The Popular Craze of Summer 2014: ALS Ice Bucket Challenge

By ALISON TRAUTMAN and ASHLEY WELLS

During the summer of 2014, a huge craze splashed across the nation: the ALS ice bucket challenge. For weeks, people all over the country posted videos of themselves dumping ice water on their heads on social media and challenging others to either do the same or donate to the ALS Association. Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) is often commonly referred to as Lou Gehrig’s disease and is a neurodegenerative disease that progressively affects nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord. We decided to poll 53 VCU honors students to get their opinion on this controversial trend.

Surprisingly, only one-third of respondents actually completed the challenge despite it seeming to proliferate across everybody’s Facebook feeds. The remaining two-thirds neither completed the challenge nor donated for a variety of reasons, the main two being lack of funds and/or nominations. Some comments were quite surprising; Marcella said, “I don’t jump on dumb bandwagon causes that followers know next to nothing about anyway. There are better things to donate time and or/money to.” Holly, on the other hand, admitted that “The idea of donating is wonderful” but emphasized that “the actual dumping of ice on your head then nominating someone else to do it is stupid.” One respondent even compared it to the Kony2012, saying, “Family friend died of ALS. Dumping ice water on your head doesn’t really help. Yes you can raise awareness but that’s not doing much (think back to the Kony trend a few years back).”

Although many people in the country participated in the challenge, it seems as though the real question is whether they understood the true meaning behind it. About two-fifths of the population surveyed claimed they knew the reason: ice was used to allow (continued on page 2)
Features

ALS Ice Bucket Challenge, cont.

by Hayat Adawi

“The hard work!”

This rally cry could not have been more appropriate for a cloudy Saturday morning, when a gaggle of bleary-eyed Honors freshmen made their way to the Larrick Student Center for the annual Honors Freshman Retreat on September 6th. We were enthusiastically welcomed by Greg Huber, president of Challenge Discovery, an organization that works to build teamwork and leadership skills. According to him, the main goal of the retreat was to build teamwork and leadership skills.

I personally felt that the retreat was a success, as the students were able to interact with each other and build strong bonds.

Discovering Richmond’s Culture of Cuisine: Restaurant Review of Fresca

By Gaston Arze

Fresca is one of a handful of quaint venues that line South Addison street, nestled by Fire Station 12 and only a block from the original Lamplighter. I lunched at Fresca on an overcast day in October with VCUarts sophomore Bridgett Low. The atmosphere was modest, but in this case, less was truly more; what wasn’t invested in interior design had gone into obtaining the atmosphere and great coffee. Despite the cost, I know that I’ll be returning the next time I’m in town.

Cuisine: Restaurant Review of Fresca

By GASTON ARZE

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The festive tacos were served last. Fresca offers the option to pick three of four taco varieties; Bridgett and I chose the curry vegetable, the seitan asada, and the avocado toscas. The steamed vegetables in the curry vegetable taco were disappointingly soggy. This was a shame as if they had been pan-fried, this taco could have been my favorite. The curry mayo, on the other hand, was creamy and flavorful; the parsley fresh and crisp; the sea salt garnish added a nice contrast to the boiled potatoes. However, both the Greek salad and kale pizzas sounded like delectable alternatives. Pizza at Fresca, where quality is preferred to quantity, are of a higher caliber than from other venues like Christian’s. The contrasting textures of the silky soup and the brittle almonds was timeless, and the silky soup and the brittle almonds were a highlight of my entire meal.

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Creativity Spotlight

Hand drawn pieces (top, right, bottom)
“Daddy,” “The End,” “The Growing Gap”
by BRIANNA JACKSON

Acrylic and Still Life Paintings
by MARK PEYTON

Photographs by GASTON ARZE

Pen and Ink Wash (below)
by RACHEL GINGRICH

Acrylic Painting “Snip Snip”
by CARMEN SMITH

Mock Movie Poster (far right)
by CARMEN SMITH

Riddles of the Heart
by JASMINE PHAGUDA
They say nothing is Perfect
and,
You claim, “we were No-thing”
I say, “Nothing lasts Forever”
So,
exactly how long were we eternally, perfectly Nothing for?

Photographs by KAYURI SHAH

Photograph “To Wake Again”
by KAYURI SHAH
Diversity Spotlight

Q&A with Honors Student Sahil Aggarwal: Founder of Pendulum Global

By Danielle Austen

In a few words, what is the main goal of Pendulum Global?

Pendulum Global is the world’s first cohesive empowerment organization for adolescents made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS in Africa—a means through which these impacted adolescents can have an unbiased program with their HIV which to share their feelings, hopes, desires, and dreams in a safe space without being stigmatized from community members. These adolescents also must be reminded that their HIV status does not define them, that they can still grow to become leaders within their community.

Why Pendulum empowerment?

The need for empowerment of these adolescents stems from the societal stigma that exists in the form of family rejection and isolation, denial of healthcare access, and barring from social institutions such as religious activities. [They] fear going to clinics to get tested for HIV and obtain their antiretroviral medications... This has directly caused an excessively high rate of mother to child transmission of HIV within Swaziland, giving the country the highest antenatal HIV prevalence in the world - over 40% of all babies who are born in Swaziland will be born HIV-positive.

How did you get involved?

I had been working on a local and national level with the U.S. Fund for UNICEF since my Freshman year, founding the UNICEF chapter here at VCU as well as becoming a National Council member for the U.S. Fund for UNICEF to help manage the 130+ chapters that make up the Campus Activist Program. Now, as the Senior National Council Member who oversees the new council while developing ways to engage more college students towards child welfare, I became inspired to start something that I can call my own—to identify an issue that is often overlooked, the social stigma of diseases, and find an innovative solution to the issue.

How can the Honors College get involved?

Students can become volunteers in our pen pal program and be connected to an adolescent in Swaziland! Check out www.pendulumglobal.org for more details. [My colleague, Ahsan Ahmad and I created a program that] consists of three core activities that we believe will allow for those adolescents in Swaziland to break the cycle of social stigma in their communities while giving college students the opportunities to apply skills that they learn to this endeavor. The first is a pen pal program that connects US college students to the adolescents affected by HIV/AIDS... for approximately 9 months [and after our webinar training series that will educate our college student volunteers about all aspects of HIV infection as well as how to engage in meaningful conversations with their adolescents during the pen pal program. Finally, and what I am most excited about is a service project component to our organization. As part of the pen pal program, each adolescent will brainstorm some small service project that he or she wants to do in Swaziland, and then we will provide the adolescent with the funds, resources, and support to make that project a reality. In this way, we hope that adolescents impacted by HIV/AIDS will be able to not just brighten their communities, but be building towards community members towards individuals who are HIV-positive.

Features

Your Library Resource:

Interview with Megan Hodge, Librarian

By Amy Thurston

Le Monde: What exactly does your job entail?

Megan Hodge: My title is Teaching and Learning Librarian. There are 4 of us with this same title, but we each have our own specialty. I work with the Honors College and also the Global Education Office, whereas the other Teaching and Learning Librarians work with transfer students and the University College. I started this position at the end of August 2014, but I’ve been with VCU since September 2013.

Additionally, I teach classes for the University College and am the social sciences editor for Auctus.

LM: What did yo do before working with the Honors College?

Megan: I worked with the University College and UNIV 200 classes, and I am still involved in teaching those. But before I came to VCU, I was a public librarian in Chesterfield and I worked at Randolph-Macon College and J. Sergeant Reynolds.

LM: How can students utilize you for HONR 200?

Megan: I can help students in HONR 200 who need help with narrowing their topic, identifying main points. Since the research problems are very original, it may be hard to find enough sources that directly relate to such a specific topic. I could be helpful in blending sources that already exist so that they could be applied to the student’s original topic.

I am set up as a Teaching Assistant on Blackboard for Professor Boyes’ and Professor Prichard’s classes, so I am in the loop about what students are still struggling with.

LM: What about your Honors Students?

Megan: Students can utilize me in all sorts of ways. I am the liaison with the Honors College, and a lot of Honors students want to study abroad or apply for grants that require a formulated proposal. I can help with those applications. I can be the person to go to for help with those sorts of things. I have training in fields that like to stay up to date on the newest findings, such as the medical field, I can help with some advanced searching tools and help set up alerts to notify those students when something new is published about that particular topic. I can help with basically anything involving research, and I can always refer students to other resources if I can’t be of assistance.

LM: What do you enjoy about your job?

Megan: I bet most students aren’t aware of our grad school application resources. In addition to having pens for the GRE, GMAT, MCAT, etc., we also have the Testing & Education Reference Center. This has a number of study guides for all the major grad school application/aptitude exams, as well as multiple practice tests for each one. These exams are scored instantly and provide question-by-question feedback on incorrect answers.

Also, help is available at all hours. Students don’t even have to come to the library for help, they can use the testing option. So even at 4 am students can have their questions answered. [The number to text is (804) 435-5420]

LM: How should students contact you?

Megan: Generally via e-mail is best, but they are also welcome to call me. However, I’ve found that e-mail is the most straightforward and preferred choice of students.

[mhodge@vcu.edu]
Hip-hop music and college go hand in hand. Whether it be dancing to bass heavy tunes by Lil’ Wayne at parties, relaxing to laid back songs, or just hanging out with friends singing catchy songs by Iggy Azalea- the marriage of hip-hop music and college is irresistibly enticing to join and to jam along with.

But hip-hop offers more than just fun beats and flashy dance numbers: It can give advice about college internships and jobs. Hip-Hop artists are some of the most successful in the music industry and have lots of experience in making money and leaving their mark with their music.

College can be intimidating at first. However, it becomes so much easier to ditch your fear in exchange for strength when listening to hip-hop music. These artists and their songs, with lyrics taken entirely out of context, can guide you to finding a job or internship at school and enhance your college experience as a whole.

Live your Life- T.I. feat. Rihanna

“Never mind what the haters say / Ignore them ‘til they fade away.”

If there is an anthem from the early 2000’s preaching positivity and doing your own-its Live your Life. You are in college and there will always be people who think you can’t do it, so: Believe in yourself. Remember college is about your personal quest- do as you desire and follow your interests whether it be a job at an art gallery or internship at Children’s Museum of Richmond. Your positive attitude and fervent conviction will see you through the end!

Superstar- Lupe Fiasco

“If you are what you say you are, a superstar / then have no fear, the camera’s here.”

That’s what we all want to be, right? Superstars! If you are searching for a job or internship, you have already taken the first step toward your super stardom. Your resume showcases all the things you’ve accomplished and boasts to prospective employers that you have what it takes. Be yourself and don’t be afraid to put yourself out there. The spotlight is all yours- this is what you were made for, now it’s only a matter of time until your name is in the rafters.

Try Again- Aaliyah

“If at first you don’t succeed/ Dust yourself off and try again.”

“Try again” is basic, but often forgotten in college; do not shy away from failure. Applying to research positions and internships can be an arduous process. Often, you may not get exactly what you wanted. The biggest challenge is to do something with everything you have learned and push yourself to do it even better the next time. E-mail more professors to find research positions, network more and get your name out, but never give up; and keep trying until you make it.

Lose Yourself- Eminem

“If you had one shot / or one opportunity / to seize everything you ever wanted / in one moment / would you capture it or just let it slip?”

Eminem is hands down one of the most lyrical artists the music industry has ever seen, and Lose Yourself may arguably be his most recognized work ever. Eminem’s intro summarizes what the entire song is about: seizing your chance at success or regretting that it passed. Walking into an interview can be daunting but make the most of this time and shine! Tell the interviewer why you want this job and be honest; your resilient passion will lead you to success. This, essentially, reminds me of a phrase popularized by the late Robin Williams in his movie The Dead Poets’ Society: “Carpe diem.”

Eminem and Robin Williams were obviously on the same wavelength in different time periods.

Work-Iggy Azalea

“I’ve been up all night tryna’ get that rich / I’ve been work work work...”

Now that you have made it to your dream internship or job, its time to grind. Iggy preaches the benefits of working hard-“that rich.” If you are working for money, do your job and get paid! Even if you are not, there is no substitute to hard work. You will only get farther with dedication. Employers and supervisors love interested and invested interns- working hard will help you get to the next step.