shorts, skirts, and dresses at or below the knee; any appropriate uniform-style pants of any color; Students are permitted to wear jeans; uniform-style pants of any color; sweatpants; shorts, skirts, and dresses at or below the knee; any appropriate top; and all footwear.

To participate in a dress down day, students must pay at least one dollar. Activity passes are acceptable proof of payment for all dress down days. Clubs will typically organize dress down days throughout the year to raise money for different causes. The first dress down of this year was Wednesday, September 22 for MiraVia, a pregnancy care center in Charlotte, NC.

Although there is not a calendar of all of the dress down days for the school year as of this edition, dean of students Mr. Conrad said, “ideally we will have a dress down day every month, probably on a Friday.”

In addition to dress downs for the entire student body, in past years Charlotte Catholic has allowed seniors to wear their “senior t-shirts” with jeans or uniform pants on the last day of each school week. Last year, seniors also had the option to purchase “senior sweatpants” to wear with the t-shirt on those days. Mr. Conrad has confirmed that seniors are currently submitting designs to be voted on later by the entire class, and that seniors will be allowed to wear them on the last day of each week this school year.

Mr. Conrad said that if some senior leadership came to him requesting sweatpants, he’d be happy to order them.

Another Charlotte Catholic tradition involving dressing down is the senior Halloween costume day. The last school day before Halloween, seniors are usually given permission to “dress up” instead of “dress down” for the holiday, so long as the costumes are kept appropriate and not distracting. When asked about his thoughts on the possibility of having that day this year, Mr. Conrad said that it is “not even on the radar.”

Having been deprived of dress down days for over a year, students are excited for their return. Junior Rian Mofu said, “in a school where we have to wear uniforms every single day, dress down days are the one chance where we can truly express ourselves.” She said that she and her peers missed dress down days and already have the first ones marked down in their agendas with outfits ready to go.

Dr. Leahy applauds student advisors as they “take initiative to form clubs, and then they have the opportunity to share their interests and learn how to plan and execute the activities of the club.”

Students interested in creating a club completed the formal club request form and returned it to Dr. Leahy for further approval. Current student and teacher advisors were asked by the campus ministry and administration to prepare any decorations prior to the occasion.

On club day, students walked around the halls to designated club tables while advisors of each participating club promoted their club at their tables. Students were allowed to register for up to ten clubs.

An ample amount of the student body participated and student advisors pitched their clubs to peers. The halls were bustling with enthusiasm from teachers as well. This year’s club day could be deemed a success, not only for its turn-out, but also for returning liveliness since Covid-19.

CLUB DAY CONCLUDES AS A SUCCESS

FERNANDA RAMIREZ
Staff Reporter

Charlotte Catholic’s annual club day was held in person for the first time in two years. The event took place on September 22, directly after school from 2:35-3:05 pm on the first and second floors.

All CCHS clubs are supervised and approved by the campus ministry and administration. 66 clubs participated in the event. Clubs cover varying interests such as arts, sports, faith, service, and more.

Dr. Leahy, who currently oversees the clubs, said, “Clubs at CCHS are an excellent opportunity for students to get involved with others who share the same interests,” and that they encourage students “to take a healthy risk and try something new.” Students are also able to create their own clubs if none pique their interest.

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Nerf or Nothing

Staff Reporter
ANDREW O’BRIEN

Despite the pressures that come with another school year, students find ways, on and off campus, to engage in entertaining activities with classmates. This year, students are entertaining themselves in a large, student-organized Nerf War referred to as “Paranoia.”

Paranoia is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as the “suspicion… of people or their actions.” The objective of the game is simple: hit the players on the opposing team with a Nerf bullet before they hit you. The game, played by juniors and seniors, has been a frequent topic of discussion at school for the past few days. Gavin Banks, a junior, described the game as “thrilling and a real adventure.”

While a competition organized by high school students might be chaotic, the game is actually quite organized. In the senior class, a total of 64 students are divided into 16 teams; in the junior class, a total of 32 students are divided into eight teams. Each team of four faces another team of four in their respective grade. The first team to have all of its members eliminated by the other team loses the matchup. Each team follows a strict set of rules to prevent cheating.

The rules of the game are what make it so enjoyable. The most important rule of the game is that a player can attack an opponent almost anywhere at any time. While participants aren’t allowed to be targeted at any school-sanctioned events (i.e., school day, football games, etc.), any other locations are deemed “fair game.” This looming threat of elimination creates paranoia among the participants, hence the name.

The rules also require all players who haven’t been eliminated at the end of the week to engage in an old-fashioned Western standoff with members of the opposing team. This way, the game ends quickly and still keeps participants on their toes.

Another rule of the game mandates the use of a participant’s “SnapMap.” To compete, players agree to share their location on Snapchat at all times. This way, players can locate a target easier (but also be located easier), thus adding to the element of suspense.

Students like Henry Cusack and Michael Spicer recognize the game’s benefits beyond its entertainment value. Junior Henry Cusack said that “winning the game requires teamwork and coordination” and that “lack of communication means losing.” Junior Michael Spicer said the game was “not only fun but also helpful… it teaches us the value of teamwork.”

In addition to the emotional reward provided by the games, the players have something else to compete for: money. The junior team that wins Paranoia at the game’s end will be awarded $80 in-hshit-$20 for each teammate. The winning senior team will be awarded $640, $160 per player. Not a bad prize for a Nerf War.

Thus far the game has lasted only a fortnight, but it has created quite the buzz. Both juniors and seniors enthusiastically play the game. All of them are eager to see who will win, and who will be left with nothing.

Features

October 4, 2021

Concerts Come Back to Charlotte

Staff Reporter
MADELYN BRONSON

Although musicians continue to express themselves and entertain fans via social media during the pandemic, it’s obvious their true passion is performing live, as evident by the impressive lineup at venues across Charlotte this season.

Charlotteans of all ages are excited about these concerts. September and October seem to be booked with big time artists, including Maroon 5, Lil Baby, Trippie Redd, The Rolling Stones, Pitbull, the Jonas Brothers, Zac Brown Band, and Playboi Carti.

Being safe on tour during a pandemic is important to artists. Both the Maroon 5 and Trippie Redd concerts required proof of full vaccination or a negative covid test to attend, while Lil Baby didn’t require a health check of any kind.

There were significant differences between the Maroon 5 and the Lil Baby concerts despite these events being separated by only a few days. Maroon 5 had a smaller crowd, required more social distancing, and performed on a weekday. Lil Baby’s concert, a weekend show with a huge crowd, attracted many Charlotte Catholic students, and required little to no social distancing. Despite Covid-19 restrictions, there have been great turnouts to all these shows since no one could attend live music events for over a year. People are glad to have concerts back, and artists are hitting the ground running. As a result, almost a dozen concerts have occurred and more are planned.

Lil Baby attracts a teen crowd, including Charlotte Catholic students, because he is a younger artist, and his style appeals to teens. Sophomore Frank Brewer said, “I personally went to Lil Baby because I wanted to do something fun and entertaining with my friends.” He also said he thinks “Catholic students went because it’s been such a long time since people have been able to get out of the house in large crowds and still feel safe about Covid.”

Another sophomore, Summer Basrawala, went because she heard “a lot of people were going and there was hype around this concert.” Summer also said, “it was built up not only by Catholic, but multiple other schools; then communication and social media spread the word around.” Some students were interested in the music, but it seems that the majority went for the social interaction and experience.
ELLEN MICHAELS
Staff Reporter

The Mecklenburg Area Catholic Schools’ previous Special-Ed program, MAPs (Modified Academic Program), has been revamped and is now called the Options Program. This program will continue to help students continue learning from kindergarten through high school, and provide them with many options for the future.

The MAPs program has been in place at Charlotte Catholic for 10 years. With the Options Program, the school has “revamped the curriculum and added a teacher assistant,” said Dr. Leahy, director of the program. One new addition includes peer mentors with the Best Buddies program.

The main difference between special education and learning support, both of which the school offers, is that special education entails “modifications instead of accommodations to their curricula—included in both regular classes and separate instruction,” said Dr. Leahy, whereas in learning support, “the kids are in the regular classes, and there are accommodations to help students learn the way they learn best.”

In the future, all the MAPs programs at MACS will be switched to the Options Program.

MACS Offers New Options

In this program, kids come to homeroom and attend classes. Some attend all classes every day; others attend part of a class or do not attend every day. Each student has “different learning goals than the other students in the classroom,” said Dr. Leahy, and as of now, five students at Charlotte Catholic are a part of the program.

Photo Credit: charlottediocese.org

MEG FRANTZ
Staff Reporter

What constitutes a celebrity? Even as recent as four years ago, planting oneself in the sea of names such as Leonardo DiCaprio, Beyoncé, and Harry Styles seemed impossible. That is, until the popular app, TikTok, created an environment where a person could post a short video and become a worldwide sensation overnight.

The app uses algorithms to decide what content is sent to its users. TikTok released a statement in 2020 detailing what goes into consideration when a video is posted. The idea behind this algorithm is to promote a “more personalized experience,” and so far, it’s working.

User interaction determines content recommendation. The algorithm uses behaviors such as how long a user watches a video or what videos a user shares with their friends to tailor their “For You Page” to their interests.

Even for a simple app, the small details make a huge difference. Choosing a popular sound, picking trending hashtags, and creating an entertaining caption are what makes or breaks a viral video. If a person prioritizes these particular details, they can easily move their way up the TikTok popularity chain and put their name next to celebrities with massive amounts of followers.

All of this can be intimidating for a new creator that wants to reach a larger audience. “How can I even compare to other people on the app? Will my videos even go anywhere?” TikTok alleviates these concerns in their statement: “While a video is likely to receive more views if posted by an account that has more followers…”

Neither follower count nor whether the account has had previous high-performing videos are direct factors in the recommendation system. In doing this, TikTok can provide a platform for small creators, perhaps even those with only 100 followers, to be in the same lineup as people who have 100 million followers. Their talent is more accessible by the public, meaning they can promote their creativity without having to worry about building up a large base first.

Names such as Charli D’Amelio and Addison Rae have circulated around the internet for the past couple of years. Slowly but surely, they used the algorithm to their advantage, gaining 100 million and 84 million TikTok followers respectively. This has allowed them to branch out into other sectors of the entertainment industry, including movies, TV shows, and the music industry.

So what does this mean for big celebrity gatherings such as The Met Gala? The now-famous TikTokers walk alongside actors and actresses on the red carpet and sit next to them at dinner parties. Some criticize this movement, such as sophomore Kennedy Dawson, who said that “being a celebrity now is based upon following and numbers instead of talent.” Others look on the positive side, and see this app and how it works as a way to get their passion out into the world in an accessible way.

Social Media Stars Step Into the Spotlight

Ultimately, the Options Program will prepare students and provide, as the name suggests, different options for the future. “There are programs in colleges—like REACH, at the College of Charleston that these students could attend after high school,” said Dr. Leahy, “so our goal is to prepare them for life after high school either through a college program or to live independently or to work.”

The program will continue to help promote the mission of providing a Catholic education to students of all intellectual ability. Allowing MACS students to follow this program all 12 years of school provides a sense of consistency and comfort for them.

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Where Were You?

TESS MULLIGAN
Staff Reporter

Where were you? It’s the haunting phrase that is said every time 9/11 arises in conversation. For some, it is a crystal clear memory and for others, it is an event of the past. These stories that people share are important. They motivate us. They teach us. Most importantly, they connect us. The enduring emotions of 9/11 still echo today. Some teachers at Charlotte Catholic have been kind enough to share their memories of the attacks on September 11th. Mr. Tony DiDonato, a Social Studies teacher, was teaching at Charlotte Catholic on the day of 9/11. He remembers that Carol Eastwood, a Spanish teacher, watched the news from the cafeteria and then began informing everyone on the second floor hall of the plane crash. However, he said that “no one knew what to make of it” and that no one had a large reaction. By the second period of the day, the faculty and students knew what was happening and every class had turned their TV on.

Watching the news live, Mr. DiDonato remarked that he believed there were probably 30,000 people in the building, but fortunately, he was incorrect. Mr. DiDonato recalled being called into a school assembly where everyone was reassured that they would be ok. He talked about the following days where cars were being decorated with flags. Two months after 9/11, Mr. DiDonato visited his mother-in-law in New York where he said that “there was still debris everywhere” and that “the places where the buildings had once stood were still smoking.” The poster that teachers received in remembrance of 9/11 still hangs on his wall, right behind his desk.

Though she was not a teacher at Charlotte Catholic at the time, Mrs. Joanne Winters, a math teacher, lived in New York in 2001. Having just dropped her children off at school, she was getting ready to take her son to preschool when she got a call saying school was cancelled. She remembers pacing around her dining room table and deciding to go pick up her kids along with her friend’s kids. She lived in a four block wide beach community in the city that was filled with firefighters, police officers, and people that worked in the Twin Towers. From her home, she said that she could see the Towers and the “huge cloud of black smoke in the sky.” Unfortunately, 90 people from her community died. There were “months and months of funerals.” She remembers it being a “surreal time” in which everyday you just had to get up, keep working, and deal with the grief. However, despite the great tragedy of 9/11, Mrs. Winters remembers the “incredible outpouring of support.” She said that God was “accompanying [her] in [her] grief,” that he was “all the people who volunteered. He was all of the people who reached out across the country.”

Like Mr. DiDonato, Coach Kevin Christmas worked at Charlotte Catholic on the day of 9/11. Teaching a health class, he was informed that a plane had crashed into the tower. The class turned into a discussion, as some kids talked about their parents who were currently in New York. Coach Christmas’ own father was stationed in the Pentagon, so while students were worrying about the welfare of their family, he was too.

He talked about the fact that there were no cell phones at the time, so “nobody could get in touch with anybody,” and that as a result, he was not sure of his father’s safety. When the second plane hit, he and his class watched. They saw people jump out of the building and when you witness such events, “you start saying prayers.” He said that he felt “vulnerable” but despite the horror of the day’s events, the way America reacted is what sticks with him. His biggest takeaway from 9/11 was the sense of community and unity that America embodied. Charlotte Catholic immediately began looking to help those in need.

While the events of 9/11 have scarred America’s and Charlotte Catholic’s history, Coach Christmas put it most eloquently: “In crisis situations, we become very, very strong.”

The Family That Built the World Trade Center

GRACE GILRANE
Staff Reporter

In the Summer of 1970, Bob Koch took a job working for his family business in between his junior and senior year of college. The Karl Koch Erecting Company had been commissioned by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey to provide the steel for a project in Lower Manhattan.

The project was the construction of the World Trade Center, including the twin towers. On July 19th, 1971, during a formal toping out ceremony of the South Tower, a final steel beam was raised in completion. Painted on that piece of steel was the name “Koch.”

The Twin Towers would be one of the Koch family’s most notable contributions to construction. When those towers fell on September 11th, 2001, Bob Koch recalls that he “didn’t think that was possible.”

Mr. Koch’s wife, Pamela, was doing the dishes when a news alert came on her television. An airplane had flown into the North Tower of the World Trade Center. First, she called her husband. He was in the office at Carteret, New Jersey and said that his employees working on the Manhattan Bridge called and said, “Hey, the World Trade Center is on fire.”

After the second plane hit, Bob “got a call and cried,” and said, “I don’t know if it’s a disaster in Lower Manhattan.”

The New York City department of transportation called to get all Koch Skanska employees off the bridge because they were shutting down traffic into the city. One of the workers on the bridge was 22-year-old Bob Koch, one of Koch’s four children.

The youngest, Tim, was in the 8th grade. He said that he can “remember walking through the doors and hearing someone … say ‘I heard a plane just flew into the World Trade Center.’ In a way that was like it was an anecdote.” He said he didn’t realize the scale of what had happened and that it wasn’t until he saw someone crying after a schoolwide meeting that it began to occur to him that people may know someone in the towers.

Tim’s mother, Pamela Koch, would come to know many of the people who lost a loved one on 9/11. After the passing of her sister, she felt called to become a grief counselor, and was certified in bereavement counseling in the 1990s. On the morning of September 11th, she was asked to stay at her son’s school in case anyone needed her help. She started a 9/11 bereavement support group on October 4th at her Banking Ridge, New Jersey, parish, Saint James.

This was not a normal grieving process. “This mode of death was traumatic and sudden, cared for being decorated with flags, and it’s a complicated grief.” Most programs Mrs. Koch had previously run would last from 6 to 8 weeks. The Saint James 9/11 group still gathers on the anniversary of 9/11 to celebrate a Mass of remembrance.

When talking about the group, Mrs. Koch said that “they healed each other” and on several occasions she “watched miracles happen.” During the time they were together she told the group that “we need to write down the goodness. There is so much badness in the world and we need to write down the goodness.”

In 2019, Pamela Koch published her memoir about the experience with the group entitled For Goodness’ Sake: The Story Behind the Saint James 9/11 Bereavement Support Group. The book intertwines the 9/11 families’ stories with Pam’s own story, including her fight with Leukemia from 2003 to 2004.

Her daughter Kerry remembers people in the group feeling like an extension of her family during that time. This was especially true when Kerry had her first baby, the first Koch grandchild. “You want your mom there when you have a baby,” Kerry said, “and she couldn’t be there. So, they brought meals, came to the hospital, and brought baby gifts.”

I am one of the six Koch grandchild. Like every kid born afterward, I will learn about 9/11 by watching the footage and hearing the stories. I will learn about 9/11 as a historical event. But it is also part of my family’s history.

The Kochs have been called “the family that built the World Trade Center” and this title was solidified in 2013 when Koch Skanska was commissioned to build the Oculus at the new World Trade Center.

In 2015, my grandparents, my uncle Tim and his partner Nik were present when the final steel beam was raised to complete the Oculus at the World Trade Center. Written in Sharpie on that beam is the name “Bob Koch.”

Photo Credit: Google Images

Photo Credit: Associated Press

Final beam being placed in the Twin Towers (1971)}
World-renowned rapper/songwriter Drake dropped a new album on September 3rd, 2021, titled “Certified Lover Boy.” The long awaited album proved a success as audio streaming services revealed CLB broke records on the charts.

Drake fans have been awaiting the release of CLB since 2019, when Drake announced he was working on a new album. Drake later announced the album would be released in January of 2021. This did not go according to plan, as the release was delayed due to a knee injury.

According to Spotify, CLB broke its record for most streamed album in a single day. Similarly, Apple Music announced Drake as the most streamed artist on Apple as of 2021, surpassing his last album “Scorpion” with 170 million streams. Adding to CLB’s success, by the week of September 13, five songs from the album made it into the top five songs of Billboard’s “Hot 100 Chart.”

Comprising 21 songs, the album features 15 artists, including popular artists JAY-Z, Travis Scott, and 21-Savage. Additionally, up-and-coming artists such as Lil Wayne, Kid Cudi, and Lil Baby make appearances as well. One of Drake’s new songs, “No Friends In the Industry,” talks about the betrayal and toxic relationships he’s faced. In the song, Drake stated, “I had to draw the line between my brothers and my enemies.” Speaking of enemies, approximately one week prior to CLB’s release, singer/songwriter Kanye West dropped his new album “Donda.” Some have speculated whether the timing of these releases was intentional, creating a competition on the charts. This wouldn’t be new for Kanye, as in 2007 he released an album around the same time as rapper 50 Cent. With both albums being released around the same time, fans are comparing the two.

In an online poll of 97 teenagers, 35 voted Donda as the better album, and 62 voted in favor of CLB. Out of the 26 CCHS students involved, 10 voted for Donda and 16 voted for CLB. There seems to be a fairly even divide among students’ opinions of both albums.

One of this album’s themes is a Gospel message. Songs like “God Breathed,” “Praise God,” “Heaven and Hell,” “Keep My Spirit Alive,” and “Jesus Lord” highlight Kanye’s struggles with his faith, how he came to find Jesus, and His impact on his life. Critical reception of the album was mixed, with Rolling Stone Magazine giving it two stars out of five and Pitchfork giving it a six out of ten. While critical reception was mixed, fans received it positively. When asked his thoughts on “Donda,” Sophomore Giovanni Gy- orody said that it was a “ten out of ten album” and that “there’s not a song I would skip.” Sophomore Richard Latorre said it was “one of the best albums this year.”

Kanye West levitating above the Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta, GA during August 5th listening party.
Game Over

WILLIAM HICKS
Staff Reporter

At the end of August 2021, China announced all minors would be limited to just three hours per week of gaming. Online games are restricted to weekends, with only one hour allowed on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. While this may seem remote, the potential results of this nationwide ban may affect our daily lives.

Clearly, it would be nearly impossible for the Chinese government to personally monitor the screen time of its 1.7 billion citizens, so they have instead dumped this responsibility onto the gaming companies. Companies such as Tencent, owner of massively popular games like Fortnite and League of Legends, must set up an identification system for each player. This system requires every player to change their unique username to a simple combination of their real name and an identification number. These names will then be processed by an “anti-addiction” machine to verify the legitimacy of each.

This prevents anyone from circumventing the restriction by changing devices. The only way around this system would be to use their parent’s account, which some parents will allow. Given that the vast majority of parents likely favor the regulation of screen time, most minors will be forced to comply with these stringent laws.

In some ways, I can see why China would want to have some reform. The Chinese are famously spectacular at online games. They field the top teams and players and hold records in nearly every game. This is thanks in no small part to the sheer amount of time they are able to spend online.

However, one hour per day is laughably short. Single games of League of Legends often last over an hour. If minors are lucky, they may be able to squeeze in two games of Fortnite before their time is up. And they can only do this three times a week until they are 18. Should the US adopt this law, it would certainly rework a good part of my life.

This is also why I’m concerned about the speed and ease of the implementation of this law. Gaming companies have barely lost any value in their stock and their revenues remain high. There was no hiccup once the Chinese regulations were implemented. Should this policy of restricting gaming produce positive results in China, the rest of the world will be watching.

The regulations that restrict gaming could easily spread into western countries including the United States, especially because the regulation software has already been developed. Not that I would object to some reasonable regulation. I have no doubt that a restriction on screen time of sorts would benefit some members of society. I would just hope it is that—reasonable.

Dawn of the Classroom of the Ape

ALEX NEWELL
Staff Reporter

This year, there’s a new class mascot in Room 222: Frank the Orangutan. Frank was welcomed into Charlotte Catholic in early September when he was found aimlessly wandering on the highest floor of the parking deck. The two seniors who found him said that when the primate was brought to Mr. Conrad’s office, the dean was “too busy with suspensions.”

They were left with one option, the only teacher who could match the animal’s energy: Mr. Smith. Frank plans to make Room 222 his home for the remainder of the 2021-2022 school year.

The journalism class, which meets in 222 for G period every day, welcomed Frank into their class activities. Students can look forward to new pictures of Frank roaming the school accompanied by a student-edited video every Friday titled “Frank Friday” on the @catholicchronicle Instagram page.