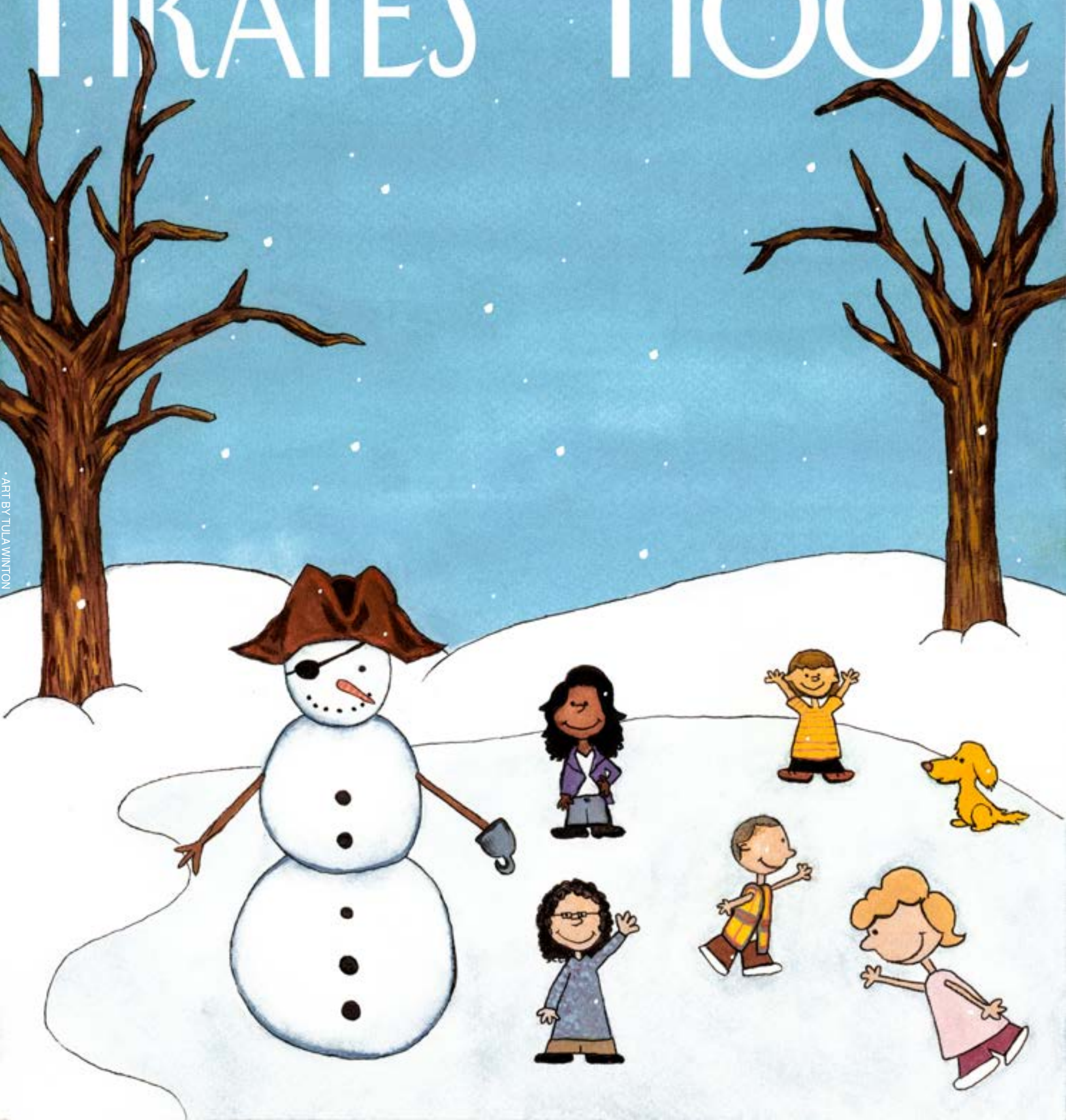


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PIRATES' HOOK



ART BY TULA WINTON

OPINION

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EDITORIAL

Fear on the Rise

Every year, students have to sit through mandatory anti-bullying training.

By the time we get to high school, we know it when we see it, and what's happening to immigrant students and their families is a textbook example.

Latino students make up 38.5% of Riverside's student body. It's the student body's largest demographic, and the fear that immigration agents from both Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) have created is reflected in our halls and classrooms.

ICE increased its presence in NC drastically during the weekend of Nov. 15, beginning in Charlotte and then moving into the Raleigh-Durham area.

On average, Riverside has an attendance rate of around 85%. On Nov. 18, the attendance rate for students was 79% and the following day it dropped to a 65% attendance rate. While maybe not all of this was due to rising tensions, a 20% difference means around 400 more students were not in class.

Karen Keim, Riverside's English as a Second Language (ESL) graduation coach, received a massive influx of calls and emails from parents following the announcement that ICE had increased its presence in the Triangle.

Many said that, out of fear, they didn't want to send their kids to school.

"The fear is not [about] having documentation," said Keim. "It's just that you look a certain way. They're gonna target you no matter what."

The attendance issues were especially disruptive for ESL classes.

"It's been pretty dramatic," said ESL teacher Jeremiah Safford. "We pretty much condensed all the ESL classes into two classrooms."

Safford said that what he was told is that parents aren't worried about the safety of actually being on campus, but more about the safety at bus stops.

Fear and intimidation tactics are clear examples of bullying. In school, we're taught to tell an adult when we witness or experience it. But when it's coming from the federal government, we have to do more.

People are raising awareness of immigration agents' locations and sharing information about how to avoid encounters and navigate a confrontation. There are live maps that show the locations and time stamps of arrests as well as photos of agents' vehicles.

On Nov. 19, the local Durham community held a rally against ICE in the Plaza outside the Parlour and marched throughout downtown. Two days later, a student walkout ended with another rally downtown.

Only a very small percentage of students at Riverside are actually adults. ICE is using its authority to intimidate, bully, and create fear, and it is our responsibility to speak out.

Fear and intimidation tactics are clear examples of bullying.



Students march against ICE and CBP in downtown Durham on Nov. 19.

• PHOTO BY NORAH LUBECK

El miedo va en aumento

Cada año, los estudiantes tienen que asistir a una capacitación obligatoria contra el acoso escolar.

Para cuando llegamos a la escuela secundaria, ya sabemos reconocerlo cuando lo vemos, y lo que les está ocurriendo a los estudiantes inmigrantes y sus familias es un ejemplo claro de ello.

Los estudiantes latinos representan el 38.5% de la población estudiantil de Riverside. Es el grupo demográfico más grande de la escuela, y el miedo que han creado los agentes de inmigración tanto de la Patrulla Fronteriza (CBP) como del Servicio de Inmigración y Control de Aduanas (ICE) se refleja en nuestros pasillos y salones de clase.

ICE aumentó drásticamente su presencia en Carolina del Norte durante el fin de semana del 15 de noviembre, comenzando en Charlotte y luego trasladándose al área de Raleigh-Durham.

En promedio, la Escuela Secundaria Riverside tiene una tasa de asistencia de alrededor del 85%. El día 18, la asistencia estudiantil fue del 79%, y al día siguiente cayó a un 65%. Aunque tal vez no todo se deba a las crecientes tensiones, una diferencia del 20% significa que alrededor de 400 estudiantes adicionales no estuvieron en clase.

Karen Keim, asesora de graduación del programa de Los problemas de asistencia fueron especialmente disruptivos para las clases de Inglés como Segundo

Idioma (ESL) de Riverside, recibió una enorme cantidad de llamadas y correos electrónicos de padres después del anuncio de que ICE había incrementado su presencia en el Triángulo. Muchos dijeron que, por miedo, no querían enviar a sus hijos a la escuela.

"El miedo no es [por] tener o no documentación", dijo Keim. "Es simplemente que te ves de cierta manera. Te van a convertir en un objetivo sin importar qué."

"Ha sido bastante dramático", dijo el maestro de ESL Jeremiah Safford. "Prácticamente combinamos todas las clases de ESL en dos salones."

Safford dijo que le informaron que los padres no están preocupados por la seguridad dentro del campus, sino más bien por la seguridad en las paradas de autobús. El miedo y las tácticas de intimidación son ejemplos claros de acoso. En la escuela, nos enseñan a avisar a un adulto cuando lo presenciamos o lo vivimos. Pero cuando viene del gobierno federal, tenemos que hacer más.

La gente está creando conciencia sobre las ubicaciones de los agentes de inmigración y compartiendo información sobre cómo evitar encuentros y cómo manejar una confrontación. Hay mapas en vivo que muestran las ubicaciones y las marcas de tiempo de los arrestos, así como fotos de los vehículos de los agentes.

El 19 de noviembre, la comunidad local de Durham realizó una manifestación contra ICE en la Plaza frente a The Parlour y marchó por todo el centro. Dos días después, una huelga estudiantil terminó con otra manifestación en el centro.

Solo un porcentaje muy pequeño de estudiantes de Riverside son realmente adultos. ICE está usando su autoridad para intimidar, acosar y generar miedo, y es nuestra responsabilidad alzar la voz.

Do the ends justify the means?



BY AUSTIN WYMORE

When you're an upperclassman and college applications begin peeking up on the horizon, you might look at your extracurriculars and realize that you haven't quite reached your potential. You might worry that colleges will see your short list of random activities and think that you're a lazy bum who doesn't care about your community.

That's when the motivation kicks in.

Like clockwork, college-bound juniors and seniors start organizing community groups, stepping up as leaders, and volunteering at every opportunity. These are good things, but authenticity comes into question here; can these services really be absolved of selfishness when students have so much to gain personally?

As a senior in 2025, I know that acceptance rates for top colleges have never been lower and that overall applications have never been more gamified. People have discovered that there's a strategy you can follow to win, and part of that winning strategy is having community work on your resume.

But if a student feeds the hungry just so they can write about being selfless in their personal statement essay, should they really be allowed

to benefit personally from it? It's nearly impossible to prove any motives, but it feels wrong to write that down as a good deed—"I'm doing this for you" is very different from "I'm doing this for me and you."

Judging whether certain acts are labors of love or just a means to an end is hard, but in the end does it really matter? Ulterior motives or not, community work is still getting done and a motivated student is still getting into college. You can be bothered

by the murky principles involved, but it's hard to argue with positive results.

Of course extracurriculars and community work are important to list in any college application, but it's wiser for students to choose activities that align with their personal interests rather than doing chores just to check a box—to do something they'll care about in 5 years rather than something they'd abandon a few months later.

Judging whether certain acts are labors of love or just a means to an end is hard, but in the end does it really matter?

Student voices are louder than you think



BY NICO JORDAN

When the Durham City Council voted to prohibit landlords from collecting rent from homes labeled "imminently dangerous," I was there representing Riverside's Affordable Housing Club.

I was sitting in Durham's City Hall on a Monday night in October, next to my friend and club founder Milo Graber, when the city council voted on the tenant protection ordinance we'd been following for months.

The room was mostly quiet, but when the final vote came in, the crowd erupted in cheers for the protection that just passed.

Under the new law, landlords have up to 72 hours to repair conditions that threaten health or safety, such as rotting floors, exposed wiring, or lack of heat or clean water. If they don't fix these issues, the city can issue a violation, and collecting rent after could lead to misdemeanor charges.

Watching this ordinance pass was the first time I watched an issue I helped work on move from conversation to actual policy.

Inspired by a similar ordinance passed in Charlotte, Riverside senior Milo Graber

founded the Affordable Housing Club to help advocate for tenants' rights and help push for this reform locally.

Graber originally created this club over a year ago to help push for stronger protections in our community and to help those struggling with unsafe housing.

For Riverside students, this isn't just a political change. It's something that could affect their health, safety, and wellbeing at school.

I was sitting in Durham's City Hall on a Monday night in October, next to my friend and club founder Milo Graber, when the city council voted on the tenant protection ordinance we'd been following for months.

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Where Christmas trees change lives

BY NORAH LUBECK & AUSTIN WYMORE

Little red barns appear on lots around Durham and Chapel Hill every November.

Surrounded by Christmas music, fairy lights and the smell of pine needles, these barns sell hand-picked, locally grown trees and Christmas decor for the holiday season, but also serve to fund the Triangle Residential Options for Substance Abusers (TROSA) program.

TROSA is a non-profit that provides a free residential rehabilitation program for people dealing with substance abuse. The tree lots help pay for residents' schooling, medical care and other expenses throughout their recovery.

"The tree lots are one of the projects that we have every year," said Jeff Stern, TROSA's director of business operations. "It's one of our biggest fundraising events of the year."

TROSA's tree lots have been

around for over 20 years and are designed to create a peer-driven community where people in recovery work together to help each other improve and build a better life.

"It's really a great way for the community to show their support for our program and the work that the residents in our program are doing to help turn their lives around and move in a positive direction," Stern said.

Residents in the TROSA program not only work at the tree lots, but also at TROSA's other enterprises, which include moving, lawn care and thrift stores.

"[The TROSA operations] are a chance for some of our residents to interact and have customers see that the face of addiction is maybe not what they thought it was," Stern said. "A lot of people have preconceptions about what addiction looks like, what a drug addict or an alcoholic may look or act like. Then they come onto our tree lots, or they meet our movers, or they come to our thrift store,

and they may see people who are very polite and smart and engaging, and it helps them to realize that these are just people who are dealing with a problem."

Stern believes that the holiday season, the environment of the tree lots and especially seeing families and kids, help boost the spirits of the residents and staff and show them hope.

"A lot of people are away from their families while they're in the program," Stern said. "The basic program is a two-year residential program, and so it can be very difficult for people to be away from their families all the time, but especially during the holidays."

TROSA's goal this year is to reach \$125,000 in donations from their six lots running through the holiday season.

"We are really excited about all of the community support that comes out to help us," Stern said. "For people who do want to get some money off, they can go to our website where there's a coupon for five dollars off any tree."



PHOTO BY NORAH LUBECK

Felicia Cox at the Southpoint mall TROSA tree lot location. Cox has been working at TROSA for almost five years.

A TROSA graduate's experience

Felicia Cox, a current tree lot manager, graduated from the TROSA program last year. She thinks that the community environment of the tree lots creates a positive experience.

"The tree lots help everybody's spirit change. It's just a positive moment where there's nothing to be upset about on a pretty tree lot," Cox said.

Cox started as a cashier at the tree lots over four years ago and credits TROSA and the tree lots for helping her out of addiction.

"I started doing drugs when I was 13," she said. "I kept it together for about 20 years, and the last two, I didn't. My life just became unmanageable, depressing and embarrassing, and I wanted to do better.

"I got arrested. I violated my probation, like, 56 times," she said.

"But this time, I didn't want to go back [to jail]. They dropped all my charges, and they told me that they weren't gonna help me get help."

Cox wasn't sure what to do next until an unexpected interaction pointed her towards TROSA.

"When I called my mom to tell her, there was a girl sitting next to me on a bench," said Cox. "She said, 'Felicia, if you want to change, there's a place in Durham, North Carolina. It'll give you four packs of cigarettes a week, and it's gonna be really hard. But if you want to change.' I believed her. I got out of jail the next day. I was on a plane four days later. I have been here four and a half years now. July 27 of next year will be five."

Since graduating from TROSA, Cox has managed to completely turn her life around.

"I didn't have a license for 14 years," she said. "I am a convicted felon. I did nothing to help anybody except for getting into a jail cell. And now I'm a manager at TROSA, and I have a car, I have a license. My family loves me, and I have respect for myself."

Cox intends to stay at TROSA for the foreseeable future.

"I'm very proud of the things that TROSA does for all of us and especially me," she said. "I'll never leave. I work here now. I'm not embarrassed anymore because that's how I got here. And all that matters is that we can."



Donde los árboles de Navidad cambian vidas

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Scenes from the Southpoint and Northgate TROSA tree lots. The other lots are in Chapel Hill and Morrisville.

From law to literature

Local author visits Riverside

BY JA'SONA SIMMONS

Imagine being on death row for 11 years. Would you rather slowly work with a lawyer to help you get out, or go on a TV show with a chance for immediate freedom if you win?

That's what author Helena Haywoode Henry asked Riverside students when she visited the media center on Nov. 6 to introduce her new book, *Last Chance Live!*

Haywoode is a former attorney from New York. She graduated from the University of Pennsylvania and attended NYU School of Law.

According to the publisher's website, *Last Chance Live!* tells the story of an 18-year-old death row inmate named Eternity Price who competes on a reality TV show for a chance at freedom. If America doesn't vote for her to stay on the show, she will lose her right to appeal her sentence and will be executed within a week of being eliminated.

Eternity, who has never had many friends, finds herself forming bonds with the other contestants in the reality TV show house. She must decide whether to betray her new friends to secure her own win or sacrifice her own life for the community she found.

Haywoode wants her book to encourage people to ask more questions instead of just believing what someone or something tells them. She was inspired by Tressie McMillan, a New York Times columnist and author.

"She's my Beyoncé," Haywoode said.

While she was a college student, Haywoode met a young girl who had a tough upbringing at a time when the laws were changing on whether the death penalty should be applied to all ages instead of 21 and over.

Haywoode modeled Eternity Price after the girl and used what she learned from McMillan to create a fictional story for both older and younger readers to think about.

When she considers ideas, Haywoode asks herself, "Is this true?" to encourage more questions and avoid accepting anything without questioning it. She hopes her book helps readers do the same.

"It's not about what to think, but how to think," she said.

Haywoode had challenges during the seven years it took her to write the book. She started after her first child was born, and later got an agent who helped get a publishing deal.

"Having to put myself in the mindset of someone that thinks differently from me, has different views, perspective, and feelings was pretty challenging," she said.

Haywood encouraged students to share their own stories in books someday.

"Swing for the fences," she said. "Write about what's bothering you. Get it off your chest. It doesn't matter if anybody reads it. What matters the most is that your name is attached to something that means something to you."



PHOTO BY HILDA ASTURIAS MAYORGA



PHOTOS COURTESY OF DELBERT JARMON

(Left) Delbert Jarmon answers questions during a November interview. (Top right) Jarmon DJ's an event at Durham County Stadium in May 2025. (Bottom right) Jarmon poses for a photo at Ideas! Coffee House, a local business he owned for 16 years.

RPC by day, DJ Kraze by night

Delbert Jarmon brings unique experience to Riverside

BY DAHLIA PONCE SANTOS & YOHANA FLORES

Delbert Jarmon planned to do many different things with his life, but working with high school students wasn't one of them.

"Never thought that I would end up in a school system, ever," Jarmon said.

But that's exactly how Riverside's Restorative Practices Center (RPC) coordinator spends his time this year.

Born and raised in Durham, North Carolina, Jarmon attended Hillside High School, where he played football and ran track. He then later attended NCCU and earned a degree in criminal justice.

His career in education began with the COPE program, a role that immersed him in discipline support and working with students who were struggling in school.

After starting at Southern High School, he transferred to W.G. Pearson Elementary School and spent nine years building relationships and strengthening community ties there before transitioning to Riverside this fall.

As an RPC coordinator, he shares information with staff about how in school suspension (ISS) and RPC are completely different approaches to discipline.

It's not about "sentencing" kids, he said, but about helping them understand, reflect, and correct their choices/decisions.

"We further the conversation to have restorative conversations and try to repair

the relationship between students or students and teachers and try to restore the positive aspect," Jarmon said.

He often tells kids to think before they act or react.

"Count to 10," he said. "A lot of students tend to react before thinking. I was once in high school. There were several times I reacted before thinking, and those situations didn't turn out well for me."

Before working in education full-time, Jarmon worked as a professional Disc Jockey.

"I've worked with many known artists like P. Diddy, Fantasia, and Toni Braxton," he said.

Known as DJ Kraze, the job allowed him to travel all over the world and opened many opportunities for him, like opening his own coffee shop.

Jarmon owned Ideas! Coffee House for 16 years. The coffee house hosted many open mic and poetry nights. He believes the events offered young people the chance to gain experience and express themselves.

"When I came into the school system and I applied for the family and community liaison," said Jarmon. "Owning my coffee shop for 16 years, I was able to use that as my experience."

A Starbucks eventually opened across the street, but Jarmon said it didn't ruin his business.

"I closed because I wanted to, not because they made me," he said.

He works closely with students as well as

Riverside's administrators.

"I would describe him as very passionate about his job," said assistant principal Kwame Stith. "We are partners in supporting young people."

"I think he's impacted Riverside in a positive way, by starting to build relationships with students," said assistant principal Tammy Patterson.

Outside of school, Jarmon is an announcer for Jordan High School athletics and still DJs local parties and events. He is also a community activist and mentor.

Whether he is working in school or mentoring in the community his main goal stays the same: shaping the minds of the young with the same inspiration as his father, who he said made him into who he is today.

"Everything about me is my father," said Jarmon.

Jarmon has four children of his own, one girl and three boys, whom he said helped him learn the importance of guidance and stability.

He does not plan on retiring anytime soon, but instead continues to stay motivated by the students he meets each day, and believes that the moment of change often happens unexpectedly.

"Sometimes you're there at the right time," he said. "[My hope is] that they 'get it.' That they truly understand why we're here - what they're in school for."

Jason Iwara, Edward Purdy and Emily Heffernan also contributed to this story.

THE HOOK'S HOLIDAY TRADITIONS

Every year, when the holidays come around, my family gets together to put up our Christmas tree. For Christmas Eve, we each choose something to make. My mom is usually in charge of the main dish, normally Tamales or Pozole. My siblings and I decide what to bake, such as cookies and traditional Mexican pan dulce. Once we are all done, we come together to eat. My older sister always makes a really long list of Christmas movies. They are different every year, and we each pick one watch while we wait to open presents at midnight. All of us buy each other gifts, so we open about five presents each.

- Sofia Alvarez-Pedraza

One tradition that my family does every year is a gift exchange around the time of Hanukkah. Sometime in late November, each family member receives a text telling them the person that they are choosing a gift for. After buying a gift that they think is right for the person, everybody gets together during winter break in California. We all put gifts in the middle of the room and one by one each person checks their gifts and has 3 guesses to guess who gave them their gift. We also sit down for dinner and every year for dinner there are Latkes, which is a Jewish potato pancake. It is a great time to see everybody together and celebrate the holidays.

- Saul Janiak Stein

Every year during the Christmas season, I put a mini Christmas tree in my room with little lights and ornaments on it. At night, I like to stare at it from my bed, watching it softly light my room with blinks and glitters as I fall asleep.

- Austin Wymore

On Christmas morning, I wake up early and share presents with my family, then I hang out with my little brother or friends. On Christmas night, I have a big dinner with my extended family. Then, on the 26th, we have a Boxing Day celebration. Boxing Day originates in the UK, where working people would celebrate the day after Christmas with gifts from their employers, as they would usually be working on Christmas. Since my Dad is British, he started it in our household. It usually involves a party at a British person's house, sometimes my own, or a pub.

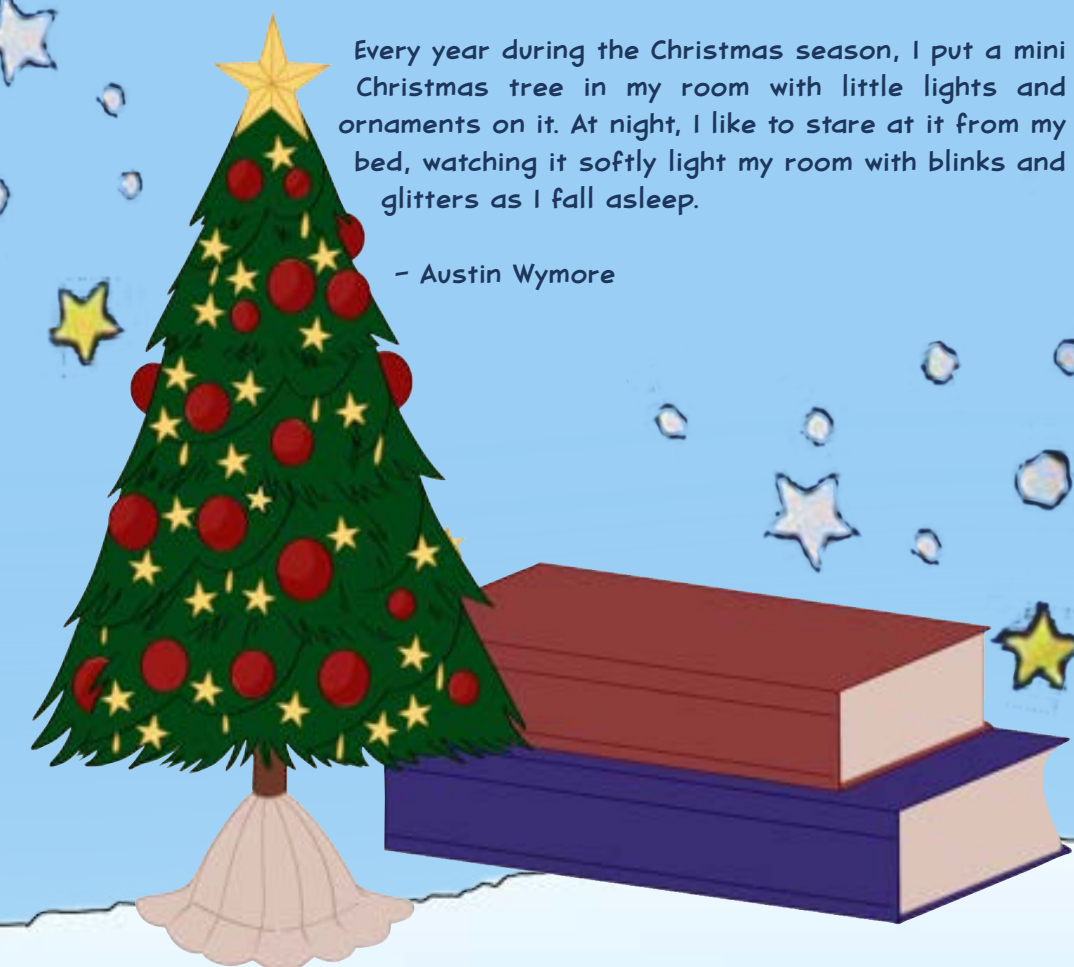
- Nelson Kerr-Richie

My siblings and I get "Christmas Eve Boxes". It's a box that my parents put together that has a different theme every year. It has new PJs that we wear on Christmas day, popcorn for movie night, our favorite snacks, and a new mug or water bottle. When I was little, my siblings and I weren't able to pick a theme. We had to wait and see. Now that we're all older, we get to choose. This year, my brother picked One Piece as his theme, my sister picked Strawberry Shortcake, and I picked Elf!

- Chandler Cates

My family celebrates holidays by getting together and making food like tamales, rice with vegetables and shredded chicken, and chop suey. My tias and tios stay up playing naipes, a card game they use to gamble with each other, for hours or party until around 4 AM. I spend most of my time playing games with my cousins or playing soccer outside. I don't play naipes because I don't bring money to the function, but I would like to learn how to so I can take money from them instead of asking for it. Back when my tias and tios were younger, they would dance for so long that the different colored lights bouncing around the house made it look like a club. They play Hispanic music like reggaeton, bachata, or anything party-like and loud. The last time they did this, I danced with them because I had nothing better to do. But nowadays they just talk about chisme, gossiping about old memories.

- Jose Obil Del Cid



It's national title or bust for Duke basketball again

BY TULA WINTON

The pressure is on for Duke men's basketball coach Jon Scheyer, the renowned Coach K's protege.

The 2025-2026 season marks his fourth season as head coach. Scheyer has already proven his worth. He led Duke to become the ACC Tournament champions during his very first season (2022-2023), then again in 2024-2025.

On top of this, from his first season and on, Duke finished third, second, and, most recently, first, in the ACC final standings. After two consecutive seasons with an overall record of 27-9, he managed to widen that gap to a record of 35-4 last year.

Despite Scheyer's consistent success in his career, the question remains: How will he fill the gaping absences of last year's top five players? Scheyer seems to have found the solution: a combination of returning players and power freshman.

Notable returning players include senior Maliq Brown, junior Caleb Foster, and sophomores Patrick Ngongba II, Darren Harris, and fan favorite Isaiah Evans. Also known as "Showtime Slim," Evans racked up 62 three-pointers as a freshman last season. These players are now all key contributors.

Joining them is Charles Boozer's legacy, the Twins. ACC preseason Rookie Of The Year and ESPN's number three recruit, Cameron, quickly claimed his spot in the starting five. In the team's first exhibition game of the season he had a double-double, dropping an astonishing 24 points and 23 rebounds on Tennessee.

Alongside Cameron is Cayden Boozer. Although he is the shortest player on the roster, standing at 6'4, five inches less than his brother, Cayden has something to prove, too.

The Twins have excellent chemistry on the court and are living up to the hype that comes with being four-time national champions while playing for Columbus high school.

Currently 10-0 and ranked third in the country, expectations remain high. The question is whether they, yet again, fall short, or if the talented young team will be able to snag the ACC and NCAA titles.

To stay updated on Duke basketball, tune in on 12/20 to watch as they take on Texas Tech.



· PHOTO BY MARCELLO LUFTIG

Senior Stephanie Diaz wins the semifinal match of the N.C. women's wrestling state tournament. Diaz beat the defending state champ.

From "I want it all" to "I want to repeat"

Stephanie Diaz-Mendoza prepares to defend wrestling title.

BY ELODIE PAGE

Senior Stephanie Diaz-Mendoza enters her fourth wrestling season with a new challenge: defending her state championship title.

Diaz-Mendoza became Riverside's first state-champion women's wrestler last year when she took down four female opponents, winning the last match by two points to claim her state title.

"It's a different 'cause last year, I went in with a 'I want it, I want it all' mentality," Diaz-Mendoza said. "This year is 'I want to repeat,' but I know the same ambition I had last year is the same one that these girls are coming at me for."

Diaz-Mendoza's victory in the state finals came with unexpected adversity. She was not the favored contender, booed by the crowd during the match, and afterwards faced criticism on social media platforms.

"Her family didn't want me to win," Diaz-Mendoza said. "On Twitter, there was a picture of her family sticking up the middle finger at me when they raised my hand. She hated on me on TikTok, and there were 40 year old men hating on me on Facebook. It didn't feel like I won. But she wasn't the one with the gold medal, she wasn't the one that had the big poster."

Looking ahead to the season, Diaz-Mendoza acknowledges the work required to repeat as champion.

"I think I can," she said. "I have to put in more work 'cause these girls, they're not coming easy this year."

Diaz-Mendoza said that being a defending state champion comes with its own pressure.

"If I make one small mistake, lose a match

or something happens, then everyone's gonna be like, 'oh, she's not that good,' she said.

Her teammates recognize her impact on the program. Senior Ezra Norberg, who joined the team last year, considers her essential to Riverside wrestling.

"It feels like she is the heart of our wrestling program," Norberg said. "She is the most accomplished wrestler that we have on the team."

Senior Christopher Rowell, a four-year teammate, agrees.

"She's probably one of the most important figures there," Rowell said. "She's the heart and soul of a lot of it, a driving force [in practice], and brings a lot of energy to the team"

Both teammates also credit Diaz-Mendoza with supporting newer wrestlers.

"Having someone on the team that's so friendly definitely helped encourage me to go to practice and show up," Norberg said.

"She takes the lead a lot of times, and takes care of a lot of the younger kids," Rowell said. "She connects the team really well."

As a practice partner, Diaz-Mendoza maintains her competitive intensity, elevating her teammates.

"She would push me a lot and force me to actually go through the motions and hit my shots," Norberg said.

Rowell has observed her technical development over four years.

"She started off and didn't really know anything yet," he said. "But now, wrestling her, she throws moves in there that you've never seen. She has her own unique style."

The four-year team member, who was the only girl on the team her freshman year, has inspired others to join.

"I hope to grow the women's team more because I've been doing it for four years," she said. "I hope I will leave with something still here."

The team now includes four female wrestlers.

Beyond the mat, Diaz-Mendoza has faced personal challenges that have shaped her approach to wrestling, too. Last August her father, uncle, and cousin were detained by ICE. While her father was eventually released, her uncle and cousin were deported.

"You don't realize it's a problem until it truly affects you," Diaz-Mendoza said. "They're no longer targeting criminals, they're targeting workers that are just working, paying taxes and everything."

The experience affected her cousin's family significantly, as her uncle and cousin were the two main providers while her aunt was unable to work due to breast cancer.

"It's breaking families apart," Diaz-Mendoza said. "You might not realize that, because you're not the one going through it, but once it happens to you, you take a step back."

The experience reinforced lessons she learned growing up watching her father work constantly to provide for the family.

"I didn't have a dad, only because he spent all the time working," she said. "Seeing that, how he sacrificed like that is the same way I sometimes sacrifice time with my family for wrestling."

Diaz-Mendoza uses wrestling as an outlet for processing these challenges.

"It's something I can channel everything into," she said. "If I'm upset, I'm gonna channel it and push myself harder. There's nothing that is gonna stop me that isn't myself."

Youth hockey grows in the Triangle

BY ISABELLE ABADIE

Starting this season the Carolina Hurricanes continued their consecutive sell-out streak for 117 home games, including both regular season and playoff games.

This statistic alone highlights the growth of ice hockey in North Carolina.

In 1997, the Hartford Whalers moved from Connecticut to North Carolina, becoming the Carolina Hurricanes. The Canes joined the Florida Panthers in Miami, the Tampa Bay Lightning and the Atlanta Thrashers (who later relocated) in the Southeast. As the number of teams grew, so did hockey culture in the American South.

In 1997 just over 10,000 youth registered for a team via USA Hockey in the Southeast, which consists of Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Georgia, Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi, Tennessee and Florida.

Inspired by his Canadian cousins, Henry Waggoner, a Riverside sophomore, has been playing ice hockey since the beginning of sixth grade. This winter, Waggoner drives 45 minutes, at least two times a week to practice with his team: the Raleigh Raptors in Wake Forest.

Waggoner has played for four different teams in five years.

“You can definitely switch [teams],” he

said. “There’s a lot of teams. [They’re] not all close. But there’s definitely options.”

Waggoner’s current team is made up of kids from all over the Triangle, each usually driving the same, if not more, distance as him to practice.

“I don’t really hang out with the guys on the team,” he said. “If we’re at a hotel for the weekend we’ll go somewhere, but, otherwise we don’t because we all live in different places.”

Durham Public Schools does not offer ice hockey as a high school varsity sport for boys or girls. This is the case for most hockey players in North Carolina. While some players may view this as a disadvantage, Waggoner doesn’t. Between two practices a week and games every weekend, he’s not even sure he would have the time to play on a high school team as well.

Max Spitzer, a current goalie for the Hillsborough Hogs has been playing hockey since age six. The Riverside freshman is also a former teammate of Waggoner’s and had similar sen-

timents about North Carolina Hockey culture.

“I don’t think I’m at a disadvantage because in North Carolina, nobody plays on high school teams,” Spitzer said.

Unlike Waggoner, Spitzer doesn’t believe having teammates from all over has made it harder to connect as a team.

“You’re all together in the same locker room,

so, I don’t think it makes us bond less,” he said.

Both players traced increased interest in youth hockey in the Triangle to the rise of the Carolina Hurricanes.

“A lot more people are going to games and a lot more kids have been seeing the Canes and wanting to play,” Spitzer said.



Sophomore Henry Waggoner scores a goal in recent game. The goal made the score 2-2, tying the game between the Raleigh Raptors and the Carolina Premier. PHOTO COURTESY OF HENRY WAGGONER



Men's Winter Track Jordan Harrell

BY LEVI BROWN

PH: What does the track offseason training look like?

JH: When I'm not running track, I'm usually lifting with the football team, and just staying in the weight room all offseason.

PH: Do you think your team has any goals?

JH: I think I just want to get to regionals this year. We had a pretty good chance at the 4x2 and our 4x4 last year, so definitely getting to regionals.

PH: What's your personal goal for this season?

JH: I want to get maybe a low 22 on my 200 and hopefully get on that board out there for school records.

PH: What's your pregame routine?

JH: Before races I really just like to be left alone. I don't really talk to nobody. Just music and silence.

Women's Swimming Aubrey Mitchell

BY WILL GRAY

PH: What was your team's offseason training like?

AM: We don't do any off season training for swimming. Swimming is weird because half the kids do year-round swim, so we swim all throughout the year. But there's no offseason practices for people that just do high school swimming.

PH: What are your team's goals for this season?

AM: Our big goal is definitely regionals. In the past, we've had lots of relays be able to make it to states. [Almost] everyone last year on the relays was a senior. I'm not sure if we'll be able to make it to states, so I think doing really well at regionals is gonna be our big goal.

PH: What is your favorite part about swimming?

AM: Definitely the relays and the competition. I do love swimming, but my favorite part is competing and racing.

Women's Basketball Saniya Thurman

BY JULIAN REYNOLDS

PH: How would you describe the team's offseason training?

ST: It was kinda iffy since most of us play other sports like flag football or tennis. So whenever we can get in a gym, we would, and if we couldn't, we were off doing our other sports. During the summer most of us were on a [travel] team.

PH: What are your teams goals for this season?

ST: Mostly just to develop better chemistry with one another and to change the program.

PH: How did you first get involved with basketball?

ST: Before I came to Riverside I used to live in New Jersey, and I played basketball there for my middle school. When I eventually had to move to North Carolina I had a thought that since I played basketball in middle school I might as well play here."

Men's Basketball Jeremiah Savage

BY JOSE OBIL DEL CID

PH: Describe your team's offseason training.

JS: Offseason training is hard. Usually we're in the gym every day. We do a lot of preseason, conditioning, and stuff. We run a lot. It's just high level energy every single day.

PH: What are the team's goals for the season?

JS: Our team's goal this season is to win conference and make the state playoffs.

PH: What's [the team's] pregame routine like?

JS: We listen to music before games, we stretch, and we try and get shots up. Before each game, we get together and take 10 seconds in silence.

PH: How do you prepare mentally before a big game?

JS: I like to listen to music. I don't listen to nothing crazy. I just like to chill, relax, calm my nerves.

♪ Who Would Win? ♪

Holiday Song Edition

"Let It Snow" - Boyz II Men

"It's beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas" - Michael Bublé

"Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree" - Brenda Lee

"Jingle Bell Rock" - Bobby Helms

"All I Want for Christmas Is You" - Mariah Carey

"Jingle Bells" - Frank Sinatra

"You're a Mean One, Mr. Grinch" - Thurl Ravenscroft

"Christmas Time Is Here" - Vince Guaraldi Trio

"Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer" - Burl Ives

"Carol of the Bells" - Cathedral Choir



WINNER



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H O R O S C O P E S



Capricorn

December 22 – January 19

Hard work? Yes. Burnout? Not this time. You're entering your productive-but-also-chill era. The universe sends success your way—and maybe a well-timed nap.



Aquarius

January 20 – February 18

You're the trendsetter of 2026 without even trying. People copy your aesthetic, your playlists, your whole vibe. Expect unexpected opportunities and some iconic "I'm reinventing myself" moments.



Pisces

February 19 - March 20

Dreamy energy all year long. Your creativity is glowing, your intuition is on point, and you're entering your soft-but-powerful era. 2026 feels like a movie with an amazing soundtrack.



Aries

March 21 – April 19

This year starts with main character energy. You're bold, glowing, and somehow always the first one to finish the group project. Just don't sprint into every decision. Pace yourself.



Taurus

April 20 – May 20

2026 brings calm, steady growth and maybe a new hobby you weren't expecting. Knitting? Pottery? Billionaire mindset?



Gemini

May 21 - June 20

Plot twist: you're entering your "unbothered era." New friend groups, new brain cells, new good decisions. 2026 gives you a fresh start and opportunities to show off your ideas.



Cancer

June 21 - July 22

You're basically the emotional support friend of the zodiac this year, but in a good way. New year, new boundaries.



Leo

July 23 - August 22

Spotlight? Yes. Drama? Only the fun kind. 2026 brings confidence boosts, surprise compliments, and that moment a teacher says "Nice job," and you think about it for weeks.



Virgo

August 23 - September 22

Organization queen/king strikes again. This year brings clarity, clean rooms, and notebooks with the aesthetic of a Pinterest board. You're leveling up in subtle but powerful ways.



Libra

September 23 - October 22

Romantic comedy energy surrounds you. Maybe it's love, maybe it's a new friendship, maybe it's you looking great in every candid photo. Balance returns, one cute moment at a time.



Scorpio

October 23 – November 21

2026: mysterious but thriving. You're finally putting yourself first, cutting off weird energy, and glowing like you have a secret (you do, but it's just good skincare). Big transformation year.



Sagittarius

November 22 – December 21

New adventures incoming—even the small kind, like trying a new boba flavor. 2026 gives you freedom, fun, and the best chaotic-good storyline in the zodiac.

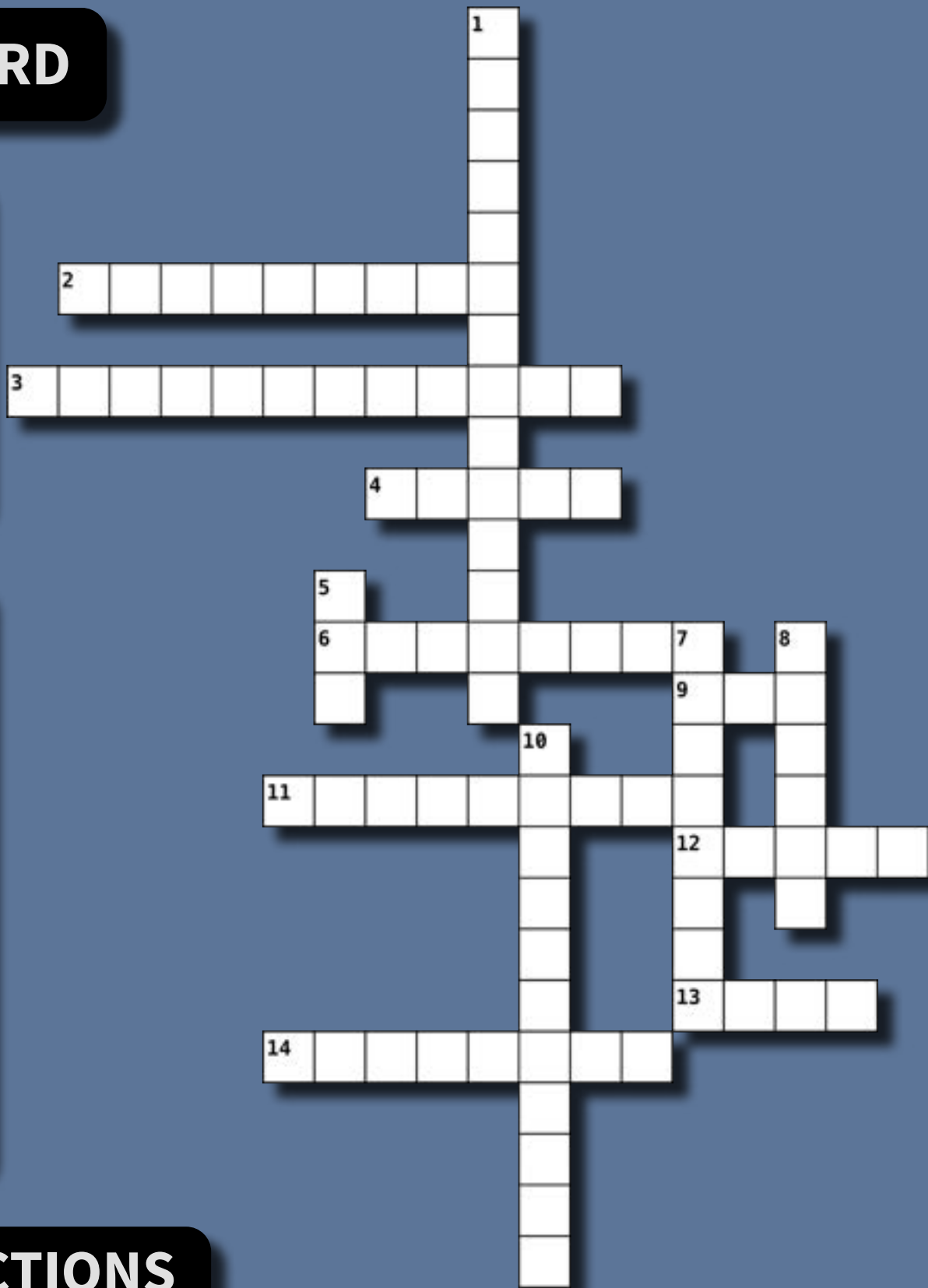
WINTER CROSSWORD

DOWN

1. "A" in PIRATE Pride
5. River behind Riverside
7. Decade Riverside opened
8. Color that used to be in Riverside's logo
10. Current zodiac season (pg. 11)

ACROSS

2. A coniferous tree the color of envy
3. A warm winter drink
4. "It's not about what to ____, but how to ____,," (pg. 5)
6. Riverside and ____ compete in the Battle for the North
9. Government organization (pg. 2)
11. State champion (pg. 8)
12. Tree lots run by ____ (pg. 4)
13. We're all hoping for another ____ day
14. Dr. Woods-Weeks' lunchtime patrol vehicle



NYT STYLE CONNECTIONS

Create groups of four out of the words, placing them into categories!

HOT CHOCOLATE

SLEDDING

MOVIE THEATER

BROWN

HAYES

RESTAURANT

ORANGE

GREEN

SKIING

GOLD

YELLOW

BOWLING

ICE SKATING

OAKLEY

PICNIC

RED
