



Camille's Corner

Student learns from Free Spirit program

Camille Herren | Editor

During the summer, I experienced one of the greatest opportunities I have ever been given. It was something that I will never forget. In February, my journalism teacher, Erin Coggins, told me about a scholarship that offered \$1,000 and a free trip to Washington D.C. I would be able to meet successful journalists and a group of people from around the United States. So I applied.

The program is called the "Al Neuharth Free Spirit and Journalism Conference." One student from every state was selected to be a part of the experience. Once, I was accepted, I began preparing for my trip.

After arriving at Washington D.C., I was dazzled by the Capitol through the plane's window and entering the hotel, I met other students and the program's coordinators. Thus began the conference.

I realized at this conference that although this country may be divided, we are not as different as we may believe. Alabamians are not alien to New Yorkers. Americans are closer than we realize and what we believe about regional differences may be prejudice. We listen to the same music, shop at the same stores and see the same events occurring within our society every day.

I also learned about dealing with the "fake news" rhetoric we confront everyday. The journalists who came to speak to us were asked at least once about the idea of "fake news" being thrown at them. The sense that I received from their responses was that journalists just have to keep moving forward and continue to do their job; holding the government responsible and remaining transparent. This can be applied to any aspect of life. People may pull us down but we have to keep going. Criticism has always been there, but it can be beneficial and it does not have to hinder our abilities.

Most importantly, I learned from Al Neuharth, founder of USA Today. He is the reason the conference exists. It is incredible to me that his family members continue his legacy as well as other journalists. Although he passed on before I came to the conference, I learned so much from him. The most important was about how vital the First Amendment is. If we continue to stand up for it, we can ensure our access to information and free expression.

Communication should improve to keep students, staff informed



Illustrated by Storm Jessett

There are a plethora of methods that our administration uses to disperse important information to the student body. However, time and time again we see that information falls through the cracks and students miss out on opportunities. Students as well as administration and faculty members contribute to the issue.

Unfortunately, intercom announcements are made during the busiest time of the morning and when most students are still trying to wake up. School social media is also obsolete and unused because students have moved on to different platforms such as Snapchat and Instagram. Sometimes, students are left out of the loop entirely because their classes are at the Ninth Grade Academy or their teachers—scrambling to make time—fail to give out the information. Despite the school system spending a large amount of time, effort and resources to try to solve the miscommunication problem, there has been no tangible effect. For instance, the new TVs—intended to be effective in spreading school news and future events—go unnoticed by the student body.

There are solutions to this issue. Most importantly, students should listen to the announcements and utilize the alternative forms of communication offered to them. But sometimes, remembering the information can be difficult with all the other responsibilities students have, so the administration should take extra steps to release updates. If students are not proactively listening to announcements, there is nothing the administration can do for them. But for those willing to

cooperate, repeating announcements would help ensure understanding. A school-wide Remind 101 would also be beneficial to all because it is a simple and efficient program. Then, students and teachers could receive information easily without overwhelming their phones.

We understand that keeping over 1,000 students informed can be a daunting task but effective communication can be achieved only through effort on both sides. Students and administration should take more consideration to uphold their end of the stick and then we can all be on the same page.

Our View 7-0 in favor

Rules for freshman make little sense

Kaylyn Jones | Editor

On the annual Senator's Day, about a week before the new school year begins, students flood the buildings to receive schedules, parking passes, bus information and walking passes for freshman students who have older siblings at the high school building. These passes permit those freshman students access to walk across the street in the afternoon—only the afternoon.

The students at the freshman building are not allowed to use these passes in the morning. The older sibling or friend instead has to sit in a line of traffic anywhere from 10 to 15 minutes just to drop said student off. This has caused many objections and complaints to arise from the student body as it not only backs up morning traffic even more, but it is also deemed as a waste of



Photo by Cady Harbin

Why? The crosswalk is open to freshman once the bell rings, causing siblings to wait in car line.

time and money for a walking pass to only be used once a day when the school day is over.

Although the rule does not seem to make much sense to the older student body, perhaps the rule is set for the freshman's safety as they are crossing over with upperclassmen, but that is also contradictory. How would it be "more safe" for these students to cross over only in the

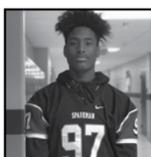
afternoon? Maybe it decongests the student traffic flow while trying to transition into their first block classes. Regardless, it seems a little dramatic to make a big deal for a green slip that is not even checked as the freshman students cross the street to ride home with an upperclassman.

Every day before crossing the street from the freshman building to the high school

building, the freshman students are reminded to have their green slips ready to be checked before crossing over but no action to actually go through with checking them is pursued. The upperclassmen at the high school are not required to have a walking pass while commuting to and from the two buildings. Rules are set for reasons, even if those reasons are not always clear.

Your View

What do you think of communication in the school and how can we improve it?



"I think the communication is good, but if we changed anything I would change the way teachers and students communicate with each other."
--sophomore Darius Roston



"[We should] get a little more detail. Announce [in] more time prior to what is happening."
--senior D.J. Adams



"Have different topics on the announcements, maybe a different voice [and] some puns on the announcements."
--junior Evie Dickerson



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Mission Statement

The *Crimson Crier* will report objectively on issues directly and indirectly affecting the student body and the school community. As student journalists, we understand our role in a global society to abide by the ethics of professional journalism in order to ensure a more informed student body.

Policy

The *Crimson Crier* is an open forum for free expression by the Sparkman High School Community. The *Crimson Crier* is a student-run publication produced in the state of Alabama. All final design, reporting and content decisions are the responsibility of the student journalists of Sparkman High School under the guidance of their adviser. The views articulated in *The Crimson Crier* do not necessarily represent the views of the entire staff, Sparkman High School or the Madison County school district. Copies are distributed to the faculty, staff and student body free of charge. The Madison County Record prints 2,000 copies, eight times yearly.

Letters to the Editor

The *Crimson Crier* will print all letters to the editor as long as space will allow, and may edit letters for grammatical mistakes. All letters to the editor must be signed and include contact information of the writer. Letters can be dropped off at the Sparkman High School newsroom (127) one week after publication.

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