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NINERTIMES

Vol. 35, Issue 14

Jan. 10, 2023

NINERTIMES.COM

OPINION:
**NORTH CAROLINA MUST
INVESTIGATE
HUNTERSVILLE CANCER
CLUSTERS**

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Huntersville cancer cluster map.

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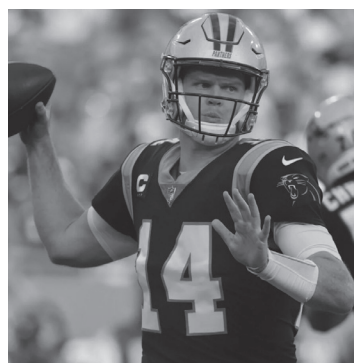
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NEW YEAR, NEW NINER TIMES

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM OUR PUBLICATION THIS YEAR

PRINTING FREQUENCY (SWITCHING TO BI-WEEKLY)

This semester the Niner Times will be switching to bi-weekly printing instead of weekly. While we will miss having a new issue each week, we can improve the quality of our content and focus on other areas by lessening our printing frequency.

Additionally, most of our audience has been through Instagram and ninertimes.com. In fall 2022, we completely changed our strategy on Instagram and saw great results. From Aug. 22 to Nov. 16, we reached 23.6k accounts (an 871% increase) and had 13.9k accounts engage with our page and content. We are shifting our focus as a publication to be 'digital first' and will be creating more content to better inform our community.

NEW ILLUSTRATOR/DESIGNER POSITION

The Niner Times is always looking for more members. This semester, we have begun to hire illustrators and designers. We are looking for people with background experience in illustration, making cartoons or creating infographics. Illustrators and designers will be assisting the Layout section and other section editors with generating graphics for print and online stories.

For more information about these positions and to apply, email layout@ninertimes.com or visit the form below: <https://forms.gle/nThqrvTNkPCygBLo9>.

MORE CAMPUS COVERAGE

In fall 2022, the Niner Times published content covering topics such as student organizations, campus events and breaking news. However, there is still room for improvement, so we aim to increase our coverage further.

By establishing connections with more campus offices and student organizations, we will have more content and people to cover through features and news articles. So far, the Niner Times has organized partnerships with 11 programs and student-run organizations.

WEBSITE AND PRINT UPDATES

In addition to our other improvements, we are updating the design of both ninertimes.com and our bi-weekly print issue.

For print, we have increased our page count from 12 to 16 pages to allow for more content and visuals. Additionally, we have made changes to our design elements and style. Each print issue will also have a game section.

For ninertimes.com, we will be making design changes to ensure easy access to articles, photo galleries and videos. An announcement will be made on our social media and weekly newsletter once the changes are live.

Thank you for continuing to support the Niner Times. We look forward to covering the semester ahead and being a source of news for the UNC Charlotte community.



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GETTING INVOLVED?

THE NINER TIMES IS
LOOKING FOR...

WRITERS,
PHOTOGRAPHERS,
VIDEOGRAPHERS
& ILLUSTRATORS!

PLEASE EMAIL
EDITOR@NINERTIMES.COM
TO JOIN

The Niner Times reflects on the fall 2022 semester

by the Niner Times Staff

Note: This article has been adapted from various articles published in the fall 2022 semester.

Fall 2022 on-campus housing shortage

Housing and Residence Life placed 141 students in their expanded University housing. The students' temporary living arrangements were as follows: 91 students at The Edge Apartments, 26 at the Sonesta Select Hotel and 24 at the Holiday Inn Hotel.

Sikh student detained for wearing a kirpan

A Sikh student was detained by the UNC Charlotte Police on Sept. 22 for wearing a kirpan in Popp Martin Student Union. The incident was brought to light through social media the following day, containing a video of his interaction with the police. The student's tweet went viral in less than 24 hours. On Nov. 17, Charlotte announced a change to the Weapons on Campus policy to allow the possession of kirpans on campus.

Man arrested for trespassing in the Student Union

A man was arrested by the campus police for trespassing in the Student Union on Oct. 20. The man, wearing pink boots and a pink vest, was charged with possession of drugs and intent to distribute, trespassing, resisting arrest and assaulting a police officer, according to a statement released by the Student Government Association. The man was then removed from the Union in handcuffs and escorted by four police officers to a campus police car.

Ra'Quan Leary named 2022 Golden Niner

Ra'Quan Leary was announced as the Golden Niner at the halftime of the homecoming football game on Oct. 22 for the 2022-2023 school year. Leary is a third-year at Charlotte majoring in middle-grade education. The Golden Niner receives awards, including \$500 and a Golden Niner Pickaxe. In fall 2024, Leary will pass the Golden Niner Pickaxe onto the 2023 winner at next year's homecoming football game.



Students dance at the Latinx Student Union gala | Photo by Miguel Sanchez-Nuñez



Native American Student Association's first annual powwow | Photo by Katelyn Kerr

UNC Charlotte's head football coach fired and replaced

Charlotte football fired Head Coach Will Healy on Oct. 23 following a homecoming game loss to Florida International University that eliminated the 49ers from bowl contention. On Nov. 15, Charlotte administration announced that the University of Michigan's Associate Head Coach Francis "Biff" Poggi would replace Healy. Poggi is the third head coach in the 49ers' football program.

Anti-abortion group set up graphic display in CHHS/COED plaza

An anti-abortion group known as the Genocide Awareness Project set up a graphic display comparing abortion to genocide in the College of Human Health and Services and College of Education plaza on Oct. 26-27. Students and faculty held counter-protests that garnered attention from campus and local news outlets.

Iran Student Organization held Rally for Human Rights

The Iranian Student Organization hosted a march on campus to protest the Islamic regime in Iran from Cato Hall to Woodward Hall on Oct. 26. Mahsa Amini was featured on many signs. Amini was 22 when she was arrested for

allegedly wearing her hijab improperly. While detained, she was said to be severely beaten and died three days later. Several marchers cut their hair in solidarity during the march.

First annual powwow held at UNC Charlotte

The first annual Native American powwow was held at UNC Charlotte on Oct. 29 by the Native American Student Association. The powwow's goal was to raise cultural awareness and celebrate Native American culture on campus.

Latinx Student Union held second-annual charity gala

The Latinx Student Union hosted its second annual gala for students and members of their organization in the Popp Martin Student Union on Dec. 4. The Hollywood-themed gala, "Maravillas de Invierno," was a charity gala to raise funds for the spring semester.

SoVi Dining Hall held Late Night Breakfast

The Student Involvement Office held the annual pre-exam Late Night Breakfast on Dec. 7 from 9-11 p.m. in the SoVi Dining Hall. The dining hall was filled with large crowds, a DJ and an ice cream bar.

Gold bus line returns to UNC Charlotte

by Jessica Ceballos
News Editor

As of Jan. 3, 2023, the Gold bus line returned to UNC Charlotte for students and staff.

Parking and Transportation Services (PaTS) announced the updated changes for the spring 2023 semester on their website.

The bus schedule will reflect the following changes:

- The Gold line service will operate Monday through Friday, 6-2 a.m.
- Beginning Jan. 9, the Red line will run Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- The Green and Silver routes will now run until 2 a.m. instead of midnight.
- The Greek Village Shuttle schedule will remain the same, running during the limited schedule on weekdays from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
- Niner Paratransit will operate on weekdays from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m.
- The shopping shuttle will still be available Friday through Sunday from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m.

“The staffing and labor shortages that were sparked during COVID were not just isolated to one or two industries. The professional driving industry was hit hard,” said Michael Christenbury, assistant director for transportation. “We were struggling before COVID. So that perpetuated the issues with recruiting and retaining people in the workforce. In addition, the federal regulations that govern CDL drivers became more stringent in February 2022. So it made it even more difficult for those who wanted to enter the field to become a CDL driver. This was not just for new drivers but also recertification.”

Before the pandemic, PaTS dealt with staffing shortages. However, the pandemic caused bus drivers to decline and become more challenging to hire. UNC Charlotte uses the contract vendor Academy Bus to obtain bus drivers.

“[Academy Bus is] a nationwide company, and they have other terminals that have operations up and down the east coast,” said Christenbury. “So they are pulling drivers from these other locations with a time commitment to help fill the gaps that we have in our normal

staffing pool for Niner Transit. So those drivers have been arriving all week [and] they have started training.”

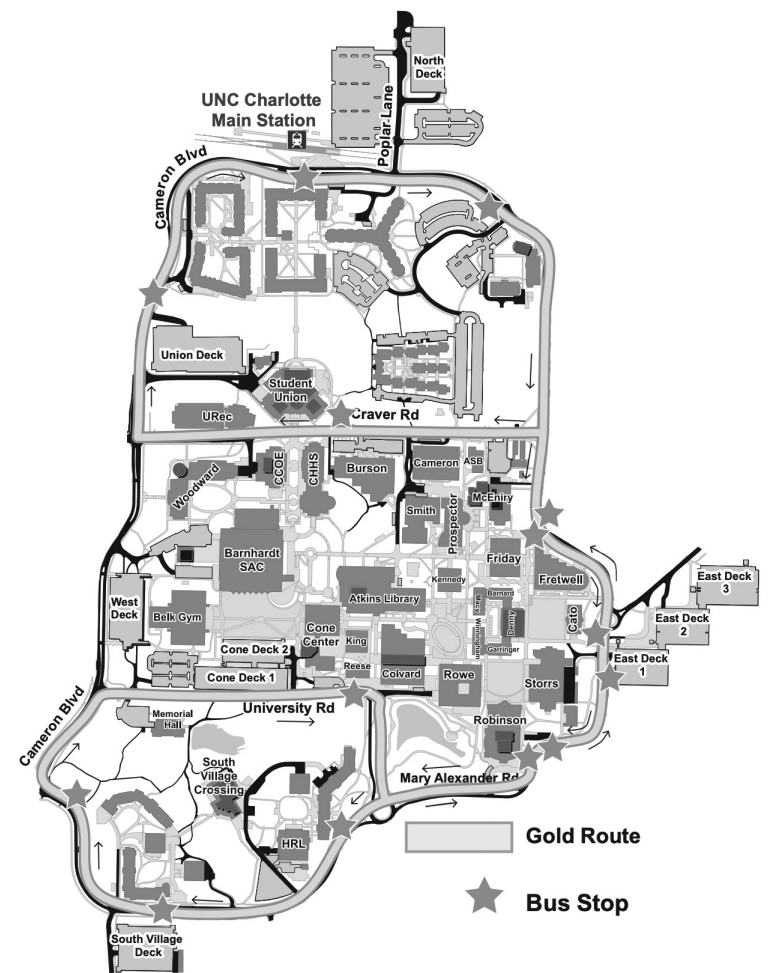
With staffing shortages and difficulty hiring certified drivers, PaTS decided to let the Gold line go. Christenbury said that 10% of the volume of riders were riding the Gold route, 35% on the Green route and 55% on the Silver line. These numbers helped PaTS decide which line to let go of temporarily.

The Gold bus returned because the ride time was too long to get from one destination to the other. The Gold route is the same as the Green Line but runs in the opposite direction.

On the Silver route, four buses run regularly. A fifth Silver bus was added to deal with the traffic from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. The fifth Silver bus was then turned into the Red route.

“We’re hoping that adding [the Red route] will help expedite traffic from one side of campus to the other,” said Christenbury.

The Red bus route started in the spring of 2020 as an express bus and an abbreviated Silver route with only five stops. The Red route started on Jan. 9.



Popp Martin Student Union amends building closing time to support student staff

BUILDING NOW CLOSES DAILY AT MIDNIGHT INSTEAD OF 1 A.M.

by Sunnya Hadavi
Editor-in-Chief

Starting in spring 2022, Popp Martin Student Union will close each night at midnight instead of the previous 1 a.m. closing time. The change was made to help student staff working night shifts at the Union.

Lack of public transportation after closing, walking home late and impacts on staff well-being and academic performance were some reasons for the change.

“At the start of the fall 2022 semester, our

student managers provided feedback that the shifts that went until the building closed at 1 a.m. were becoming challenging for a variety of reasons,” Morgan Meehan, director of Popp Martin Student Union, NinerTech and Cone University Center, said. “So we decided to review the data on how the Student Union is used in the late night hours to see how it matched up with the feedback we received.”

During spring and fall 2022 (151 days),

staff counted an average of six people in the Student Union open spaces between 12 - 1 a.m. In addition, wireless counters at the building entrances counted an average of 34 people (including staff) during those same times. Each accounted for less than 0.5% of the Union’s daily traffic.

“We discovered a drop in foot traffic and building usage starting around 9 p.m., which we would expect,” Meehan said. “This is when

meetings end and the dinner rush is over at Crown Commons. Additionally, zero events in the fall went past midnight. There are also no services open in the Union after midnight.”

Student managers and Student Affairs leadership supported changing Union hours to close at midnight. The Student Union Advisory Board also unanimously approved the proposal at their November meeting.

Continued on p. 6



Popp Martin Student Union | Niner Times File Photos

Continued from p. 5

“We continuously strive to fulfill our mission to be the center of student life on campus and UNC Charlotte’s ‘living room of campus,’ and we believe we can still fulfill this mission if we close at midnight,” Meehan said. “I believe this change will help our student staff to run the

“I believe this change will help our student staff to run the building operations better and manage their teams, which in turn, will provide a better experience for the campus community.”

Morgan Meehan
Director of Popp Martin Student Union,
NinerTech and Cone University Center

building operations better and manage their teams, which in turn, will provide a better

experience for the campus community.”

Closing the Union earlier is said to improve energy efficiency and consumption habits.

“While not major factors, closing at midnight will also help reduce our energy consumption and allow for some money savings which we can [be used] for upgrades or new services. You’d be surprised how much our utility bill can go down when we can cut back on lights and air conditioning for an hour,” said Meehan.

Groups and organizations can request a ‘late close’ if they would like their event extended beyond midnight by paying the required fee.

Complete building hours can be found on the Union’s website, including changes for the summer and academic breaks.

Students find mold in UNC Charlotte residence halls

by Benjamin Greenzaid
Staff Writer

Students found mold in Sanford Hall, Martin Hall and Greek Village air vents in November and December 2022.

Rumors of mold began circulating on Nov. 12 when a parent posted pictures of black mold in her son’s air vents on Facebook. Since then, others have shown evidence of mold in their dorm rooms.

First-year student Taylor Reilly said, “When I first moved into Sanford Hall in August, I noticed the appearance of either mildew, black mold or mold in and around the air vent in my room as well as the bathroom’s air vent.”

Second-year student Emily Grillo, who lives in Martin Hall, said she and her roommates found black mold in their living room air vent in November.

The Facebook post says that the student had been suffering from anxiety and headaches since moving into college. This is similar to an unexplained illness Reilly and her roommate had after finding the mold.

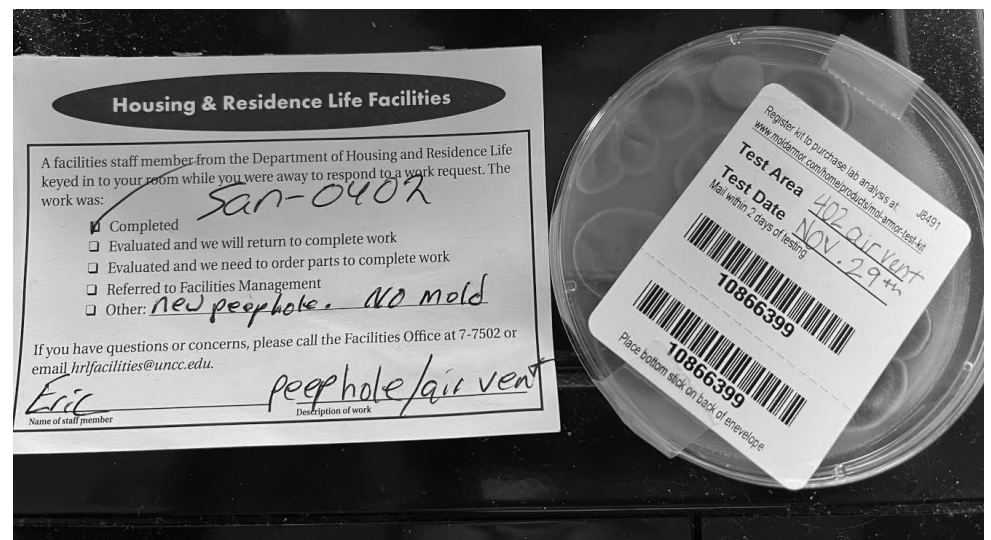
Reilly said, “We had both been getting sick since moving in. We have an air purifier in the room, and yes, the sickness could be from multiple things, but the Student Health Center at UNC Charlotte does not know what either of us had. My roommate has been sick for two months now.”

According to the CDC’s Basic Facts about Mold, mold grows in places with lots of moisture and dampness, such as leaks in roofs or walls, but it also can grow in wallpaper and ceiling tiles. Mold has been linked to health symptoms such as headaches, a stuffy nose, watery and itchy eyes and persistent coughing. For people with asthma, symptoms can range from wheezing to chest tightness or shortness of breath.

Reilly said she talked to Housing & Residence Life (HRL) staff to remove the mold, and Charlotte offered to provide emergency housing until the mold removal is complete. Charlotte’s staff also reportedly checked her space very quickly, coming only a day after she submitted a maintenance request.

Reilly also said, “I think this is a real health and safety concern. I know there isn’t enough housing to move everyone with mold in their air vent. I know our building is getting torn down after this year, which is a good step, but until then, I think they need to try their best to fix the mold in our air vents. This way, all of our health can improve.”

The parent’s Facebook post relays the same message, saying, “I trusted the University that they inspect and clean thoroughly before students move in in the fall.”



Sample of mold found in student’s air vent at Sanford Hall | Courtesy of Taylor Reilly

Housing & Residence Life has a website section devoted to mold and its detection. Steps for students to test and locate mold and prevention include reporting water leaks, regularly cleaning bathrooms and private spaces and opening the bathroom door for at least 30 minutes after a shower to prevent steam buildup.

Housing & Residence Life also conducts

regular cooling and heating systems checks. HVAC units are regularly cleaned and repaired if needed.

According to the HRL website, “We will determine the cause of the mold or mildew, assess the severity, and properly clean it or take the other steps necessary to remove it.”

The friendship of Charlotte men's basketball guards Montre' Gipson and Lu'Cye Patterson have propelled 49ers to early success

by Bryson Foster
Sports Editor

The Charlotte men's basketball team is off to an 11-5 start this season. A highlight of the teams early success is the friendship between transfer guards Montre' Gipson and Lu'Cye Patterson.

Head Coach Ron Sanchez said the players fit right into the system.

"They are new and are learning every single day," said Sanchez. "They bring a lot of energy which is so important. I am hoping that this is just the start for them."

The road to Charlotte

Gipson, a native of DeSoto, Texas, started his collegiate career at Midland College. At Midland, he was an All-Western Junior College Athletic Conference first-team selection.

Gipson played his sophomore season at Ranger College before spending two years with the Tarleton State Texans. In 2021, he averaged 14.9 points per game while scoring double-figures in 26 of Tarleton's 31 games.

Gipson said multiple factors led him to Charlotte.

"When I visited, I loved the city, and Sanchez showed me ways to improve my game," said Gipson. "It motivated me to come to Charlotte because he really cared about making me a better player."

Redshirt sophomore Patterson was a high school phenom who recorded 2,900 career points, 700 rebounds and 800 assists at Minnesota Prep Academy. He spent two seasons at Missouri State, appearing in 57 games while leading the team to an NIT postseason tournament appearance.

Patterson said he had similar reasons for transferring to Charlotte.

"I was a big fan of the city and already loved North Carolina," said Patterson. "I had a great talk with Sanchez, and he wanted to give me the ultimate ability to be the best version of myself."

Beginning of friendship

Their friendship began when both players arrived in Charlotte. Patterson said they instantly bonded and did everything together.

"When we first came here, we had to stay in a hotel," said Patterson. "We did everything

with each other such as eating and working out. I figured we had the same type of game, and we complemented each other well."

Gipson said they have been there for each other since their stay in the hotel.

"Staying in the hotel was the start of our friendship," said Gipson. "We bonded, and we are here now."

The duo, who are both guards, have named themselves the 'backcourt bros.' Both players are facilitators and feed off each other on and off the court. The nickname, Patterson said, came from an Instagram post.

"We had posted a picture, and I called ourselves the backcourt brothers, and it just stuck from there," said Patterson.

Key production

Both players have had an instant impact producing at a high level. Gipson and Patterson are averaging 7.7 and 9.1 points per game, respectively.

Patterson was a vital part of the team's thrilling victory over Detroit Mercy on Dec. 10, 2022, where he recorded 22 points, seven assists and seven rebounds. His shot with 42 seconds left in overtime propelled the 49ers to an 82-80 win.

Patterson said the team is firing on all cylinders and are leaning on each other.

"The team is clicking on and off the floor," said Patterson. "It is easy for us to bond and have good chemistry on the court."

In the team's loss to FIU on Thursday, Jan. 5, Gipson was a bright spot, recording 14 points, a season-high. He also went 3-4 from

three, keeping the 49ers in the game down the stretch.

Sanchez said the duo continues to take strides on the court.

"I hope they continue to improve and implement our systems," said Sanchez. "Their leadership is valuable; the biggest part is that they are selfless."

Looking ahead

The 49ers are 2-3 in Conference USA (C-USA) play while boasting wins over Louisiana Tech and Middle Tennessee. The team got off to a fast start posting a 4-0 record while recording wins over Boise State and Tulsa.

The expectations are high for the 49ers going into the rest of the year. Patterson said he has a list of team and personal goals he looks to achieve.

"Everybody wants to get to the C-USA

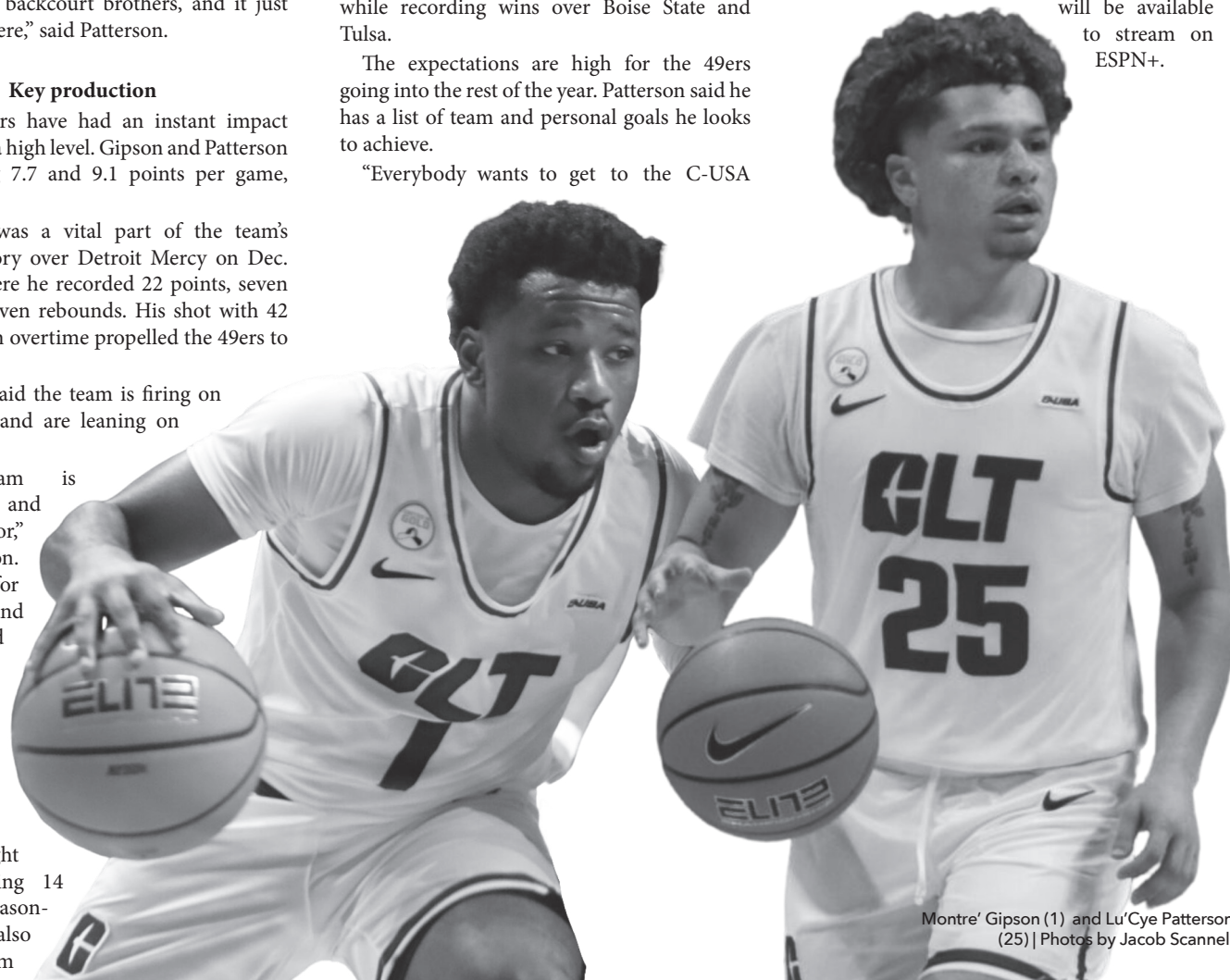
championship and win the conference," said Patterson. "I want to improve and hopefully make an all-conference team."

Gipson said the team cannot get ahead of itself.

"Our goals are to win the conference and go to the tournament. We have to take it one game at a time," said Gipson.

Next up

Patterson, Gipson and the 49ers will be back in action on Saturday, Jan. 14, when they take on the UTSA Roadrunners. Tipoff is set for 2 p.m. inside Halton Arena, and the contest will be available to stream on ESPN+.



Montre' Gipson (1) and Lu'Cye Patterson (25) | Photos by Jacob Scannell

Column: What to takeaway from the Carolina Panthers up and down 2022 season

by Josiah House
Staff Writer

As the 2022 NFL season ends, the Carolina Panthers carry on a tradition that fans are all too familiar with since owner David Tepper bought the panthers in 2018: missing the playoffs.

2022 also marked the second time Tepper has fired his head coach during the season, Ron Rivera in 2019 and Matt Rhule in 2022, and the fifth consecutive season with a losing record. While this unsatisfactory résumé should cement a grudging acceptance of what Sunday evening football would be, it makes the backdrop for the most impressive mid-season shift in franchise history even more vibrant.

The Panthers managed to do the unthinkable by completely resetting a fractured franchise's identity within a season, starting with interim head coach and Charlotte native Steve Wilks.

Wilks was brought in as a placeholder after Rhule's disastrous 1-4 start, and even with Tepper telling the press that Wilks would be given a fair chance at the head coach position in the 2023 off-season, the expectations were astronomically low for the Carolina Panthers heading into week six.

With a stumbling 24-10 loss to the Los Angeles Rams, the Panthers were far from clearing that bar. His no-nonsense attitude made up for what Wilks's first appearance as head coach lacked in on-field progression. Wilks benched Robbie Anderson after an altercation with a receivers coach and then traded Anderson to the Arizona Cardinals the next day.

This pragmatic approach brought a sense of professionalism the Panthers had lacked for years, and as his confidence in the team rose, so did the players' morale. The 2022 Panthers were hardnosed, resilient warriors. This tough love brought a sense of responsibility quickly felt by the players and the Panthers fanbase. Steve Wilks is a leader of men.

While undeniably significant for the future, this triumphant realization can only stay relevant if the play on the field matches the intensity of the Panther's newfound dictum.

Did they prove that they had the bite



Carolina Panthers quarterback Sam Darnold | Photo courtesy of Kim Klement-USA TODAY Sports

to back up their bark? The answer is more complex than relieving. Wilks has won five of his 11 games since taking over as the Panthers' head coach, three of which came after Sam Darnold took over as starting quarterback in week 12.

For every dominating and franchise-breaking rushing performance, there is a head-scratching dud of a rushing attack the week before. For every jaw-dropping 60+ yard TD pass, there is an equally confusing offensive meltdown the week after.

For most of the season, the defense was the only positive constant, so it was only fitting that the horrendous defensive showing in week 17 barred the Panthers from the playoffs. In week 17, Tampa Bay Buccaneer's wide receiver Mike Evans amassed 207 yards and three touchdowns.

The Panthers' performance in 2022 would fit better as a roller-coaster at Carowinds than at Bank of America Stadium. The twist and turns sum up an underwhelming transitional period, where a glimpse of elite-level play can

be seen, but the puzzle is far from complete.

Whether the future holds Wilks as the Panther's head coach or not, his leadership helped a team who performed with all the grace of a toddler throwing a temper tantrum in 2021. On paper, this season may look like one disappointment in a string of disappointing seasons, but 2022 allowed the Panthers to set the groundwork for a better future.

Looking forward, some pivotal players, like newcomers D'Onta Foreman and Bradley Bozeman, are not under contract. QBs are unclear, with 2022 rookie Matt Corral being the only QB under contract heading into 2023.

2022 saw the Panthers cracking eggs left and right, trading away Christian McCaffrey, cutting Baker Mayfield and firing Rhule and ex-defensive coordinator Phil Snow.

Panthers fans only hope is Tepper hires someone who can make a great omelet.

ELT CHARLOTTE 49ERS SCOREBOARD

RECENT GAMES DEC. 29 - JAN. 7

MEN'S BASKETBALL

Dec. 29:
Charlotte 82, Middle Tennessee 67

Dec. 31:
Charlotte 68, Louisiana Tech 66

Jan. 5:
Florida International 62, Charlotte 60

Jan. 7:
Florida Atlantic 71, Charlotte 67

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Dec. 29:
Middle Tennessee 71, Charlotte 46

Dec. 31:
Charlotte 66, Louisiana Tech 57

Jan. 5:
Florida International 71, Charlotte 63

Jan. 7:
Charlotte 77, Florida Atlantic 67

OVERALL STANDINGS

Men's Basketball: 11-5, 2-3;
No. 7 in Conference USA

Women's Basketball: 7-7, 3-2;
No. 4 in Conference USA

UPCOMING GAMES

Men's Basketball:
vs. UTSA on Saturday, Jan. 14 at 2 p.m.
Vs. UTEP on Monday, Jan. 16 at 4 p.m.

Women's Basketball:
@ UTSA on Saturday, Jan. 14 at 3 p.m.
@ UTEP on Monday, Jan. 16 at 3 p.m.

What you missed from Charlotte Basketball over winter break

by Joey Ellsworth
Asst. Sports Editor

Winter break for Charlotte ran from Dec. 16, 2022, to Jan. 8, 2023, but while classes were out, 49er basketball was still in full swing.

Over winter break, men's and women's basketball went 3-3, but both squads had notable moments fans may have missed.

Brice Williams' career week

In back-to-back 49ers victories against Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) and Louisiana Tech University (LA Tech), Williams averaged 31 points, five rebounds and 1.5 assists while shooting 78% from the field (18-23), 56% from beyond the 3-point line (5-9) and drained 21 total free throws.

Williams totaled 62 points in his two matches for the week while only playing a combined 55 minutes coming off the bench.

The two performances marked the first time a 49er scored 30+ in back-to-back games since Leemire Goldwire in 2008. This stellar week for the current redshirt junior 49ers guard led to him receiving multiple honors.

Williams was named the Conference USA (C-USA) Player of the Week with his outstanding performances.

Two days following his C-USA recognition, on Jan. 8, the United States Basketball Writers Association named Williams the Oscar Robertson National Player of the Week. This



Charlotte women's basketball team in a huddle during a game | Courtesy of Charlotte Athletics

makes him the first 49er to receive the award.

Williams, averaging 12.2 points per game and 4.1 rebounds per game while shooting 49.6% from the field, 47.9% from three and 83.6% from the charity stripe, is a significant threat for winning the C-USA Sixth Man of the Year Award while leading Charlotte in scoring despite coming off the bench in all 16 games this season.

Women's basketball begins conference play

The Charlotte women's basketball team began C-USA play on Dec. 19 with an 85-79 victory over the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB). After five conference matchups for the 49ers over their winter break, they now hold a 3-2 conference record. This puts them at No. 4 in the C-USA and one game out of No. 2.

Their five conference games has resulted in alternating wins and losses. The three

wins were against UAB, LA Tech and Florida Atlantic University (FAU).

In their latest outing, the 49ers took down FAU 77-67 as Dazia Lawrence dropped a career-high 31 points.

Their two conference losses came against formidable opponents. The first C-USA loss was to No. 1 MTSU, who are undefeated in conference play at 5-0. The other came against Florida International University, who are tied for No. 2 with a conference record of 3-1.

Men's basketball finishes 2022 year strong and continues to dominate at home

The men's basketball team won both games in the final week of December, taking down MTSU and LA Tech, backed by Williams' stellar week.

With the two victories coming within Halton Arena, the 49er's record at home improves to 7-0. This marks their best start

from home since the 2007-2008 season, where they also took victories in their first seven games at Charlotte.

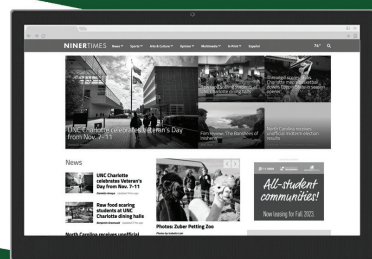
In January, the 49ers have yet to put up similar performances, losing both of their matches thus far in 2023 to drop them to 2-3 in conference matches, placing them No. 7 in the C-USA.

Up next

The men's and women's teams have a small break before returning to action following the start of the new semester. They each play the University of Texas at San Antonio on Jan. 14.

The men's game will be played in Halton Arena at 2 p.m. while the women's team heads south to San Antonio, Texas, for a 3 p.m. matchup. Both games will be broadcasted on ESPN+.

READ MORE ONLINE



NINERTIMES.COM

North Carolina must investigate Huntersville cancer clusters

by Lola Oliverio
Asst. Opinion Editor

Southwestern North Carolina has had a deadly issue bubbling under the surface for over a decade: abnormally high rates of rare cancers in the towns surrounding Lake Norman.

Despite ongoing concern from citizens, the state government has yet to establish any legislative push to fund cancer research. This is a serious problem, considering the severity of ocular melanoma. Ocular melanoma typically occurs in men over the age of 60 but has been disproportionately affecting young women in the Charlotte area, specifically in the town of Huntersville.

As of 2014, the N.C. central cancer registry claimed insufficient evidence to declare this phenomenon an actual cancer cluster. However, the organization admitted that gathering data regarding cancer diagnoses in specific areas is often complicated due to the registry's methods of designating and logging cases. Additionally, ocular melanoma is challenging to track due to the length of its incubation period.

Every attempt to research contributing factors to these cancer clusters has been futile. Ocular melanoma usually occurs in

just five per million people, but there have been over 20 cases in Huntersville, which has a population of around 60,000. The public is just as dumbfounded as when the first case was detected.

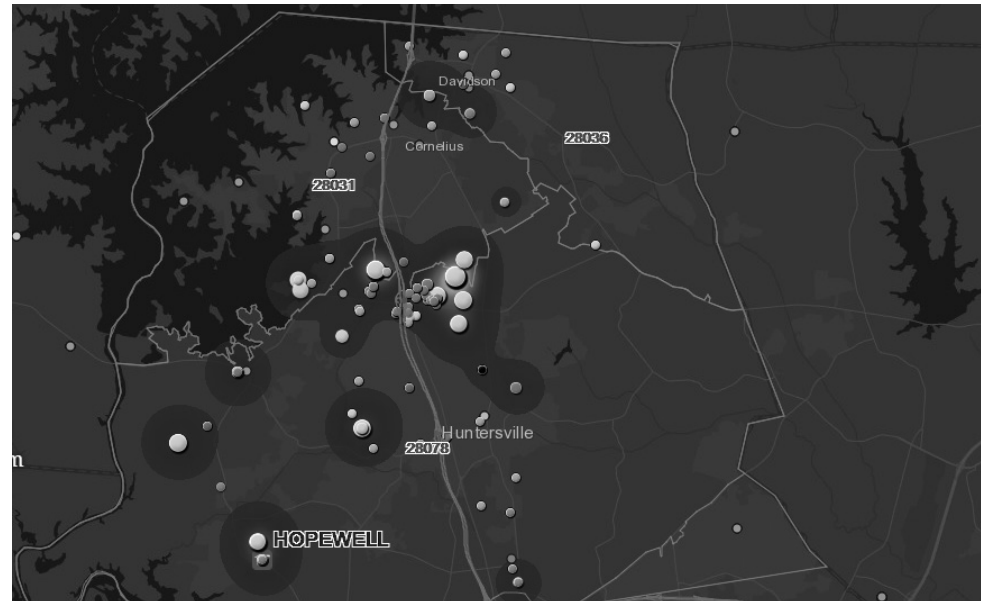
In 2016, a committee was appointed to investigate potential causes behind the cancer, but all research came back inconclusive. Additionally, there has been a push to allocate \$100,000 to research, but every bill proposed has failed to pass.

The only way to bring peace of mind to the affected families is to continue searching for a cause. The state government must take legislative action to determine occupational and environmental risks as well as general risk and protective factors.

A popular theory regarding the causative agent behind these clusters is that heaps of coal ash surrounding the Lake Norman area may increase one's cancer risk. Coal ash is the residue that remains after coal is burned, and a Duke Energy coal power plant is situated directly beside the lake. Coal ash often contains carcinogens, but scientists say no causal link exists between the substance and cancer development.

The citizens of Huntersville, Mooresville and the areas surrounding Lake Norman have been left with unanswered questions and concerns for years. Individuals cannot protect themselves against these deadly cancers and

live life not knowing which of their neighbors will receive a diagnosis next. North Carolina needs to invest funds and personnel into investigation and research before more residents fall victim to this devastating disease.



Huntersville cancer cluster map | Photo courtesy of WFAE

The mental health pandemic in college athletics

by Bryson Foster
Sports Editor

CW: Mentions of mental health struggles and suicide appear throughout this article.

The landscape of college athletics continues to grow as the NCAA becomes a multimillion-dollar corporation. Even with the organization's prosperity, a mental health pandemic affects college athletes.

The NCAA and major universities seem more concerned with making money than giving their athletes mental health resources. College athletes are seen as a number filling a quota rather than people with needs.

In a 2022 study by the NCAA, research found that college athletes are dealing with exhaustion, anxiety and depression nearly twice as much as before the pandemic. Additionally, the number of athlete suicides this year has risen to four as of August. College athletes' pressure is astronomical, and tragedies like these affect their families and teammates.

A notable case is Stanford soccer star Katie Meyer who took her own life. After an incident where Meyer dumped coffee on a football player accused of sexually assaulting one of her teammates, the University jumped into action, saying that she would be removed from the institution due to the coffee incident.

Meyer's family is suing Stanford, stating the discipline led directly to her death. Instead of counseling the women's soccer team, they jumped to protect a football player that should not have been on campus in the first place. The big question is why this is happening.

A college athlete's daily grind is brutal and filled with classes, lifts, practices and team meetings. This schedule takes up every part of the day while athletes struggle to find time to eat and do homework. It is not a healthy way to live and asks too much of college athletes.

The sad reality is that some coaches who should be protecting athletes are the root cause of this mental stress. Many love their athletes

as their own, but some let the power get to their heads. East Tennessee State fired softball Head Coach Belinda Hendrix on Nov. 15 after two former student-athletes came out on social media stating she was mentally and verbally abusive.

Moreover, college athletes face a mental toll from social media. If they miss a shot or fumble on the goal line, fans immediately go to Twitter or Instagram, bashing them for their failure. We forget these are 18-22-year-olds doing their best.

College should be a place where we are given tools to grow as people and think critically. During this time, failing or messing up is normal for the regular college student. However, college athletes do not have this luxury and must deal with added pressure. We tell these athletes to be tough because they somehow 'asked' for this treatment. This argument has no place in our society because college athletes are not public figures.

All these factors play into the mental health pandemic facing college athletes. Many continue to ask what the NCAA is doing to combat this problem. The organization has a website with mental health resources, but they are a brief overview of documents that say what strides they are taking. It needs to list programs they have or resources in place to deal with mental health.

The problem is college athletes fall right into the tragic NCAA system of suffocation leading to these present issues. We grieve for a short time before jumping back into the money-making game. To universities, as long as the teams are doing well, that is all that matters.

In the wake of these tragedies are teammates and parents who will never see their kids or friends experience milestones. We expect athletes to pick up the pieces when they have nowhere to turn. This is not acceptable, and we have to be better for college athletes so they can have a brighter future.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

UNC Charlotte Housing & Residence Life needs to do better

Letter submitted by students of ANTH 2171 (fall 2022)

A case study was conducted in ANTH 2171 (Action, Justice, and Change: An Introduction to Engaged and Applied Anthropology) in regard to Housing & Residence Life's (HRL) initial overbooking and their response to students' concerns.

This case study was a semester-long project on gathering statistics, input from affected students, and analyzing the response of HRL. This letter is written in regard to HRL to address the grievances received from the case study.

To the Housing & Residence Life Department of UNC Charlotte,

We wish to address grievances against the department in regard to housing shortages, the miscommunications over the past year, and the lack of clarity on what alternative housing was for those who received it.

We, as students, rely on HRL to provide clear and accurate information on housing, including up-to-date availability and deadlines, to make decisions on whether or not we will reside on campus. The lack of clarity in communicating that there was not enough housing is jarring, even more so when the University was still accepting students for guaranteed housing, knowing that there was not enough available space.

The fact that over 2,000 students were accepted for on-campus housing even though no bed space was available in July is egregious, dishonest and disrespectful to those who applied by the deadline expecting to live on campus. With the already rampantly rising housing prices around campus and the delays in constructing new housing options on campus, options for students who can't afford housing without financial aid are limited.

Moreover, the alternative arrangements for students who did not or could not cancel their

housing contacts were not clearly outlined or equal to the services provided on campus. The shuttle system to campus and back was unreliable, walking was unsafe as there were no sidewalks to campus for those in the hotels, and students were paying more to do laundry and have food, not to mention that meal plans were canceled unbeknownst to those in temporary housing. Students were charged the same amount as they were for a double suite on campus but did not have the same or adequate enough services to justify the price.

On top of all of this, students in temporary housing were quite isolated from their peers, unable to stay on campus later than 5 p.m., or risk not being able to safely get back to their housing arrangements.

As students, we wish to clear the air between HRL and the student body by relaying this message to all those responsible: do better for your students. Be clearer in communications about housing by giving us accurate updates about how much space is available. Be open in your communication about waitlist lengths, how many people have applied and when construction will be finished.

We understand that sometimes these numbers may fluctuate or that a concrete date may not be set for things, but providing clear

and open communication about these things instead of leaving us out to dry is better than what has been portrayed by all involved.

Adapt better systems for housing. We are tired of using the same program from 2010 for housing. The application program does not give information about availability beyond what is manually updated. The system goes down and crashes because it can't handle the amount of traffic 30,000 students generate. The application itself is not the easiest to navigate and is difficult to use even when it does work.

We are proud to call UNC Charlotte our home, but please do better for all of us making campus our home for the year. If you only take one thing away from this, please let it be to make campus a more welcoming home for us through open and clear communication.

Sincerely,
Niner Nation and the students of ANTH 2171

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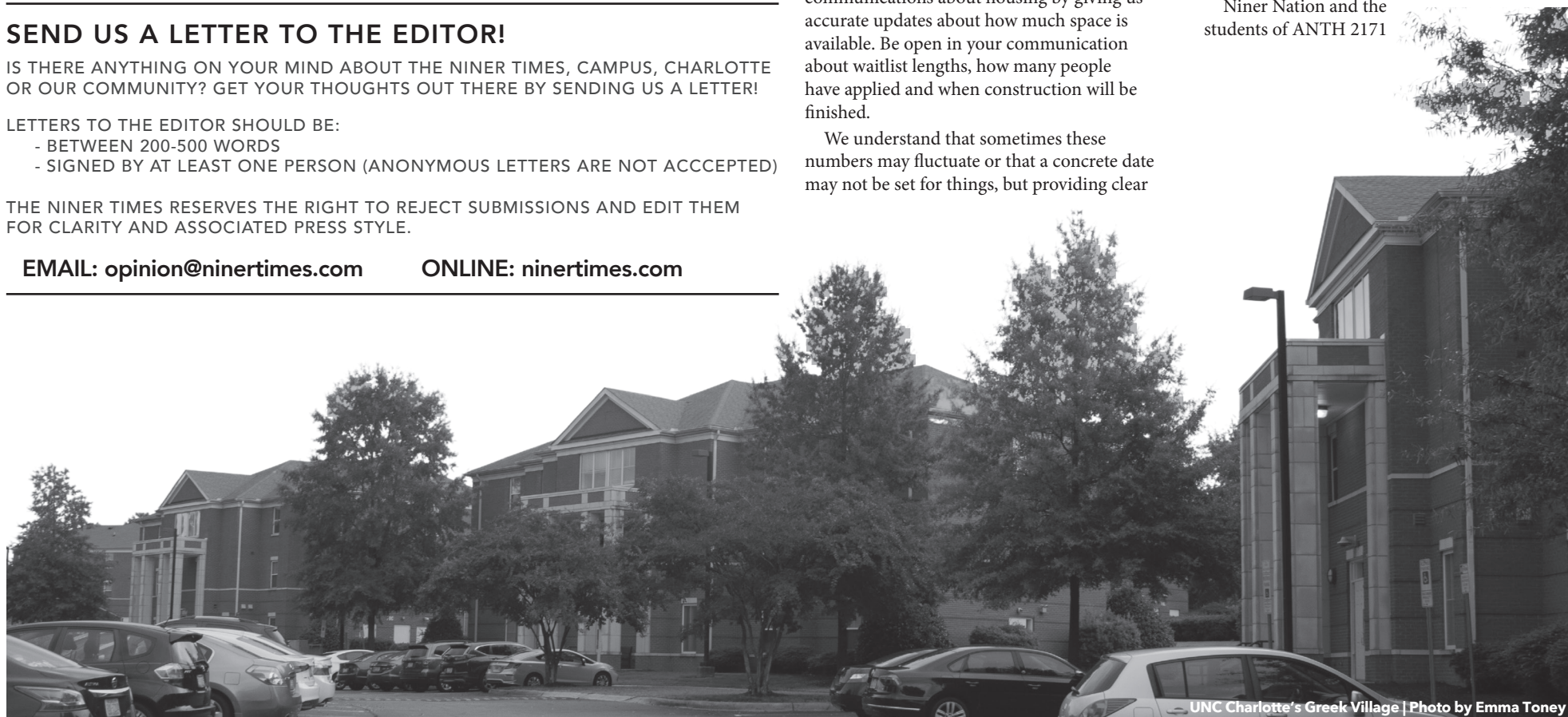
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UNC Charlotte's Greek Village | Photo by Emma Toney

CHECK THE NEXT ISSUE (1/24) FOR THE ANSWERS TO THIS WEEK'S CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU!

DID YOU KNOW?

THE CAROLINA PANTHERS LOGO IS DESIGNED TO INCLUDE THE STATES NORTH AND SOUTH CAROLINA IN THE PANTHER'S HEAD.



Images courtesy of ESPN & Suturi.com

	1			5	7			
7			2	1		9		6
3					8	1		
4						8	6	
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NINER TIMES SUDOKU

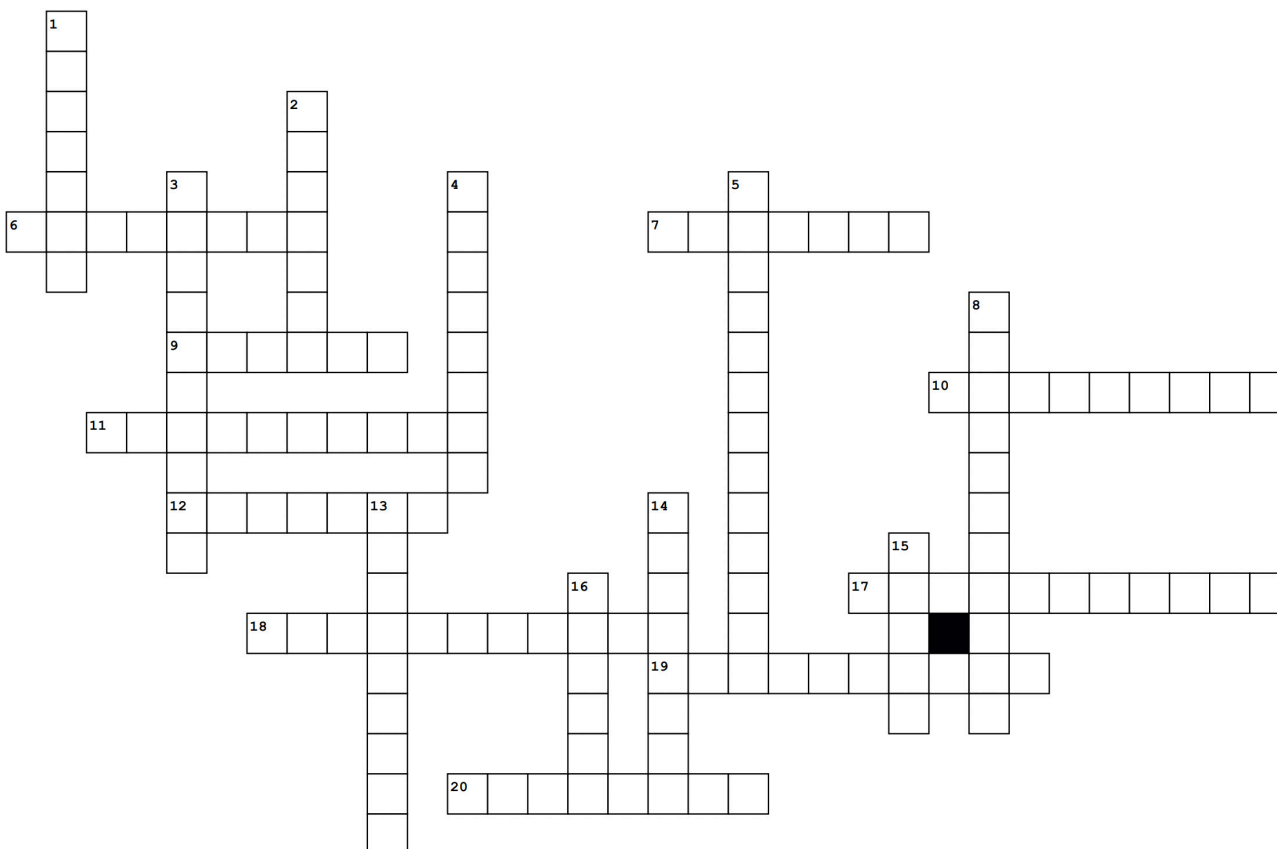
What is sudoku?

Sudoku is played on a grid of 9 x 9 spaces. Within the rows and columns are 9 "squares" (made up of 3 x 3 spaces). Each row, column and square (9 spaces each) needs to be filled out with the numbers 1-9, without repeating any numbers within the row, column or square.

The more spaces filled in, the easier the game – the more difficult Sudoku puzzles have very few spaces that are already filled in.

Sudoku rules:

1. Use Numbers 1-9
2. Don't Repeat Any Numbers (in a row, column or square)
3. Don't Guess
4. Use Process of Elimination



NINER TIMES CROSSWORD

Across

6. Actor of the main character in 'A Man Called Otto'
7. Disagreement between people
9. A hole dug by a small animal
10. Space telescope whose first images were shown in July 2022
11. Fast-running ground cuckoo
12. Military university in South Carolina
17. "Pray for ___"
18. 2001 Romance/Comedy film
19. Song by Michael Jackson
20. First round of NFL playoffs

Down

1. Fictional character in 'The Big Bang Theory' series
2. Weather phenomenon and party game
3. Movie named after the largest city in Morocco
4. Herb used in cooking and perfumes
5. To be related to the mental and emotional state of a person
8. Capital of Mongolia
13. To be unconventional and slightly strange
14. South American mammal resembling a giant longlegged guinea pig
15. Stringed musical instrument with a long neck and a round body
16. 2003 musical based on a novel and film

Humans of UNC Charlotte: Joshua Molai releases first single, 'Fears'

by Cat Beck
Asst. Arts & Culture Editor

Joshua Molai, a third-year student at UNC Charlotte, recently released his first single, "Fears." The song has a soft, ethereal sound and conveys a fitting message for a musical debut. It speaks to Molai's experiences and hopefully foreshadows more music to come.

Molai came up with the beat behind "Fears" a year and a half before its release, and at the time, he had no idea what it would become. When he began working on the lyrics, Molai drew from his experiences and spoke about how fear gets in our way.

"A lot of people let fears hold them back from doing things they want to do or dreams they want to accomplish," Molai said. "The more you give in to your fears – the more you give into your insecurities and all the negativity – that's when the time will sweep you by, and I feel like nobody should live with regret in their lives."

Molai was only sometimes interested in songwriting. When he was 12 years old, he began taking guitar lessons but quickly lost interest in their rigid structure.

"I didn't have the passion for picking it up again," Molai said. "I respect music theory and things like that, but I realized it was not for me."

In the past, Molai's perception of music was different from today's. For example, when he was in high school, he had the opportunity to attend a concert by alternative musician EDEN with his brother. Although he had never been an avid listener of EDEN's music, the experience left a lasting impression.

"I just fell in love with his music after that," Molai said. "And I was like, 'Maybe I could do this.' I felt it at the moment, and after that, I got inspired, picked up my brother's electric guitar, and started playing."

From that point, Molai began using music to express himself. He writes "from the heart," but that does not mean the creative process is easy. After saving up enough money to buy the equipment and software he needed, Molai began honing his skills in making beats, melodies, and, eventually, songs.

"I always try to make something every day," Molai said, "But there are days that I force myself. And it's good because it creates a habit, but at the same time, I feel like when it comes to creating music, it has to come from within – something that you feel."

Over time, Molai developed his style of songwriting. While many artists begin with the lyrics or concept behind a song, that is

typically the last part of Molai's process.

"I always make the song first, produce it, and then I sing on the mic anything that comes to mind," Molai said. "It may sound like gibberish like I am humming, but I have a melody. Then, I figure out a flow and say random stuff on the mic. After that, I hear the words I am saying and feel the song's vibe."

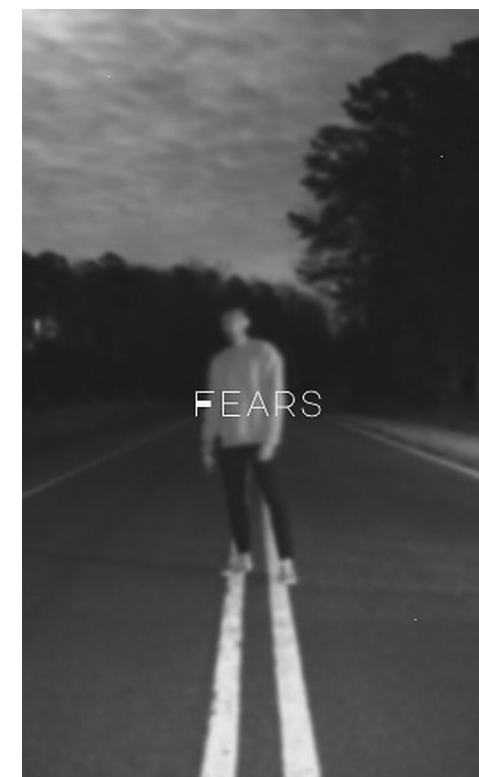
Molai's approach to songwriting is an exploration. He rarely knows what direction a song will take when he begins, but he discovers it on the way.

"I have learned much about myself through the music process," he said. "It has shown how much I have grown from where I started, and it surprises me that I can come up with things I am feeling and transpose them into lyrics."

When asked what advice he would give to people who want to get into music, Molai emphasized openness and bravery.

"Give it a shot and see where it goes," he said. "If you are passionate about it, stay consistent, and if you think it is good, release it or post it."

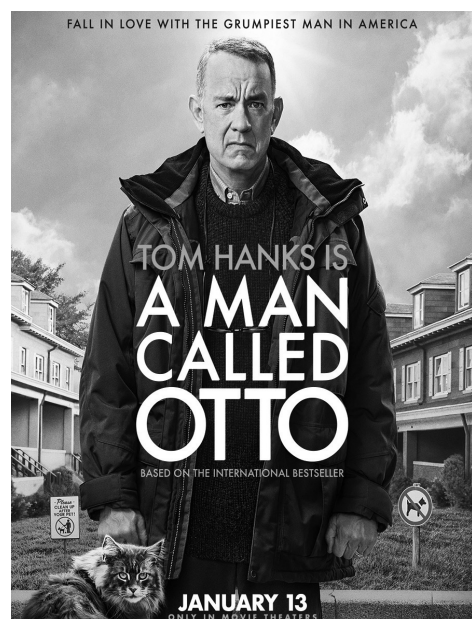
"Fears" is available on all platforms, and hopefully, there is more to look forward to from Molai.



'Fears' album cover | Photo courtesy of Joshua Molai

Film review: 'A Man Called Otto'

by Jack Hale
Staff Writer



'A Man Called Otto' | Courtesy of IMDb

Based on the Swedish book and film "A Man Called Ove," Otto (Tom Hanks) is a grumpy and stringent man trying to end his life after his wife passes. While the film sounds dark and depressing, many comedic moments give it a nice balance. Unfortunately, none of the emotional moments surrounding Otto worked for me the way the film wanted.

Given that the film surrounds Otto wanting to commit suicide, it is vital to make the audience care for him and his situation, but that did not happen. He is not likable, and his motivations in the film are generic and not strong enough to create a genuine connection. The film makes few attempts to make the audience care about his situation, leaving its treatment of suicide shallow and unmoving. I wished it delved deeper into Otto's psyche. There was a lot of potential for Otto to be a much more interesting character than a stringent widower, but the film did not take the extra steps and settled for a generic character.

One of the biggest surprises about the film is that it balances the somber and emotional moments with many comedic aspects. It is difficult to show someone contemplating suicide and then a minute or two later to be cracking jokes, but "A Man Called Otto" does it superbly. Even though the tonal balance is done well, I was not emotionally invested in Otto and preferred the comedic parts. There were multiple times I genuinely laughed, with very few jokes missing the mark. Despite not being emotionally attached to Otto, I still found him hilarious as he complains about mundane things around his neighborhood. The neighbors are a joy to watch and were my favorite aspect of the film. Seeing the camaraderie between them was truly heartwarming.

"A Man Called Otto" also dragged on too long. The film is a little over two hours long, and there could have been 20 minutes shaved off due to multiple unnecessary scenes. There

were also times I found myself rolling my eyes at scenes. Quite a few cringe-worthy lines of dialogue were either ridiculous or stereotypical.

While I was never bored with "A Man Called Otto," I was never fully invested in the characters or story. It is a fun watch at times, and I do appreciate that the film takes a look at suicide and the impact it can have on others, but it would have been nice to have a deeper and more contemplative view. There are aspects that everybody can take away from and enjoy themselves with as the film is an overall good time, but I do not see much rewatchability with it with a generic and predictable story.

Rating: 6/10

Most anticipated films of 2023

WHAT FILM RELEASES TO LOOK OUT FOR THIS YEAR

by Jack Hale
Staff Writer

With 2022 behind us, it is time to look at some of the biggest film releases this year. As we have all-time and up-and-coming filmmakers, 2023 is shaping up to be an excellent year for film. This list includes the must-see movies slated for release this year. So, here are my most anticipated films of 2023.

'Killers of the Flower Moon'

After much anticipation, the latest film from the great Martin Scorsese is almost here. Starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Robert De Niro, it follows an FBI investigation of J. Edgar Hoover about the murders of members of the Osage tribe. While there have been trailers, any Scorsese movie is a must-see, especially with DiCaprio and De Niro. The film will debut at the Cannes Film Festival in May before appearing on Apple TV+ soon after.

'Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse'

In the sequel to the 2018 smash hit "Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse," we will follow Miles (Shameik Moore), Gwen (Hailee Steinfeld) and Peter (Jake Johnson) as they try to protect the multiverse against Spider-Man 2099 (Oscar Isaac). "Into the Spider-Verse" is one of my favorite films of all time, so I am naturally excited for the sequel. The animation looks just as incredible, and the story seems compelling, with Spider-Man 2099 having the potential to be one of the great on-screen Marvel villains. "Across the Spider-Verse" is set to appear in theaters on June 2.

'Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny'

Indiana Jones is finally back for a supposedly final time to find more treasure and fight more Nazis. Like most other kids,

I grew up watching the Indiana Jones films, which hold a special place in my heart. Despite the disappointment of the fourth installment, seeing Harrison Ford back as the iconic character gives me chills. Phoebe Waller-Bridge ("Fleabag") co-stars with Ford and is the film's writer, which gives me hope for a thrilling action-adventure film with emotional growth with Indy. While part of me is nervous about the film, I will still be there on opening night. "The Dial of Destiny" opens in theaters on June 30.

'Mission: Impossible - Dead Reckoning - Part One'

Ethan Hunt (Tom Cruise) and his team are back in action to save the world again. While the exact plot is currently unknown, it is unnecessary to be excited about this one. The "Mission: Impossible" franchise is the

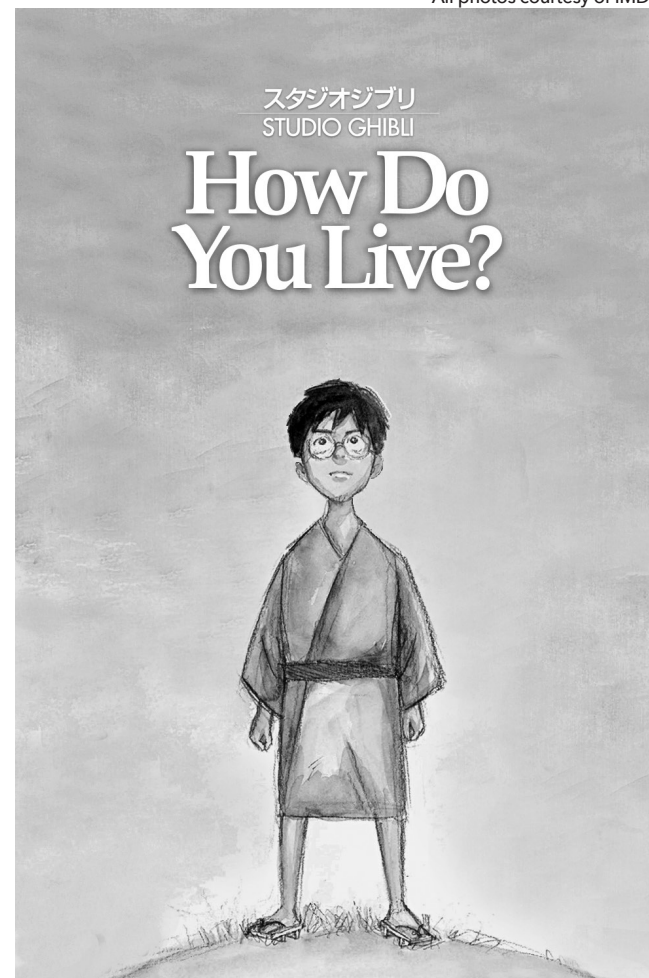
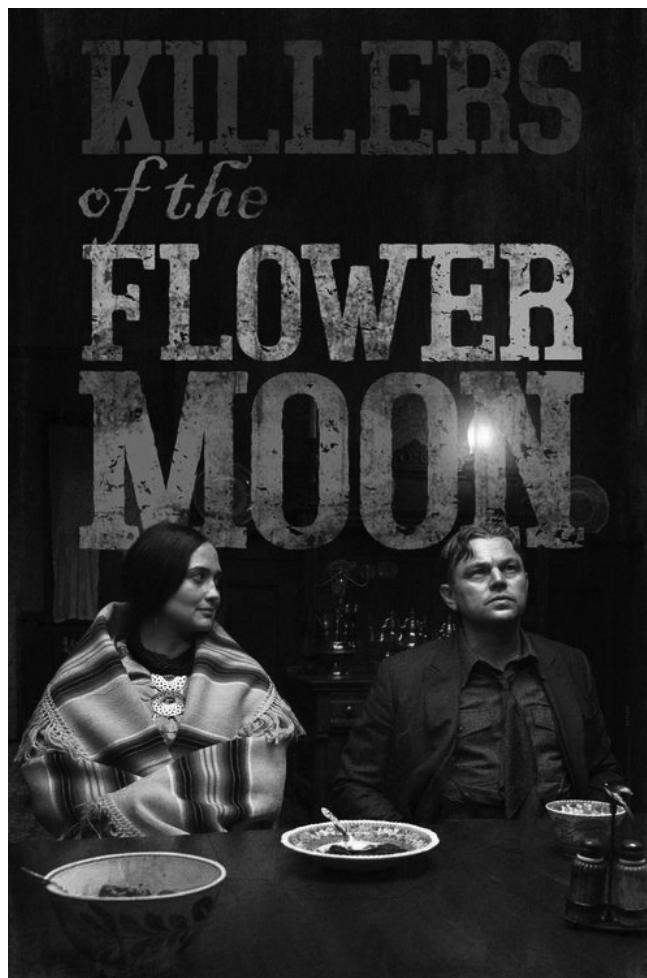
best-running action franchise, with each film topping the previous with an engaging story and stunning action sequences. The last entry, "Mission: Impossible - Fallout," gave more depth to the characters while not sacrificing any action, and I expect nothing different from this one. "Dead Reckoning - Part One" debuts in theaters on July 14.

'How Do You Live?'

The latest film from Studio Ghibli and director Hayao Miyazaki ("Spirited Away" and "My Neighbor Totoro") follows a teenage boy's psychological growth through interactions with his friends and family. Even though the film has been in production for years after multiple delays, there still needs to be more known. Nevertheless, this film is considered a must-see film of this year, with Miyazaki, one

Continued on p. 15

All photos courtesy of IMDb



Continued from p. 14

of the greatest storytellers and Studio Ghibli, known for gorgeous films and beautiful stories. The film will premiere in Japan on July 14, with the United States release not far behind.

'Oppenheimer'

The film follows the story of Julius Oppenheimer (Cillian Murphy) over 45 years and his role in developing the atomic bomb. The latest film from Christopher Nolan ("The Dark Knight" and "Inception") looks to be his most unique yet as the film is a historical biopic, but I fully expect Nolan to make it feel right at home with his filmography. The cast is one of the best of all time, with Emily Blunt, Matt Damon, Robert Downey Jr. and a dozen other A-list actors. The story looks incredibly gripping, and the film itself looks gorgeous from the trailers. "Oppenheimer" will be in theaters on July 21.

'Barbie'

"Barbie" will follow Barbie (Margot Robbie) and Ken (Ryan Gosling) as they make their way through Barbie Land. While that is a vague film synopsis, that is the film's plot. This

is Greta Gerwig's latest project, and I could not imagine anybody better suited to helm this film. She has a unique and creative voice, as seen in her movies, "Frances Ha" and "Lady Bird." "Barbie" looks colorful, fun, hilarious, and a good time at the theater. You can catch it in theaters on July 21.

'Dune: Part Two'

In the sequel to 2021's "Dune," we will continue to follow Paul Atreides (Timothée Chalamet) as he looks to take his place as the Messiah of the Fremen of Arrakis. The first film is one of the best adaptations, with jaw-dropping visuals and an action-packed story. Writer and director Denis Villeneuve is one of the best directors working and happens to have a knack for science fiction. I have been dying to see this since I stepped out of the theater after seeing "Dune"; it is a must-see. "Dune: Part Two" will be on Nov. 3.

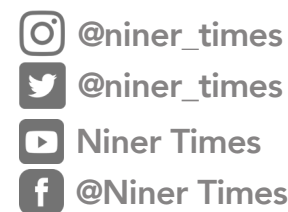
'Beau is Afraid'

A horror comedy starring Joaquin Phoenix, we will be following one of the most successful entrepreneurs of all time through several decades. "Beau is Afraid" is the latest film from

Ari Aster ("Hereditary" and "Midsommar"), who has cemented himself as one of the defining directors of horror for this generation. It looks very different from Aster's previous films, but I am intrigued. While we know almost nothing about the film, not even a release date, be on the lookout for it.

'The Killer'

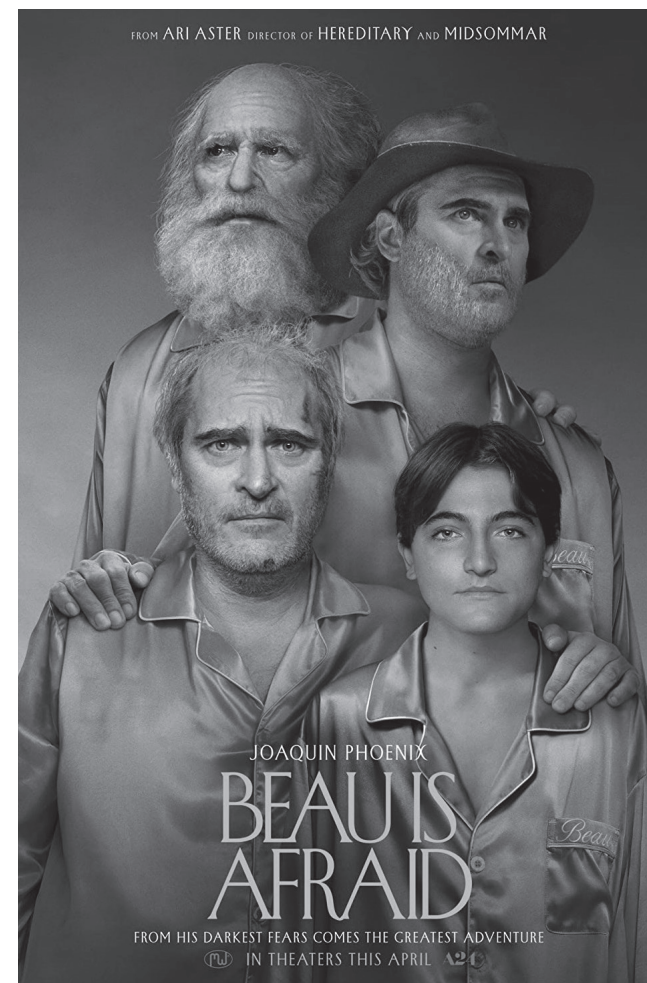
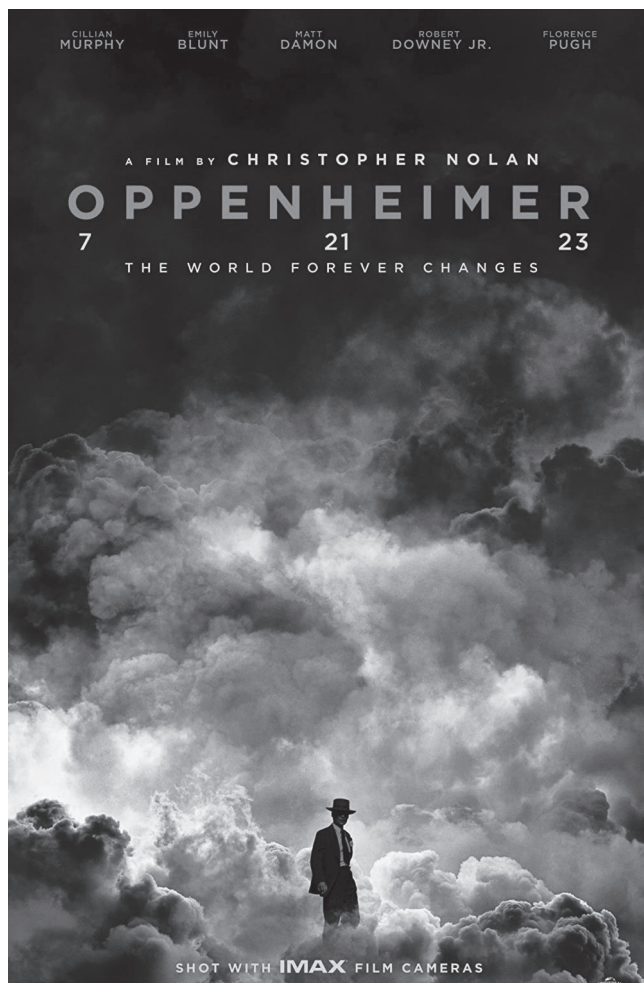
Starring Tilda Swinton and Michael Fassbender, the film follows an assassin who starts to develop a conscience and questions his career. The film looks to be director David Fincher's return to form, who is best known for his psychological crime thrillers such as "Se7en" and "Gone Girl." Few things are known about the film, but it has a great cast and a fascinating story.

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The Museum of Illusions comes to Charlotte

by Annie Turk
Staff Writer

The Museum of Illusions opened its 37th location in the Queen City on Dec. 7. Located on S. Tryon, it invites viewers to experience “a brilliant collection of perspective-changing rooms, enthralling installations, and spellbinding images,” according to their website. With over 60 illusions, I was intrigued by the social media ads and had to visit the museum myself. Here are my thoughts on my experience.

Each exhibit has a sign describing how to get the whole experience of the illusion and a possible explanation as to why our brains might see things differently. There is a lot of math and science involved in how these things work, but you do not need to be a genius to experience it yourself. The whole place reminded me of a slightly more grown-up version of Discovery Place because of the museum’s spectacle and educational factors.

The “Head on a Platter” installation was my favorite. I had to crawl under a mirrored table and pop my head through the top. Somehow the mirrors on the side made it appear that the



rest of my body was not under the table. It was easy to do and made for the perfect Instagram-worthy picture. A few honorable mentions were the “Jastrow Illusion,” a mind trick where two objects of the exact dimensions look different sizes; the “Moving Picture,” a 3-D

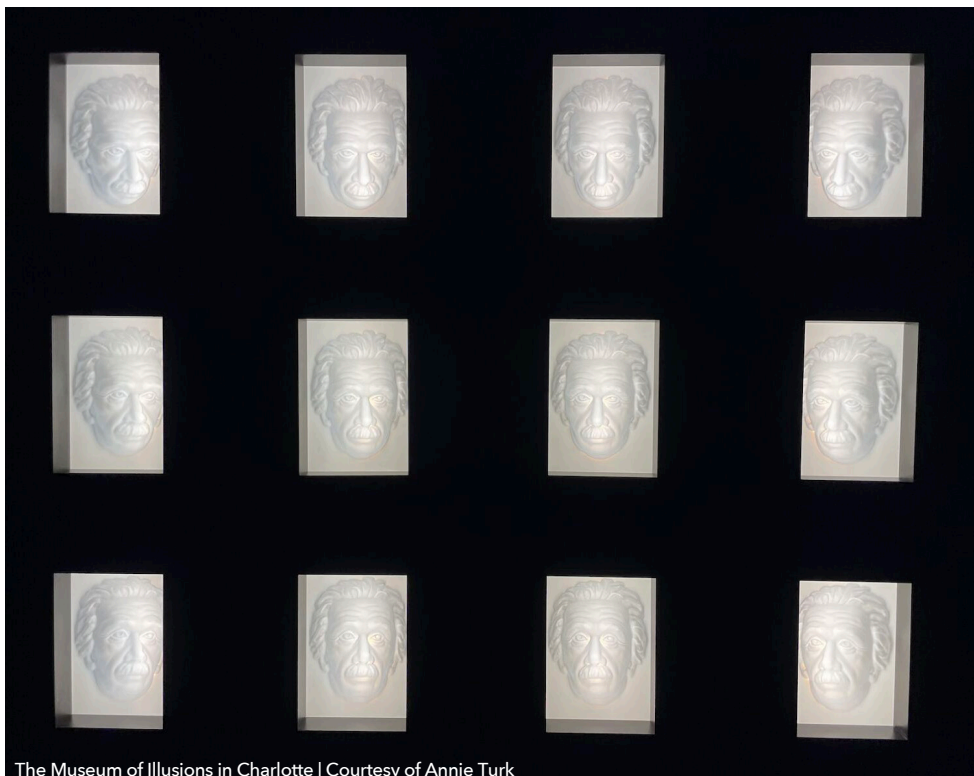
painting that appears as if it is moving and the “Infinity Portal,” a depth-defying attraction.

The museum tries to make these illusions as accessible as possible. However, my mind was boggled by the tricks my brain played while looking at the installations. The wall of Albert Einstein heads messed with my mind the most because it looked like they were popping out of the wall when they were instead hollowed-out figures.

Aside from the installations and interactive exhibits, the art uses the science of illusion, which is fun to look at while you wait for another exhibition to become available. Thankfully, some staff around the museum were available to assist as needed in the exhibits.

This was helpful because I was confused about how to master the illusion itself.

The museum is on the pricier side, considering that the art museums uptown, like The Mint Museum, are half the price of admission for college students compared to what the Museum of Illusions costs. So, although I had fun and walked away with some fantastic pictures and a newfound perspective on the power of illusion, I do not need to go back. However, visiting the museum is a one-time experience worth checking out.



The Museum of Illusions in Charlotte | Courtesy of Annie Turk

PLAYLIST OF THE WEEK

FIRST FULL
MOON



ZOYA ZALEVSKIY
LAYOUT EDITOR