CCHS Students Show off their Spirit, Inside and Out

TESS VALKOVSCI
Staff Reporter

From sweatshirts to ear stickers to cowbells, there is no doubt that the Charlotte Catholic community loves to show off their cougar pride. Currently, Charlotte Catholic’s Keffer Stadium is home to a spirit store where students and parents can purchase CCHS merchandise during the football season. Soon, students will have the opportunity to shop from a new spirit store that will be located inside of the main school building.

Thanks to athletic booster funding, a closet in the cafeteria will be transformed into the new spirit store. Parent volunteers have already begun to clean out the closet, making way for a fresh coat of paint, display installations, and decorations.

The Keffer Stadium spirit store will be great during the football season. Soon, students will have the opportunity to shop from a new spirit store that will be located inside of the main school building. Thanks to athletic booster funding, a closet in the cafeteria will be transformed into the new spirit store. Parent volunteers have already begun to clean out the closet, making way for a fresh coat of paint, display installations, and decorations.

The Keffer Stadium spirit store is great during the football season, but not so much during adverse weather. The new store will not only resolve the weather issue, but better reach and service the entire student population within Charlotte Catholic.

The plan is for the closet to be converted into a walk in store, complete with products and prices on display across all of the walls. This walk-in experience is different from the Keffer stadium spirit store, being a walk-up store. As far as inventory for the new store, it will sell the same items as the outdoor store, such as sweatshirts, t-shirts, hats, water bottles, and cowbells. Angie Johnston, who is leading the creation of the new spirit store, said that “the store is looking to expand and offer seasonal items such as shorts and beach towels.” Additionally, the store would love to receive feedback from the students on what they would like to see being sold and possibly create new CCHS branded products. Payments via cash or credit card will be acceptable.

While there is no set opening date, “the desire is to have a soft launch by the end of January with limited hours,” said Mrs. Johnston. Optimally, the store will be open for a few hours during break and lunch on certain days each week for the entire school year. Hours of operation are still under consideration; student interest and the willingness of parent volunteers to run the store will determine when the store will be open.

Lawrence Nazarian, student council executive president and hype squad member, said he is excited about the new store because he thinks “having a more accessible spirit store for all students will help to spread the Red Machine pride and give nobody an excuse not to show school spirit!”

WILLIAM HICKS
Staff Reporter

For most students at Charlotte Catholic, there exists a well-suited extracurricular activity. Between the student-run clubs like the Super Smash Bros club and the official school activities such as football and band, a student would struggle to find an uninteresting extracurricular activity. Unfortunately for Senior Benjamin Pingree, Charlotte Catholic legally cannot offer what he is really interested in: beekeeping.

“Until recently,” Ben said, “I hadn’t even been a huge fan of bees. I’ve just always enjoyed animals and plants. You know, farmer stuff.” And indeed, once Ben turns on his Zoom camera, you can easily locate a wall full of plants and maybe even some pictures of goats. “It didn’t even have to be bees.

I would have happily gotten a goat license or anything if that had been offered instead.” But that didn’t mean he clicked the link any slower when the chance to become a certified beekeeper did arise.

The first few weeks of the seven week beekeeping course are not as entertaining as one might expect. Ben compared it to a history class in that a good amount of time was spent looking at presentations and taking notes on important details. Though Ben said the two hour sessions were “certainly not the most fun,” he also added that it “didn’t bother me too much. I mean, it was just a few more weeks until I got to actually touch some bees.” And with each passing Monday, Ben became closer to becoming a licensed beekeeper.

The final day was among the best, as it was a departure from the indoor presentations he had come to expect, and was entirely focused on being outdoors with the bees. Better yet, Ben and all other participants in the program were able, with the help of trained professionals, to get up close and personal with the bees.

In order to ensure the bees have enough nutrients to survive the winter, sugar and other food substances were placed atop each hive. Although he never got to fully take care of a hive by himself, to Ben it “was still worth the hours of sitting I had to do. I’ve definitely learned to appreciate bees. And how loud they are.”

While it is cool to be legally certified, Ben shared that there is not much that he can practically do with it at the moment. “Keeping a beehive on our property is really impractical.” They take a lot of time and management, which most high school students know they do not have. “But I suspect it will help my future as a farmer in Idaho,” he said, only half-jokingly.

Student of the Month: Ben the Beekeeper

Photo Credit: Tess Valkovschi

Photo Credit: Ben Pingree, Master Beekeeper
‘21 and Done

TESS MULLIGAN
Staff Reporter

Similarly to the preceding year, 2021 began with a bang. On January 6th, a group of belligerent US citizens incited an insurrection at the Capitol building. One student referred to this event as “an embarrassment.” This sparked debates about Donald Trump’s presidency, Joe Biden’s presidency, and unrest within the country. This led to the second impeachment trial of Donald Trump, almost a year after his first impeachment.

Financially and politically, the United States faced pressure from various sources, such as the stock market jitters caused by thousands of young stock traders on Reddit.

Their actions resulted in a surge in the purchases of GameStop stock in order to stop corrupt hedge funds from harming the businesses.

For weeks, traders were rushing to buy and sell stocks in order to retain or gain a profit. In addition to this financial upheaval, almost two months later, the Suez Canal was blocked by the ship “The Ever Given” for six days, resulting in global shipping delays.

Later on in the year, President Biden would make the controversial decision to withdraw U.S. troops from Afghanistan quickly, resulting in the Taliban takeover of the area.

Politically, events caused frustration. Notably, the debate over racism in America and gun control continued into this year with cases such as the Ahmaud Arbery case and the Kyle Rittenhouse case.

According to Reuters’s graphics, President Biden’s approval rating fell from 55% on January 21st to 48% on December 10th. However, some decisions, such as rejoining WHO (World Health Organization) and the Paris Climate Accord, might prove to be positive.

2021 saw great loss of life in unexpected disasters. In February, Texas suffered a massive cold wave that left many Texans without power. Around 210 people died as a result. In June, a condominium building in Miami would collapse, killing 98 people. Approximately 386,000 people in the U.S. died from Covid-19 this year. Hurricane Ida devastated Louisiana and 2021 marked the grim milestone of 20 years on from 9/11.

In 2021, we finally celebrated the Summer Olympics after a year’s delay due to the pandemic. One student, who was supposed to be a visitor at the 2020 Olympics, said it was disappointing that she was not able to attend and also mentioned how she noticed “it messed with the athletes” by delaying the games a year.

While 2021 had its highs and lows, it proved to us as individuals and as a society that despite tragedies and setbacks, we can keep fighting. This year, China was declared malaria-free. Juneteenth became a federal holiday. The creation of Covid-19 vaccines has helped in slowing the spread of the disease as well as diminishing its lethality. SpaceX made developments in space technology and orchestrated the first launch of a private crew into orbit. Blue Origin took Star trek star William Shatner to space.

This year, humans achieved several incredible feats and on an individual level, there is no telling how many other good things have happened this year.

Cougars Collaborate with ‘Cottie and Cake’

ANDREW O’BRIEN
Staff Reporter

Today, it seems individuals making impacts in their communities and the world are getting younger. Role models like Greta Thunberg or Malala Yousafzai have captivated millions and impacted the world in a beneficial way. Could we perhaps find some of these young people in our city, maybe even our school?

Obviously, the answer to this question is yes. Charlotte Catholic is home to three students who are heads of a fundraising board for the Cottie and Cake Fund, a local philanthropic organization that supports the neonatology program at Levine Children’s Hospital.

Established in 2010, they have raised over $440,000 to date, and late last year introduced their first ever board of fundraisers made up entirely of middle and high school students from around Charlotte, the first of its kind in the state.

The Cottie and Cake Fund was started by a local family who lost one of their twin girls after a complicated, high-risk pregnancy.

Throughout the difficult process, the family found strength in each other and through the support of the staff at Levine Children’s Hospital’s Neonatal Intensive Care Nursery (NICN) showed them.

To honor their children and show their gratitude for the care they received, the family started the “Cottie and Cake” Fund (after the nicknames given to the twins) to raise money for neonatal care at Levine Children’s Hospital. The money they raised funds projects like buying state-of-the-art machinery for operating on the newborns.

Currently, there are three students at Charlotte Catholic who are on the board for the organization: Ann Douglas O’Brien and Kevin Kennelly, both freshmen, and Andrew O’Brien, a junior. Though not completely sure how their fundraising efforts will turn out with Covid-19 being on the rise again, Ann Douglas said she was “very excited to get the ball rolling in the new year” and that the organization has a “special fundraising event” planned for the winter of 2022.

Kevin added that he is “looking forward to being part of such a unique, motivated group of kids” and that he will be helping as much as possible with the fundraising efforts. He also hopes Covid-19 won’t have a major impact on raising money or spreading awareness for the cause.

All in all, the students on the board are proud to be making a difference in their communities. Ann Douglas even alluded to her goals of taking the cause further, saying, “though it’s just local for now, that might not be the same in a few years.” The board hopes that they will find success in their efforts in the new year and make a difference in their communities.
Omicron Appears on the World Stage

MEG FRANTZ
Staff Reporter

During the past two years, the Covid-19 pandemic has been at the forefront of the world’s mind. What used to be unfamiliar and scary is now normal. Masks, social distancing, and vaccinations are a part of everyday life. The world has become resilient to everything thrown our way, but it is uncertain if we are resilient enough.

Omicron is a variant of Covid-19, first discovered in Botswana, Africa on November 11, 2021. It moved swiftly across the world and had reached San Francisco by November 22, 2021. It was named a “variant of concern” by the CDC on November 26, 2021.

This variant differs from the Delta variant because of its ability to spread quickly. However, according to The Los Angeles Times, people infected with the Omicron variant are 45% less likely to be hospitalized than those infected with the Delta variant, but this fact does not mean that Omicron should be taken lightly. The CDC maintains that the most effective way to slow the Omicron variant is to get vaccinated. Recently, the booster shot became available to Americans ages 12 and over. The booster shot builds on pre-existing antibodies to increase protection against Covid-19 and the variants. The CDC also recommends wearing a mask indoors, regardless of vaccination status.

Charlotte Catholic issued a statement on January 3, 2022 detailing their protocols for the situation. They are continuing to offer Zoom accommodations to students infected with Covid-19 who have contacted Nurse Holder.

Regardless of vaccination status, students exposed to Covid-19 must quarantine for five days and get tested. If the student tests positive and does not have symptoms after five days, they may return to school but must wear a mask for five days upon return. If they continue to have symptoms, they must stay home until their symptoms resolve.

It was noted that when masks are required for Covid-19 procedures post-exposure, the “mask exemption form” does not apply until the procedure is completed.

With the rise of Omicron, some students are worried about the potential consequences, but others trust that CCHS will make the right decisions. One junior, Maddie Sternberg, said, “I’m glad Charlotte Catholic is doing what they can to keep us in school. I don’t know what’s going to happen, but I’m sure we will find a way to get through this rough patch.”

After two long years of Covid-19, people began to hope that 2021 would see the end of the pandemic. Unfortunately, we have been thrown back into the unfamiliar.

Features

Eatin’ Less Chikin

MADELYN BRONSON
Staff Reporter

As we enter the new year, we are still facing multiple challenges. Not only are Covid-19 cases rising, but certain foods are getting more expensive. In 2021, food shortages continued to climb. These shortages have been highlighted through social media, with the chicken shortage taking the spotlight. Teenagers began to post about the situation, thus causing a panic over the loss of their beloved chicken nuggets, tenders, and more.

Social media played a major role in spreading the word about these food shortages to the general public. Once the news of the chicken shortage spread, people began to worry that it would last into the new year. The answer? Yes, there will still be shortages of chicken products.

The Daily Gazette, a New York based newspaper, interviewed Joan Driggs, vice-president of analytics firm IRI, about the issue. “We’re not anywhere near the empty shelves that we saw in the spring of 2020, but we can really anticipate a lot of shortages continuing into the first half of 2022,” Driggs said. According to Driggs, volatile raw material shortages, high commodity prices, and consumer demand contribute to fewer chicken products available to consumers. The New York Post reported “underperforming roosters that aren’t producing as many chicks as expected are partly to blame for the US poultry shortage.”

Tyson, one of the largest poultry producers in the country, has been using new roosters for fertilizing eggs. This has been a struggle since the breeding of these new chicks “simply aren’t hitting expectations.” The eggs fertilized by these new roosters hatch less often, limiting the country’s chicken supply. Tyson wishes to resolve this issue by replacing the roosters responsible for nearly half of Tyson’s chicken shortage.

Chicken products are rising in price, and the amount of poultry in stores is decreasing daily. These changes directly impact families. People are already struggling financially because of Covid-19, and many will not be able to afford the higher prices of the poultry. Chicken is a main protein source and a staple in family kitchens. Rising costs affect lower income households. It will be harder for them to afford good, protein-filled meats. They will have to buy processed, cheaper substitutes that are not as healthy.

At Charlotte Catholic, chicken tenders and nuggets on the daily menu are student favorites during breakfast and lunch. However, students believe that if the chicken prices in the school cafeteria rise, students and staff will continue to buy chicken tenders and wings no matter how expensive they are. So, in a school full of students with social media, the news of chicken shortages spread like wildfire. Junior Joe Hickman said “if Catholic ran out of chicken, I would be devastated because I love the chicken choices.”

Joe weighed in on the scope of this problem. He said, “I don’t understand how there would be a chicken shortage in the first place because there are millions of chickens in the world.” He added, “the effect would be negative because millions of people throughout the world rely on chicken for their main protein source.” Another junior, Ashley Sofarelli, said, “if Catholic ran out of chicken, that would be awful because it is the main choice on the menu and is one of my favorite things to buy for breakfast or lunch.”

Despite the hardships that chicken lovers faced in 2021, the world hopes that 2022 will be a chicken-filled year!
Entertainment

GRACE GILRANE
Staff Reporter

Reunions of popular television shows and movies have become increasingly popular. HBO Max has produced several of these reunions, including The Reunion, a highly anticipated television event of 2021. On New Year’s Day, Harry Potter 20th Anniversary: Return to Hogwarts came to HBO Max, reuniting the cast of one of the most beloved franchises of all time.

The special celebrates the 20th anniversary of Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone, the first film in the series based on the popular novels. The nearly two hour special opens on the Harry Potter series in people’s lives echoes one of Professor Dumbledore’s iconic quotes: “Happiness can be found even in the darkest of times if one only remembers to turn on the light.” or in this case, our televisions.

ELLEN MICHAELS
Staff Reporter

Taylor Swift again tops the charts with her newly re-released album “Red (Taylor’s Version).” The original album was released October 22, 2012 and was Taylor’s fourth studio album. She was 22 when the original album was released and was struggling with the milestone switch from her teen to adult years. Swift has been able to re-release her early albums, since she now fully owns the rights to them.

For a large part of her musical career, Taylor Swift was signed with Big Machine Record Company. She signed as a teenager in 2005, and when she decided to leave in 2018, her previous contracts would not allow her to profit off of her music or purchase her discography.

Swift openly negotiated with Big Machine Records, but they refused to give her the rights to her own music. They never even allowed the young musician to bid on her records. Later that year, Taylor Swift announced her new label with Republic Records and Universal Music group. She came out stating that from now on she will completely own all the music she puts out.

In 2019, high profile music executive Scooter Braun became the owner of Big Machine Records. Braun is well known for working with many famous artists that have harmed her career, including Kanye West, who notoriously stole Swift’s spotlight at the VMAs when he interrupted her victory speech for “Best Music Video.” This further complicated the situation.

Swift soon discovered online that Scooter Braun had sold her records to Ithaca Holdings LLC without her knowledge. In 2020, her masters were sold again to Shamrock Holdings. The sale, rumored to amount to 300 million dollars, was kept a secret from Swift.

Shamrock Holdings offered a contract with Taylor Swift, but Scooter Braun would still profit. Swift declined the deal, stating that “Scooter’s participation is a non-starter for me.” As of 2020, a provision in Swift’s record with Big Machine Records allows her to re-record and re-release all of her previous albums. On April 9, 2021, Swift re-released “Fearless,” along with a collection of songs “From The Vault” that didn’t make it onto the first record. Since she re-released her second album first, fans were kept guessing which album she would re-release next.

In June, Swift announced that she would be releasing “Red (Taylor’s Version)” on November 12th, 2021. Along with the original songs on the record, Swift also added nine new tracks from the Vault, including the long-awaited ten minute version of “All Too Well.” The original version of the song was ten minutes long, but only five minutes made it onto the first album. Many of these Vault songs include features and duets from popular musicians such as Ed Sheeran, Phoebe Bridgers, and Chris Stapleton.

In addition to the ten minute version of “All Too Well,” Swift also directed her own short film to accompany the song, featuring well-known actors Dylan O’Brien and Sadie Sink. Swift also released a music video for the Vault song “I Bet You Think About Me,” which was directed by Blake Lively.

Taylor Swift’s avid fan base, which includes many Charlotte Catholic students, is back to guessing which album she will release next. Charlotte Catholic Junior Lauren Brockman predicts Swift will release the album “1989” next, her personal favorite. Junior Megan Pons, on the other hand believes she will release the album “Speak Now” next, because Swift “has hinted to it on her social media.” With four possible studio albums to re-release, who knows what Swift’s next move will be?

‘Red’ Steals Fans’ Hearts

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Marvel Finds Their Way Home

On December 17, 2021, Marvel Studios, in association with Columbia Pictures, released Spider-Man: No Way Home. Directed by Jon Watts and starring Tom Holland, Zendaya, and Benedict Cumberbatch, the movie is the 27th installment in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, or MCU.

The third movie in the current Spider-Man trilogy was a smash hit at the box office over the holidays. The movie currently sits at 94% on Rotten Tomatoes and 8.8/10 on IMDb.

With a budget of $200 million, it has currently grossed $609.9 million in the United States alone. The movie also took the spot for the third biggest opening weekend ever, previously held by Star Wars: The Force Awakens, which was released in 2015.

After the mixed receptions of Marvel’s previous film Eternals, 2015. Awakens, which was released in previously held by Star Wars: The Force Awakens, which was released in 2015. The third movie in the current Spider-Man trilogy was a smash hit at the box office over the holidays. The movie currently sits at 94% on Rotten Tomatoes and 8.8/10 on IMDb.

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The autumn and winter are the most exciting seasons for sports. Football fans eagerly anticipate the 18 weeks of America’s most popular sport. However, in cities with no football team, or cities like Charlotte where the home team is usually mediocre, the games on the field aren’t enough for diehard fans. Spectators sometimes bet on games to prove their dedication to the pastime, while others watch analysts argue and predict the best and worst teams of each season. Several even participate in what are famously known as “fantasy football leagues.”

Fantasy football brings additional competition to the NFL, as groups of friends act as general managers in their own leagues of hand-picked teams, competing against each other to see who can build the best and worst teams.

Fantasy football is key for creating new fans for players that have been performing well throughout the season. Players like Cooper Kupp, Justin Jefferson, and Jonathan Taylor proved to fans that they were valuable members of both a football franchise as well as a fantasy football team.

Players having a breakout season are pleasant surprises to team owners who drafted them late or added them from the waiver wire. The waiver wire is a fantasy football concept where players that didn’t get drafted onto fantasy teams are put in limbo to wait for team owners to pick them up if one of their starters gets injured.

For fantasy footballers, bragging rights are not enough. It is common for leagues to put money on the line for the winner, and the loser is often forced to participate in embarrassing challenges. The incentive of a challenge encourages team owners to make trades often, check their fantasy apps constantly, and agonize over early-season injuries to star players.

Nathan Peine, a senior at Catholic, had the misfortune of finishing last in his fantasy league. Luckily for him, the league decided to go easy on him and, instead of severing a digit, they made him eat a dozen of the Atomic Spicy Wings from Wing-Stop.

Prior to his punishment, Nathan affirmed his belief that “considering I’ve had spicy wings many times before, this shouldn’t be too bad.” Afterward, however, Piene expressed that the wings “can’t even be described as spicy, they’re just pain encapsulated in a meal.”

Other fantasy leagues had the idea of wearing a Halloween costume for one week straight, taping the loser to a tree and throwing eggs at them, and doing other embarrassing challenges in public. Safe to say, finishing last in fantasy football isn’t fun.
January 25, 2022

New Year, New Me

ELLEN MICHAELS
Staff Reporter

January 1 is the first day of the new year where hundreds of thousands of people set goals for the following 365 days. Whether it be going to the gym, picking up a new hobby, or totally changing life habits, New Year’s resolutions have become a staple to starting off the year on a good note. But where did this tradition originate? How does one pick a good resolution? Is it even possible to carry them out?

Dating back to 2000 B.C., the citizens of Babylon started the new year with a 12 day festival called Akitu that began the new year with a 12 day festival that began on the day the sun crossed the celestial equator. At the start of the new year, the Babylonians would crown their king, begin their farming season, and make resolutions to pay their debts and return farming equipment.

The traditions of the Babylonian new year were later adopted by the ancient Romans. After the creation of the Julian calendar, the holiday was moved to the month named “January” after their god Janus, the god of new beginnings, reflection, and resolutions. Like the Babylonians and Romans, knights in the Middle Ages also made New Year’s resolutions, annually renewing their pledge to chivalry by touching a peacock.

Although people today no longer go around touching peacocks and returning borrowed farm equipment when the clock strikes midnight, New Year’s resolutions have remained a constant tradition through the ages.

This leads us to our next big question: how does one pick a good resolution? According to lifehack.org, it’s best to pick one resolution for the entire year. In addition, it’s important to plan ahead, track your progress, anticipate problems, and to go easy on yourself.

Making a resolution is the first step in achieving your goals, so remaining positive and persistent is half the battle.

To kick off the new year on a positive note, some Charlotte Catholic students have made their own resolutions for 2022.

Several students stated that they wanted to get in better shape, grow in their relationship with God, and stop procrastinating. Sophomore Elaina Grady said she wants “to look on the positive side of things and try to keep a good attitude even when things can get really rough. I just want to live my life.”

Photo Credit: Google Images

The “Worst Month of the Year”

NATALIE DOMINGUEZ
Staff Reporter

I am writing this article the Monday after returning from winter break, the day before it is due. You are probably wondering why I did not write it over break. After all, I had two weeks and should have been able to find the time. That is a good question.

I am still trying to figure that out. I am here to write about January, and how it appears to be everyone’s least favorite month. Considering that I and all other students have returned to more assignments and due dates after living stress free for the past two weeks, I too partake in this sentiment.

January. What even goes on in January is my question. As I look back over the course of the year, January is a blur. I think of myself sitting in a classroom, reminiscing over winter break and counting down the seconds until Spring Break.

The weather is unpredictable; in Charlotte, we get a few snow storms or even 80 degree weather. People always seem to be sick. There is a constant cold going around, and this year Covid as well.

“Post-holiday blues” plague the month of January. This syndrome leaves individuals feeling down or depressed because the holiday season is over. A common joke shared on December 26th is “364 more days,” showing our attachment to Christmas and its effects on our happiness.

However, as we bask in the afterglow of Christmas, we must realize that the season is not entirely over. According to the Catholic Church, the Christmas season does not end until January 6th with the Epiphany of Jesus, also referred to as “Three Kings Day.” Therefore, do not lament over relatives leaving after a visit or that Santa will not make an appearance for another 12 months. Instead, continue on the Christmas spirit until the feast day that marks the revelation of Jesus.

With New Year’s resolutions floating around, I guess you can call it a month of new possibilities. I know some view January as a fresh start: an opportunity to better oneself and try something new, myself included.

I have set goals revolving around softball and prioritizing my sleep schedule, which was definitely a wreck this past semester. I think it is important that everyone sets a goal, even if it may not seem to make the largest difference. I think once a person sets a goal, it can motivate them to set and accomplish more goals.

As I write this article, originally intending to focus on the sadness and seasonal depression felt by students walking through the halls on the first week back from break, I would like to take a new perspective on January.

Let’s try to make January a memorable month for when we review the year. Try to make the most of it. Set those goals and enjoy every moment of your journey towards accomplishing them.