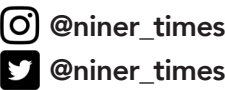




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A lamp and plate of dates for Ramadan

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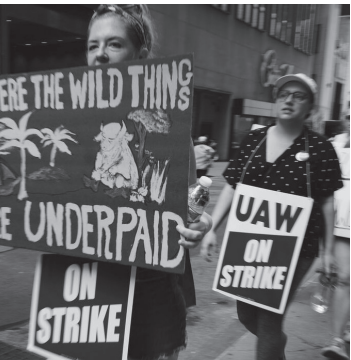
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Charlotte train derailment reveals hazardous light rail conditions

by James Kmosko
Staff Writer

A LYNX Blue Line train derailed on May 21, 2022. Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) did not disclose the derailment to the public until March 13, 2023.

The derailment occurred between Archdale and New Bern stations due to a defective wheel bearing. There were 24 passengers on board during the derailment. No injuries were reported, but one passenger called for a medical evaluation at the scene.

At the time of the derailment, CATS' only statement was a tweet that called the incident a "train malfunction."

The derailment was not made public until CATS Interim CEO Brent Cagle informed the Charlotte City Council of the incident during their monthly business meeting on March 13. Cagle, who was not CEO at the time of the derailment, said he was not informed of the incident until the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) requested a corrective action plan in late February.

CATS operates 42 rail vehicles, each with three of the defective bearings. While CATS

plans to replace the bearings, LYNX Blue Line trains will continue to operate until those plans are completed. According to Cagle, CATS initially estimated half the fleet will be repaired by July 2025.

"We have mitigating measures to help us identify bearing failures before it becomes a catastrophic failure," said Cagle at the March 13 Council meeting. "We are working to remediate this problem as quickly as possible."

Each set of wheels must be sent to the California manufacturer for repair. Currently, CATS only owns one dolly capable of transporting its trains. Repairs may be expedited if more dollies are purchased.

"We're buying six more of those; we had only one," said Charlotte City Council member Edmund Driggs. "That will start a more rapid program of replacement or servicing of the wheels."

CATS has temporarily reduced their trains' maximum speed from 55 mph to 35 mph to lower the likelihood of another derailment, a move ordered by the NCDOT.

CATS officials and Charlotte City Council members assure the public that the trains are safe to ride.

"[CATS] has an augmented program for

checking these bearings to make sure that there are no problems," said Driggs. "It's not necessary to take the trains out of service for the sake of safety; they can be operated, but with heightened scrutiny and reduced speed."



Derailed LYNX light rail | Courtesy of Charlotte Area Transit System

UNC Charlotte students report satisfaction ratings in campus survey

by Jenny Kase
Staff Writer

The Niner Times conducted a survey in the Spring of 2023 including 34 UNC Charlotte students. The survey found that 64.7% of students are happy with the academic programs offered, 67.6% find campus moderately safe, 52.9% believe the accessibility and quality of dining options are poor, 83.3% are happy at Charlotte and 32.4% have or considered transferring.

Most students are satisfied with the academic programs offered here at Charlotte, stating that there are ample resources to take advantage of and the workloads are reasonable. Others need help in specific departments, need more guidance and wish for more diverse programs.

Third-year student Trey Canovai states that there are many resources to take advantage of on campus, such as the writing and math learning centers, office hours, UCAE and clubs.

"Utilizing the academic resources on campus has helped with my success as a student and becoming an academic weapon," said Canovai.

Second-year student Nicole Austin wishes there was a more comprehensive range of art programs.

"There is such a big art presence in the city, and since this is the biggest school in Charlotte, I would have expected the programs to correlate with life in the city. For example, I am shocked that we do not have any film or media majors," said Austin.

Regarding campus safety, most students find the campus itself safe, and they fear the surrounding neighborhoods.

"Campus tends to feel like a bubble; however, the crime right outside is very apparent. It seems as though there is always some breaking news of awful crimes right down the road. Though this is to be expected in a city, it still sometimes worries me. I also think that when campus dies down at night is when I feel the least safe," said Austin.

Following the recent armed carjacking on campus, some students fear for their safety.

Second-year student Katie Wick said, "We do not have the proper security on campus, especially when it comes to the parking lots. People have for far too long experienced damage to their vehicles, had things stolen and had their safety/lives threatened. This is, and should not be, normal."

Over half of the surveyed students are unsatisfied with campus dining options.

Second-year student David Siderio said, "The food always tastes like cardboard, workers do not care about their jobs and the timely manner in which food is served is non-existent."

Satisfaction regarding campus dining varies among students. Many students feel the dining options are adequate, with some mentioning a slight lack of healthy and vegetarian options.

"I can normally find something that satisfies me in the dining halls, and if not, there are many food places that accept DB. There are also a good amount of healthy options," said second-year student Megan Reen.

Fourth-year student Dylan Hemrick said, "I just don't understand how Crown pizza is so much better than SoVi."

Although there are varying opinions regarding the satisfaction levels with Charlotte's campus, most students express significant contentment with the school.

"I love all of the clubs and my work environment at my job. Also, most of my professors have been so great, especially when I get to know them better. I feel like I am setting myself up for success after university," said Reen.

"I love my school, and the campus is beautiful. We just need to be given more events on campus, better communication and way more opportunities that help guide and support students on their career paths," said Wick.

Students, such as Hemrick, transferred to Charlotte to finish their degrees. The students who had considered transferring stated that they initially felt isolated but managed to make Charlotte feel like their home.

UREC has seen an increase in theft in March

by Olivia Fey
Staff Writer

The University Recreation Center(UREC) has seen an increase in theft from the locker rooms in March 2023.

March alone saw nine reported larcenies from locker rooms, according to UNC Charlotte police reports. Stolen items included \$100, sneakers and a lock.

UREC locker rooms provide door locks, but students can bring locks to secure their belongings.

“Somebody’s personal lock had been broken, and contents were taken from the locker,” said a UREC employee who asked to be anonymous. “As many as thirteen thefts from lockers occurred in one week, but they all went unreported because students didn’t want to file police reports, so there are more thefts than what’s being reported.”

According to a police report dated March 16, “An incident report was completed as well as

an email was sent to the Criminal Investigation Department to further investigate since the locker room has been the area for recent larcenies.”

Out of the nine reported larcenies, five of the police reports referred to the victims as male. Therefore, over half of the larcenies occurred in the men’s locker rooms.

These thefts could be partly due to guests visiting UREC. Reportedly, a man recently

signed in for a guest pass to UREC as D.B. Cooper, referencing the unidentified man who stole about \$200,000 from passengers on Northwest Orient Airlines Flight 305 in 1971.

Guests need to come with a UNC Charlotte student to sign in to the UREC. UREC urges that Charlotte students be careful about who they trust to bring into the facilities and lock up their belongings.

Charlotte Douglas International Airport to receive \$32 million for renovation projects

by Daksh Mota
Contributor

On Feb. 27, Congressman Jeff Jackson of North Carolina’s 14th district announced that Charlotte Douglas International Airport (CLT) would receive \$32 million in funding for its Concourse E Improvement Project.

Concourse E is one of five concourses at CLT, serving mainly American Airlines’ regional routes. The funding comes from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Airport Terminals Program through the Federal Aviation Administration. Through this program, \$5 billion has become available to award competitive grants to airport terminal development initiatives.

The CLT airport connects the Southeast United States to the global economy, making Charlotte a business center. The new funding will ensure CLT can continue to sustain the growth that the city is seeing.

The Concourse E improvements include new ceiling panels, better signage, moving walkway replacements, new lighting, carpeting in gate areas, integrated power in seats and terrazzo flooring in main passenger circulation areas.

CLT contributes about half of the approximated \$72 billion annually from all of North Carolina’s public airports and is also the second largest hub for American Airlines, one of the four largest airlines in America.

Other concourses have undergone similar renovations, with concourses A, B and C all completed between 2017 and 2020. Concourse D renovations will start in the fall of 2023 and finish in 2025.

Concourse E is the only concourse at CLT that has not been renovated since its completion

in 2002. These renovations fall under CLT airport’s \$3.1 billion capital investment plan called “Destination CLT.”

One major project within “Destination CLT” is to expand the terminal lobby, which started in 2019 and is set to finish in 2025. Another entails closing two of the airport’s five security checkpoints, instead condensing them into three larger ones. This project is slated to be more efficient and process passengers through security faster. Concourse A is also seeing a second phase of its expansion, which is expected to be completed in 2024.

These expansions of CLT Airport have also led to improvements in the transportation infrastructure in the surrounding Charlotte metropolitan area.

The Lynx Blue Line Extension, under the Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS), connects UNC Charlotte directly to Uptown Charlotte and was partially funded by CLT airport. This extension has helped reduce traffic congestion and made it easier for residents of Charlotte and UNC Charlotte students to commute around the area.



Construction at Charlotte Douglas Airport | Photo by Miguel Sanchez-Núñez

UNC Charlotte celebrates Earth Month throughout April

by Jessica Ceballos
Staff Writer

UNC Charlotte will recognize Earth Month from April 2 through April 30.

Earth Month is a month-long celebration for Earth Day on April 22. This year is the 53rd anniversary of Earth Day.

Due to COVID-19, Earth Month events have been limited for safety reasons. This year will have the most events since 2020.

"I challenged my own staff to come up with new events because we're a growing campus, and we have a strategic plan that now says we need to work on being a culture of sustainability and hosting these events is one of the ways I think we can build this culture of sustainability," said Dr. Michael Lizotte, university sustainability officer.

The Office of Sustainability compiled the following events. Some events require registration.

Gratitude in the Gardens: Change and Uncertainty is a meditative silent walk that will take place on April 2 at 3 p.m. in the Botanical Gardens. Horticulture Technician and Facilities Specialist Jennifer Bueno will lead the walk. Attendees must register as there are only 20 spots available. The program is free; however, there is a recommended donation.

Dean Brook Muller is giving a lecture on his published book called "Blue Architecture" on April 4 from 5:30-6:30 p.m. in Storrs Hall in the Hight Library. Muller will discuss the influences of his study of architecture and sustainability. The event is limited to the first 35 people.

The School of Architecture is hosting a lecture by Courtney Crosson on April 5 from 12:30-1:30 p.m. at the Dubois Center at UNC Charlotte Center City. The lecture is called Net Zero Urban Water: Reinventing Water Infrastructure for Self-Sufficient Cities in the US Southwest. Parking information for attendees can be found on the Dubois Center at UNC Charlotte Center City website. There is also a virtual option on Zoom attendees can register for.

Net Positive Watershed Development in the City of Creeks is a "solutions-oriented conversation" that will occur on April 5 from 2:30 - 4 p.m. at the Dubois Center at UNC Charlotte Center City.

Those interested in attending can register online.

The Campus Tree Planting will be on April 6 from 9 - 10:30 a.m. in front of CAPS at 9526 Poplar Terrace Drive, Charlotte, N.C. The Grounds Department will provide professional instruction. Those interested in attending can

register online.

The Botanical Gardens spring plant sale will occur over two days: April 7 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and April 8 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Both events will be in Lot 5 on Martin Village Road.

The Earth Day Festival will be on April 12 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in Belk Plaza. If there is a weather delay, the event will be rescheduled to April 19 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in Belk Plaza. Student organizations will be present, such as Plants For People and the Earth Club, as well as campus police and environmental health and safety.

Student Garden Day will be on April 14 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. The four locations will be the Jamil Niner Student Pantry Gardens, Student Gardens, Staff Gardens and the Pollinator beds. Registration is required online.

UNC Charlotte students will perform "Hatful of Dragons" on April 15 from 4-4:30 p.m. in the Arts Quad. The play "is imagined straight from the vibrant pages of Vikram Madan's poetry, adapted by Professor Beth Murray and student playwrights: Micah Contee, Isabelle Grise, Erin Jarrell, Maxwell Martin, Brittney Tavira-Cuevas and Courtney Cox Tillson," according to the Office of Sustainability.

Campus Cleanup will occur on April 18

from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in Lot 5A at the corner of Van Landingham Road and John Kirk Drive. The location is accessible using the Silver route to bus stop #14. Supplies will be provided for cleanup. Those looking to attend can register online.

Wear, Care and Repair will take place on April 18 from 2-4 p.m. in Atkins Library Makerspace within Area 49. This event offers sewing machines, sewing materials such as buttons and patches, and instructions on how to mend worn or torn clothes. Bring any clothes with holes, rips or tears to be repaired.

Teaching Kitchen: Build Your Earth Day Parfaits will take place on April 19 at 12:30 p.m. in UREC Demo Kitchen. Registration is limited.

The Botanical Gardens Earth Month succulent planting will be on April 20 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. in McMillan Greenhouse. There is a limited number of supplies/spaces available.

The Party for the Planet will occur on April 21 from 5:30-8 p.m. in Belk Plaza. Mark Mistretta, founding president of Plants For People, said "There are 11 [student organizations] participating; and this will be a fun event emphasizing our love for the community and, of course, the planet. We'll give tours of the Student Gardens, commemorate our dedicated

volunteers and feature a DJ to add to the atmosphere." Those interested can register online.

The Artist's Lecture: Awaiting Vertical will be on April 21 from 11:15 a.m. to 12:05 p.m. in Rowe 130. Dr. Halide Salam is the featured speaker for this event.

The School of Architecture Series: Mona Azarbayjani will be on April 21 from 12:30-1:30 p.m. in Storrs Hall and on Zoom. Seating is limited to the first 30 attendees.

The "As You Like It" Shakespearean play will take place for three days from April 28-30 from 3-4 p.m. on Van Landingham Glen of the Botanical Gardens. This event is a promenade performance piece where the audience will walk through the gardens to view the play. Each actor will be placed in their scenes throughout the gardens to act out the play.

In the city of Charlotte

According to the Charlotte Earth Day website, Charlotte is hosting an Earth Day celebration on April 15 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at First Ward Park. DeAndrea Salvador, an Environmental Justice Advocate, will be the keynote speaker.



Students participating in Earth Month | Courtesy of University Communications

Ramadan deserves more federal recognition

by Ruhshona Soledjonova
Staff Writer

Ramadan is an Islamic holiday that requires 30 days of fasting from dawn until sunset. To honor this holiday, the federal government and employers should recognize it more.

Working and going to school can be challenging while holding a fast. The lack of support from jobs, education and society weighs a heavy burden on those who participate in Ramadan.

Islam is the third largest religion in the United States, with 3.45 million members, and yet many still remain uneducated. For instance, some do not realize that Muslims fast as early as age 12.

During Ramadan, Muslims practice acts of charity and generosity by abstaining from food and water for the majority of the day. Fasting also aims to clear one's mind of negative emotions, unnecessary anger and jealousy. It requires concentration and a deep understanding of spiritual reflection.

Most Muslim countries shorten work and school days during Ramadan. People all around the world get time off for Christmas and Easter, whereas other religions very rarely receive the same type of accommodations. In the U.S., studies have shown that the scarcity of federal recognition of Ramadan and other Muslim holidays adds to increased rates of Islamophobia.

Ramadan can be considered emotionally exhausting to some because it is a complete

shift in a person's daily routine. Holding an almost 13 hour fast can cause headaches, nausea and energy deficit.

Muslims break their fast according to the Iftar schedule. This time varies from day to day between 7-8 p.m., and both school and work employers should be considerate of this time range.

Additionally, opening and breaking a fast requires prayer. While a generous amount of Muslims do not pray five times a day, many choose to do so during the month of Ramadan.

Muslim adults in the U.S. still have to obtain their obligations and responsibilities during Ramadan, and support from federal and social recognition can only help. This means allowing Muslim employees to work earlier shifts, providing breaks for students who attend evening classes or providing Muslim athletes with understanding in adjustments of training.

Ramadan deserves acknowledgment, and the absence of education among Americans is alarming. Creating a safe environment for a large demographic of Muslims is imperative.

As a society, we need to highlight the importance of Ramadan and celebrate the Muslim population.

Inclusivity in a workplace, education setting or social gathering is necessary for cultural acceptance. Providing kindness and willingness to learn about Ramadan is a way to spread support for Muslims.



A lamp and plate of dates for Ramadan | Graphic by Zoya Zalevskiy

Biden's student loan forgiveness is the plan students and taxpayers need

by Matthew Porto
Staff Writer

President Joe Biden's student loan forgiveness plan spells some semblance of a victory for countless college graduates that accumulated debt for their university tenure. Republican lawmakers are looking to undermine this milestone under the guise of a callout of Biden's supposed misallocation of funds.

Biden's plan has come under new fire from senate republicans as measures are introduced to counteract the plan. On Aug. 24, 2022, Biden enacted the Student Loan Relief Plan for "Borrowers Who Need It Most." The three-part plan aimed to cancel \$10,000 worth of debt to

non-Pell Grant recipients as they recover from the impact of the pandemic. The United States' cumulative federal student loan debt sits at \$1.6 trillion, with no sign of stopping without mitigation.

This leaves a huge section of middle-class borrowers in America that are left struggling to make high monthly payments, buy homes, make investments and start retirement savings. GOP lawmakers are coming down hard on the bill but seem to be missing the point: if not now, when?

The focal point of several Republican senators' arguments against the proposed

student loan forgiveness is that Americans who chose not to take out student loans or did not go to college would suffer in the long run and will be "picking up the bill for this irresponsible and unfair policy." However, this argument is invalid when the notion of relativity is brought into the conversation.

Without a plan in place, and when student loan debt inevitably hits a point of critical mass, it will affect taxpayers regardless of their status as a blue-collar or white-collar worker. Moreover, The U.S. is a nation with notoriously poor handling of debt and especially that of educational debt. Making legitimate steps to

change this could greatly improve the economy and financial stability of the middle class and the country's overall security.

There are countless families struggling because of a loved one's yearning to advance their education, so why is it that expanding one's knowledge is punished with a virtually unpayable fee? Biden's loan forgiveness plan garnered 50% of voters' approval and 47% of disapproval, leaving current university students in limbo and wondering whether or not they will continue to be punished for seeking a better opportunity.

Deep fakes spread more misinformation than creativity

by Ruhshona Soledjonova
Staff Writer

Deep fakes manipulate both visual and auditory aspects of a person to appear as someone else. Most people struggle to distinguish what is real or fake.

Deep fakes are changing the way daily consumers perceive synthetic media content, and this technology is often used in modern media.

The highlights

In many ways, deep fakes shed light on the positive outcomes of artificial intelligence (AI). In various aspects of creative expression, digital art and reanimating history, deep fakes improve accessibility in productivity. In entertainment, deep fake technology is often referred to as CGI.

For example, “Rogue One: A Star Wars Story” by Lucasfilm, Carrie Fisher’s young Princess Leia and Peter Dinklage’s Grand Moff Tarkin were deep faked to illustrate the iconic characters. Since then, Lucasfilm has gradually approved deep fake techniques in the recent 2021 production of “The Book of Boba Fett” with a cameo of young Luke Skywalker.

Deep fake technology is also used to bring history back to life. Historians and artists alter images and videos of prominent past public figures to commemorate their life in present day. Some even use this technology to heartwarmingly bring their loved ones back to life through digitization and lifelike movements.

The ethical dangers

On the other hand, the use of deep fakes is more likely to be used in disturbing and malicious ways. 96% of deep fakes are geared toward pornographic material and approximately 99% of that is targeted at female celebrities. This act damages a person’s reputation and threatens emotional distress and employment loss.

In addition, deep fakes cause widespread fake news and misinformation. Anyone has access to put out inaccurate content. Deep fakes have challenged the minds of audience members regarding whether or not they should believe everything they see on social media.

Manipulated videos of politicians such as Barack Obama calling Former President

Donald Trump a “total and complete dipshit” constantly surface on the internet. Deep fakes’ impact on politics contributes to polarization and a threat to democracy in the United States.

Deep fakes have generated a system of broken trust in society, and distinguishing between real or fake videos will only get tougher with further advancements. Oddly enough, some technological inventions can detect deep fakes with the help of AI software but are weak compared to the believability and realistic nature of deep fakes.

Yet there are many ways to distinguish content from truth and falsehood. Unusual body or facial movements, poor quality lip-synching and unnatural shadowing are all signs that a video is deep faked.

Labor unions should be more active in politics

by E. Alexander Zimmerman
Staff Writer

While union organizers have support from the federal government, their membership is emboldened to take political stances. As dissatisfaction with the government grows and economic conditions worsen, unions should offer political solutions and a means to organize around them.

The president of the Amazon Labor Union (ALU), Chris Smalls, recently released a statement to the New York US-Cuba Normalization Conference condemning the 60-year American blockade of Cuba. In conjunction with Smalls’ appearance before Congress, where he testified to union busting by companies like Amazon, the ALU puts itself in the middle of political struggles that run deeper than the task of organizing Amazon warehouses. Although some have criticized this activism, unions and their membership, along with working people, have historically benefited from political radicalism.

When the economy crashed in the late 1920s and Americans were left to find a new political solution, they turned to the policies of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his New Deal. Labor unions were a key part of the coalition that won Roosevelt the 1932 election.

Through unprecedented government expenditure and investment in infrastructure, labor reform and the welfare state, Roosevelt alleviated the worst effects of the Great Depression. Serving as an essential buffer against the interests of industrial tycoons and

the Southern planter class that would not have benefitted from such public investment, the unions’ activism insured the inclusion of taxation and public spending to the Democratic Party’s platform.

Following his election, Roosevelt passed the Wagner Act, a labor reform that protected unions and empowered the National Labor Relations Board to act on their behalf. This allowed the unions to grow in strength and exert greater political force. The influence of organized working people in economic, industrial and labor policy allowed the United States to develop into an industrial superpower that provided quality-of-life guarantees to its citizenry.

As union membership has hit an all-time low, the Biden administration has sought to encourage worker organization. The National Labor Relations Board has been empowered to side with unions in the face of illegal union busting by companies like Starbucks—an issue on which Senator Bernie Sanders has subpoenaed former CEO Howard Schultz to testify.

Unions historically see more membership when they offer stronger convictions. Public union militancy inspires greater confidence that they are capable of offering solutions. A union willing to strike over public policy is willing to exercise its labor power when negotiating with employers.

The membership of establishment

unions, such as the Teamsters and United Auto Workers, have started pursuing more aggressive positions. In recent elections, both unions rejected longstanding elected leadership in favor of more radical and reformist opposition candidates that promised more aggressive negotiation and greater input from rank and file membership.

By agitating for public policy change and allowing the political views of its memberships

to be expressed, unions can offer more to their members. The more members a union gets, the more influence and power they wield and the greater the things it can achieve.

As government officials struggle to pass laws at the state and local levels and economic problems like inflation and supply chain shortages worsen, labor unions serve as an essential political force, uniquely secured and empowered by their labor.



Protestors holding signs as they strike against underpaying wages | Courtesy of NPR

SATIRE: ROBOT UPRISING HAS DESCENDED ON UNC CHARLOTTE



Courtesy of Starship & edited by Zoya Zalevskiy

WATCH OUR SATIRE VIDEO

Charlotte 49ers Football Pro Day

Photos by Sunnya Hadavi

Charlotte 49ers Football Pro Day occurred at Jerry Richardson Stadium on Thursday, March 30. Approximately 15 players and draft hopefuls participated in the event. The event consisted of on-field drills and weight room activities. Over 20 professional

teams were in attendance to scout players. Among the participants were program pillars Chris Reynolds, Viktor Tucker, Grant DuBose and Markees Watts.



Charlotte softball travels to Western Kentucky University for weekend series for upcoming season

by Jacob Moss
Staff Writer

The Charlotte softball will take on the Western Kentucky University (WKU) Hilltoppers in a pivotal Conference USA (C-USA) battle. WKU currently sits atop the C-USA rankings 5-1, with the 7-2 49ers hot on their heels. The three-game series was slated to kick off on Friday, March 31, but the first game was postponed to Saturday.

Saturday, April 1, will now feature a doubleheader, with the first game set for 2 p.m. and the second at 4 p.m. The series will wrap up on Sunday, April 2, with a 1 p.m. first pitch. All games will be played at the WKU Softball Complex in Bowling Green, Ky.

Looking at the 49ers

The Charlotte squad sits at 19-13 on the season, including a second-best 7-2 mark in C-USA play. The 49ers will be looking to bounce back after their last outing ended in a 4-2 loss against the University of North Carolina at Greensboro Spartans, which snapped a five-game winning streak.

A trio of hitters leads the 49ers. These are Kassidy Krupit, Bailey Vannoy and Ashleigh Washington. All three hold batting averages over .300 and an OPS over 1.000, making them the only three qualified hitters on the team with those numbers thus far.

Krupit is currently the team leader in batting average, holding a .385 mark, and is also the team leader in hits (40) and RBIs (28). Vannoy currently leads the team in home runs (9), SLG% (.736) and OPS (1.214).

The Charlotte pitching staff is led by reigning C-USA Pitcher of the Week, Sam Gress. The sophomore holds team bests in ERA (2.05) and WHIP (1.13). She also holds the team's only winning record with a 12-5 mark on the season thus far. The Charlotte rotation also features freshman right-hander Lena Elkins, who currently has a 4.35 ERA, and junior right-hander Georgeanna Barefoot, who holds a 5.40 ERA.

Overall, the 49ers are hitting .270/.382/.478 as a team. Conversely, opponents are hitting .284/.340/.439 against them. Charlotte also holds a 3.56 team ERA and 1.41 team WHIP, while opponents hold a 4.55 ERA and 1.59 WHIP against the 49ers.

Scouting the Hilltoppers

The Hilltoppers enter the weekend with a

20-10 record and boast a conference-best 5-1 mark in C-USA play. They will also be looking for a bounce-back win, as their last outing ended in a 2-0 loss to the Belmont Bruins.

The WKU lineup is a potent bunch with five hitters with batting averages over .300 and six with an OBP over .400.

Leading the charge is senior Taylor Sanders, who holds team bests in OPS (1.191), SLG% (.717), RBIs (39), and home runs (9). Right behind Sanders is fifth-year senior Faith Hegh, who currently holds team bests in batting average (.396) and OBP (.482). Overall, the Hilltopper lineup features a dynamic blend of hitting and power from top to bottom.

The WKU pitching staff is led by senior right-hander Katie Gardner who currently leads the team in ERA (3.54), starts (19) and wins (9). The Hilltoppers rotation also features freshman reliever Maddy Wood, who holds the team's second-best ERA (4.01) and is tied for the team lead in WHIP (1.31).

Gardner is the staff's workhorse, pitching over 109 innings on the season thus far, with the next closest pitcher at 46.2 innings.

Overall, the Hilltoppers are hitting

.314/.408/.433 on the season while holding opponents to .236/.328/.376 at the plate. WKU pitchers currently hold a 4.00 ERA and 1.38 WHIP on the season, with opposing staffs holding a collective 6.49 ERA and 1.91 WHIP.

Keys to a Charlotte victory

Pitching will be paramount to a 49er series win.

The Hilltoppers boast the conference's top offense and easy outs are few and far between. It will be challenging to completely shut down an offense this potent, but Charlotte must limit walks and extra-base hits. If they can do that, the Hilltopper pitching staff has proven to be the weaker link of the team. The Charlotte pitching staff has to give their offense a chance by keeping the game close.

Gameday

The doubleheader games are set to begin at 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. on April 1.

The series will wrap up on April 2 at 1 p.m. All games will be played at the WKU Softball Complex in Bowling Green, Ky.



Charlotte softball's Lexi Winters (2) in match against UTEP | Photo by EJ Rothman



CHARLOTTE 49ERS SCOREBOARD

RECENT GAMES MARCH 26 - APRIL 2

MEN'S BASKETBALL

March 22:
Charlotte 71, Eastern Kentucky 68
(CBI Championship)

BASEBALL

March 26:
Charlotte 8, Dallas Baptist 1
March 28:
Charlotte 6, Gardner-Webb 5
March 31:
Charlotte 11, UAB 3
April 1:
UAB 2, Charlotte 1
April 2:
Charlotte 5, UAB 0

SOFTBALL

March 26: Charlotte 6, UTEP 0
March 29: UNCG 4, Charlotte 2
April 1: Western Kentucky 3, Charlotte 0
April 1: Charlotte 11, Western Kentucky 0
April 2: Charlotte 6, Western Kentucky 3

UPCOMING GAMES

Baseball:

Vs. Radford on Tuesday, April 4 at 6 p.m.

Softball:

@ Coastal Carolina on
Tuesday, April 4 at 4 p.m.

Column: As Michael Jordan looks to sell majority stake in the Hornets, questions loom about the franchise's future

by Logan Allard
Staff Writer

ESPN reporter Adrian Wojnarowski reported on Thursday, March 16, that Hornets majority owner Michael Jordan is in talks to sell a majority stake in the Charlotte Hornets.

Team and ownership history

Jordan, the legendary six-time champion, acquired majority ownership of the team in Feb. 2010 from Robert Johnson.

Since then, the Hornets have only made the playoffs three times and have failed to make it out of the first round each time, getting swept by the Orlando Magic in 2010 and the Miami Heat in 2014. Their most recent appearance was seven seasons ago in 2016, losing the series again to the Heat in 7 games.

The last time a Charlotte NBA team won a playoff round was in 2002, when the NBA's first round was still a five-game series, and the original incarnation of the Hornets was on their way out under the ownership of George Shinn, who moved the team to New Orleans following the end of the season.

Empty pockets

While Michael Jordan has had plenty of financial success in the past four decades, he lacks the financial power other owners in the league have.

Compounded with the fact that Charlotte lacks the appeal of cities such as Los Angeles or Miami to young superstars, the Hornets are all but forced to build through the draft. Furthermore, the team has never paid the NBA's

luxury tax.

In the event of a wealthier ownership group acquiring majority ownership of the Hornets, the team would be better able to comfortably make a big splash in free agency and staff hiring.

What to expect if Jordan sells

Jordan has been talking to a group including Gabe Plotkin, to whom Jordan sold a minority stake in 2019, and Atlanta Hawks minority owner Rick Schnall.

In June 2022, the Charlotte City Council approved an extension on the Hornets' lease in Spectrum Center, which was scheduled to expire at the end of the 2029-2030 NBA season until the end of the 2044-2045 season.

While one benefit of Jordan's ownership is that he likely would not entertain the thought of

relocating the Hornets, the chance of relocation would be low even after selling.

Jordan's future involvement with the team

Jordan will likely keep a minority ownership stake in the team following a sale, according to Wojnarowski's report.

While what he would do with this minority stake is unknown, Jordan may remain closely involved with the team as there is a precedent dating back to his purchase of a minority stake in June 2006.

As part of the 2006 deal, Jordan took control of the basketball side of the team with the title of Managing Member of Basketball Operations.

While a sale has not been made official, it seems like a matter of time until it happens.

Charlotte football Pro Day hosts over 20 NFL teams

by Josiah House
Staff Writer

On Thursday, March 30, the Charlotte football team hosted a Pro Day for 15 Charlotte athletes that had declared for the NFL Draft, with over 20 NFL teams having scout representatives in attendance.

Teams came to see all 15 players, including wide receiver standout Grant DuBose. The event allowed the athletes to showcase their talents in front of the gatekeepers to the next level, NFL scouts.

DuBose said teams need to keep an eye out for talent at Charlotte.

"There are a lot of hidden gems out here. All of those guys they're capable of playing at the next level. There's a lot of talent out here, so, you know, tell a friend to tell a friend," said DuBose.

Drills

On-field testing started at 3 p.m. with the 40-yard dash. Victor Tucker, Chris Reynolds, Markees Watts and Geo Howard competed. DuBose notably did not partake in the 40-yard dash, as he ran a 4.57 dash at the NFL Combine a month ago.

DuBose said he was content with his NFL Combine time, and it led to the decision to step aside for the 40-yard dash.

"I'm pretty satisfied with that time and feel

like other people are also satisfied. Going into the combine was one of the biggest questions, and 4.5 isn't blazing, but it's pretty solid for me," said DuBose.

"There are a lot of hidden gems out here. All of those guys they're capable of playing at the next level. There's a lot of talent out here, so, you know, tell a friend to tell a friend."

Grant DuBose
Charlotte football wide receiver

The players were then divided into two groups to run shuttle and cone drills. After the general athleticism portion, the offense and defense broke into two groups to work on positional drills.

First up was the offense. Charlotte quarterback Reynolds took charge, tossing the ball to DuBose, Tucker, tight end transfer Eugene Minter Jr., running back Calvin Camp and wide receiver Trey Blount.

DuBose and Tucker put up stellar performances in route running drills, practicing routes such as slants, go's and more complex double-move routes for all to see.

On the defensive side of the ball, edge rushers Amir Siddiq and Watts competed in linebacker and defensive line drills, placing their athletic versatility on a pedestal for all to see.

Watts said the performance was solid, but he needs more work.

"Today was a success for me," said Watts, "I got some information for myself. Today, I got out here, and I got a little winded. That's not acceptable to me. I want to be strong-winded. I want my condition to be great. I want my footwork to be perfect and flawless. Today wasn't perfect and flawless. It was good, but for me, not good enough."

After most of the team had worked out, Charlotte kicker Antonio Zita took the field for 40-yard kick drills in front of a few NFL scouts that had stayed, including representatives from the Jacksonville Jaguars, Cincinnati Bengals and Chicago Bears.

Looking toward the NFL Draft

Watts said there is uncertainty about his NFL future, but what he can bring to a team grants

him a potential opportunity.

"Just an opportunity. That's all I'm looking for," said Watts,

"I'm somebody that can last. Some guys get out here, and they think they're the guy. They think they have everything set. Some guys faced that with a bad mindset, but coming out here humbly, being aware of what areas you need to improve on will help me in the NFL path because that's something I can feed into."

While Watts came to the Charlotte Pro Day with something to prove, DuBose came with something to solidify, consistency.

DuBose has had a more orthodox path for highly touted NFL Draft prospects, being invited to the Reece's Senior Bowl in Mobile, Ala., and the NFL Combine in Indianapolis, Ind., before finally traveling back to his self-proclaimed second home of Charlotte.

DuBose said the training process taught him what is required for the next level.

"I feel like I proved that I belonged," said DuBose, "I knew that going into the experience, but I guess you could say that [the Senior Bowl] solidified it."

The NFL Draft occurs on April 27-29 in Kansas City, Mo., and the draft hopefuls will look to hear their names called.

Charlotte track & field pole vaulter Riley Felts makes impact on and off field

by Jessica Danesi
Opinion Editor

Charlotte track and field redshirt junior pole vaulter Riley Felts has developed into a leader in the Charlotte community.

She set the school record for the indoor pole vault and was named Conference USA (C-USA) Outdoor Track and Field Female Field Athlete of the Week on March 21.

Early life

Felts' hometown is Matthews, N.C., about 13 miles from campus. Growing up near Charlotte impacted her decision to enroll at the University. While searching for schools where she could be involved in engineering and pole vaulting, and decided on Charlotte.

Felts got her start in track and field due to the encouragement of a friend. After being invited to a pole vault clinic, Felts did not know what to expect. However, she said she had an immediate connection with the sport.

"From the first practice, the first day, I was just like, 'Whoa, this is so cool,'" said Felts. "It clicked, and I loved it from the first day."

Performance on track

On Feb. 23, 2020, Felts obtained the school record for the indoor pole vault with a 4.26m mark to finish first in the C-USA Championships. Felts said achieving this accomplishment was a once-in-a-lifetime moment.

"To jump that high in PR for me was so amazing," said Felts. "I'll always remember that moment when I looked up at the bar and was like, 'Oh my gosh, it's staying up there' I was so happy but also so surprised."

On March 21, Felts was named C-USA Outdoor Track and Field Female Field Athlete of the Week, a title that celebrates her achievements as a student-athlete.

She earned the accolade for the first time after setting the program's outdoor pole vault record with a 4.29m at the 49er Classic. Felts broke her record again with a 4.35m at the Weems Baskin Invitational on March 24-25.

During the 2021-22 outdoor and indoor pole vaulting seasons, Felts could not compete due to injury. Coming back from this pause, Felts said she is focusing on listening to her body and prioritizing her health.

"I was trying to give my body a reset and

figure out what worked for me and what didn't work for me," said Felts. "So far in outdoor [pole vaulting], it has helped. I think it is good to learn that everybody's body is different. For me, I know what works better."

Motivation

Felts said her success in being a student and a student-athlete demonstrates her numerous skills and allows her to bond with other Charlotte students both in and outside the classroom.

"I get to know more people being in class and on the track," said Felts. "I really like being a student-athlete."

Additionally, Felts has been a Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) director since April 2019. In this position, she consults with student-athletes and coaches to encourage community engagement and promote student

wellness. SAAC gives student-athletes opportunities to voice any concerns.

Career ambitions

Felts is a civil engineering major in Charlotte's graduate program and an environmental engineering intern at Brown & Caldwell. After graduating with a bachelor's degree in December 2022, she enrolled in an early entry program for graduate school.

This ambition for environmental engineering began when she was in high school and was assigned a project where students had to create a green city, which she found interesting.

Felts concentration is in natural environments and the community. She wants to make systems more efficient and clean. In addition, Felts said she wants to make it more accessible for people to drink safe water and breathe clean air.

"I chose to obtain my bachelor and master of science in civil engineering because I knew I could concentrate on environmental and water resources engineering," said Felts. "I have happily worked my way through school preparing to help make the world a cleaner, safer and better place to live in."

Legacy on program

When asked about her legacy, Felts said she hopes to inspire others by working hard and performing at her best to accomplish more as a track athlete.

"Honestly, just working hard, being positive," said Felts. "Trying to break as many records as I can."

Felts and the track and field team will return to action on April 6-8 when they travel to Durham, N.C., for the Duke Invitational.



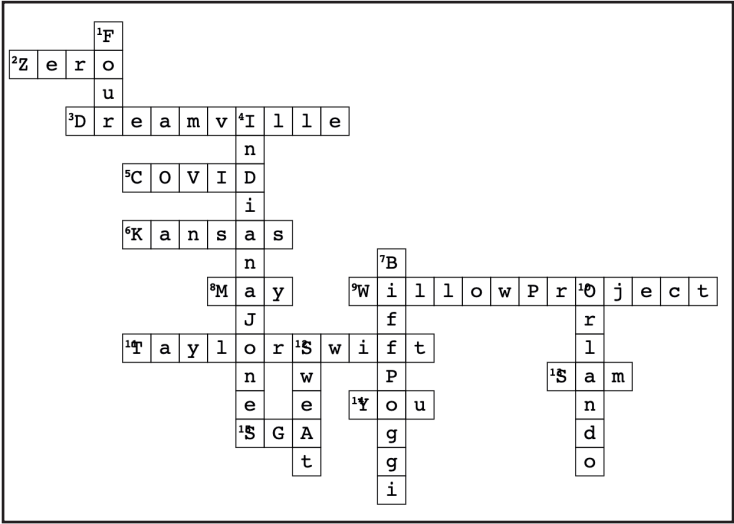
Charlotte pole vaulter Riley Felts | Photo courtesy of Charlotte Athletics

CHECK THE NEXT ISSUE (4/18) FOR THE ANSWERS TO THIS WEEK'S
CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU!

NINER TIMES SUDOKU

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3/21 ISSUE ANSWERS



5	8	6	2	1	9	3	4	7
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3	4	1	5	9	7	2	8	6
6	5	8	1	2	4	7	9	3
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DID YOU KNOW?

WYOMING IS HOME TO JUST TWO ESCALATORS, AND THEY ARE BOTH LOCATED IN THE SAME BUILDING.

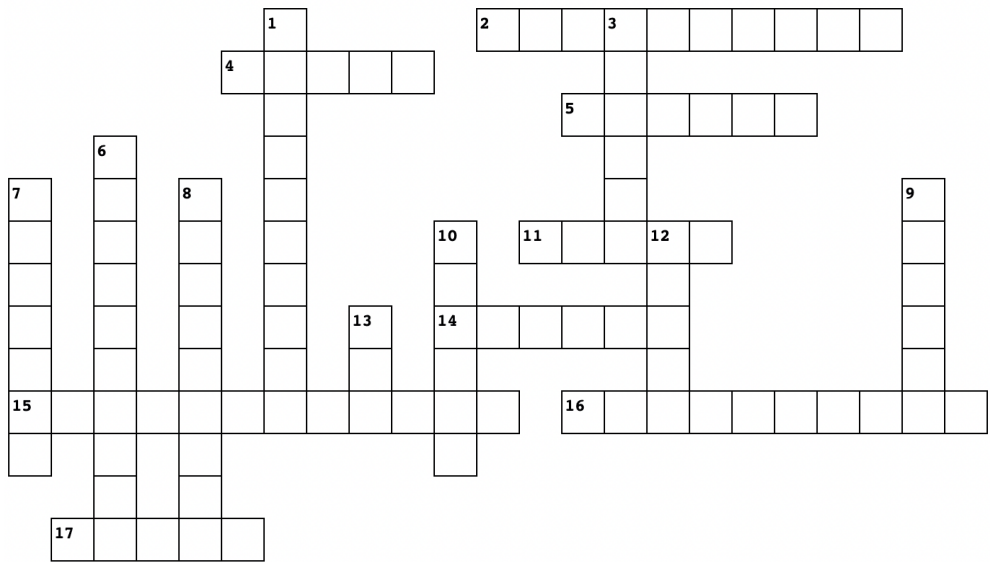
NINER TIMES CROSSWORD

Down

- Music festival created by J. Cole that took place on April 1 and April 2
- Market on ____ (Student Union general store)
- Building where Crown Commons is being temporarily moved
- Islamic holiday spanning from March 22 to April 20
- ____ State University (school whose women's basketball team went against University of Iowa on April 2 during the NCAA Women's Basketball Tournament Title Game)
- Dating app that is named after the sound a bee makes
- Soda that replaced Sierra Mist
- Vehicle that can derail
- Abbreviation for Charlotte Douglas International Airport

Across

- HBO show about a media conglomerate that is airing its fourth and final season
- Donald ____ (former president that was indicted on March 30)
- Southernmost state in the U.S.
- Planet that the month of April honors
- Northernmost state in the U.S.
- What the second 'A' in 'CoAA' stands for
- Musician with the 2023 album "Did You Know That There's a Tunnel Under Ocean Blvd"
- Name of robot featured in the Niner Times April Fools special video



Kim Jones, Charlotte dance professor, finds freedom through dancing

by James Kmosko
Staff Writer

Kim Jones is an associate professor of dance at UNC Charlotte, stage director with the Martha Graham Resource Center and founder and artistic director of Movement Migration. As a dancer from a young age, Jones has worked with dance groups both in the United States and abroad to discover the freedom and confidence of dancing.

As a native of New York City, Jones first enrolled in a ballet school when she was three years old. However, she first learned modern dance, her preferred style, at her public high school.

"My high school had a wonderful dance program, where they introduced [me to] modern dance," said Jones. "At that school, my dance teacher [was] Eleo Pamare, a famous artist in the modern dance genre. I didn't know how famous he was, and it was such a pleasure and a joy to study with someone like him."

When Jones graduated high school, she began attending Marymount Manhattan College in Manhattan.

"I didn't get into my top schools, but I was thankful that I ended up in Manhattan," said Jones.

"Even though I was a New Yorker, I wasn't exposed to the arts on a daily basis like [people are] in Manhattan. Because I grew up in a blue-collar neighborhood, my parents were not in the arts. But now that I was going to school at Marymount Manhattan College, I had such great exposure to dance."

After graduating college and sustaining an ACL injury, Jones moved to California to become an actress. She took jobs in commercial television, live musical theater and as a dancer in a national Broadway production. She returned to New York and joined the Metropolitan Opera House (The Met) before becoming a Martha Graham Dance Company member. Martha Graham, the company's founder, is regarded by many as one of the most influential figures in modern dance.

"I had gone back [to New York] to do some training there with my teacher, Pearl Lang, a wonderful Jewish woman from Chicago who danced with Martha in the 40s, 50s and 60s," said Jones. "Talk about brutal; she was ruthless, but she was wonderful. Even though I was a professional, I wanted to go back to train with her. She was such a great teacher and artist."

Jones has since taught dance in several locations, including the prestigious Laban School in London. She is also a choreographer specializing in dance reconstruction, also known as dance reimagining. The process involves extensive research into historical dance pieces to recreate them for a modern audience.

"[I reconstruct] pieces that were not well documented prior to video," said Jones. "So a lot of the 20th century and older works that either I can get through researching firsthand accounts of the dance, experience or research. I try to bring those stories back."

"If you see [a dance] live, it's in the moment," said Jones. "But once that curtain comes down, that dance is completely gone. It's the dancer that brings it back the next day, or the choreographer that puts it on another dancer for the next week, or there's a journalist, a writer, a critic, a film and before film, it was mostly in photographs."

During the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns in 2020, Jones coordinated a live online dance school over Zoom called Movement Migration. The program was designed for instructors and students who would otherwise be unable to continue practicing their art.

"[My] most challenging [project], I created a virtual online school during the pandemic with my nonprofit," said Jones. "I called all my friends around the world that were all unemployed because of the lockdowns, and they're sitting home, and they were miserable. [I told them] 'let's try to build a summer program.' And we did. We had 35 instructors from around the world and had 350 students."

The program offered classes in various dance styles, expert dance instructors and a worldwide base of instructors and students from numerous nations, cultures and languages. Students were charged \$5 for a class, and most signed up for several courses.

"I did it for free and gave all the money to all those artists that weren't employed," said Jones. "Because I knew that people would come back, we have the arts, but they needed to make money. It provided them joy, happiness, connection and a real sense of community. After that, I really could do anything. There's nothing I can't do; I believe that. There's nothing I can't learn."

"Freedom; [dance is] freedom," said Jones.

"In the body, mind and the spirit, in space, it's absolute freedom. Freedom to express myself.

Without words. Martha [Graham] used to say a quote, 'the body says what words cannot.'"



Kim Jones performing | Courtesy of Kim Jones

Amélie's French Bakery prepares for May 1 reopening in Uptown

by E. Alexander Zimmerman
Staff Writer

Amélie's French Bakery, located at 380 South College Street, has been undergoing severe renovations since its closure in early November 2020 due to pandemic-related issues. The extensive renovations anticipate their planned May 1 reopening and will have limited hours.

Charlotte-based architecture firm Fortis will be handling the renovations. The firm has done work throughout the southeast in various fields, including residential housing and overhauls for commercial spaces.

The renovations will include new flooring, a

redecorated dining area and a dedicated space for catering and private events. The location will also be premiering several functional improvements. For example, implementing a new ordering system and pick-up window will allow customers to receive their Hallmark pastries and coffee more orderly.

The uptown location is the largest of the five locations, boasting 14,000 square feet and multiple levels. The bakery's reopening will bring a Charlotte staple back into the city, serving pastries, coffee, sandwiches and alcohol to the city.

However, another Amélie's flagship location recently relocated in NoDa to 136 E 36th Street and is open from 7 a.m. - 10 p.m. on weekdays and until midnight on weekends. Additional locations can be found at Park Road, Crown Commons and Rock Hill, S.C.

The Charlotte-based pastry and coffee shop is notable for its French pastries, coffees and even alcoholic beverages such as wine and beer. Offering a variety of brownies, danishes and macaroons, Amélie's has long been a favorite for office workers and patrons of Uptown looking for a sweet treat.

DEAR NINER TIMES,

How can I celebrate Ramadan on campus?

by Amna Noyal
Staff Writer

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar and a sacred time for all Muslim students on campus. While being away from home and family can be lonely, there are ways you can connect with your peers and celebrate together.

Ramadan is a month full of praying, fasting, reflection, community and self-restraint. Fasting is observed between sunset and dawn and is compulsory for any Muslim who has reached puberty and is physically capable. Things such as food, drink, sexual activity, music, unfavorable thoughts and evil intentions are to be avoided. During Ramadan, Muslims repent their sins and seek forgiveness.

If you are a Muslim student, there are many resources you can access to help you out this Ramadan! On campus, the Muslim Student Association (MSA) holds Iftars (breaking of the fast) weekly from Monday to Thursday. These Iftaris are hosted by students or restaurants and funded by donations. I recommend attending these to meet new Muslim friends and break fast together while building community. For more information, check MSA's Instagram @msa_uncc.

Another helpful resource is SGA's Suhoor (start of the fast meal) bags which include food options for students struggling to find meals. These bags can be found at the Office of Identity, Equity, and Engagement from Monday to Wednesday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Finally, the United Muslim Relief (UMR) is helping students who do not have access to Suhoor or Iftar from Friday to Sunday. Volunteers with UMR will pass boxes out after Jumma prayer for Iftars. In addition, on Saturdays and Sundays, there are days to pick up the Iftari boxes posted on the UMR's Instagram @umr.charlotte.

Ramadan is a celebration that every Muslim looks forward to. For more information on Ramadan or how to celebrate on campus, students can contact MSA or UMR. Ramadan Kareem!

Game preview: 'Star Wars Jedi: Survivor'

by Jessica Danesi
Opinion Editor

"Star Wars Jedi: Survivor" is the sequel to "Star Wars Jedi: Fallen Order" and will be released on April 28. The game will follow protagonist Cal Kestis as he explores the galaxy and fights the Empire.

In the previous game, Cal was introduced as a young Jedi who learned to hone his skills using the force and lightsabers. Cal fights back as the Empire oppresses the galaxy, organizing a team of allies across various planets.

"Star Wars Jedi: Survivor" will feature Cal continuing his battle against the Empire's reign, liberating communities and saving his friends. Five years after the first game, the events in this sequel coincide with the timelines of the "Andor" and "Obi-Wan Kenobi" Disney+ shows.

Due to the time period and the presence of the Empire's Inquisitors in both "Obi-Wan Kenobi" and "Star Wars Jedi: Survivor," many fans have theorized about a crossover.

In addition to its narrative, this game will expand on its gameplay. There will be a focus on action-RPG combat, open-world exploration and environmental puzzles. Players can anticipate familiar landscapes and new, larger open-world environments to traverse.

Moreover, players will have new opponents to fight, including Star Wars' classic battle droids and alien creatures. Regarding gameplay, developers have announced that new skills and equipment will be available for players.

There will be new lightsaber techniques,

force abilities and a blaster. In addition, there are hints that some of the equipment will be used for traversal rather than combat, a feature of the previous game.

The most significant combat change will likely be Cal using two lightsabers from the start. In the previous game, this ability was unlocked toward the end. These lightsabers can be used individually in each hand or combined into one double-sided weapon.

For new players, the open-world traversal in this game is comparable to that of the most recent "Tomb Raider" or "God of War" games. In addition, the combat is similar to other action-RPG gameplay described as "souls-like," in reference to "Dark Souls."

For players interested in this narrative-driven, science fiction game, "Star Wars Jedi: Survivor" will arrive on PC, PS5 and XSX/S.



'Star Wars Jedi: Survivor' | Courtesy of GamesRadar

Charlotte's ARTS reps hosts second annual CoAAPalooza

by Bethany Ivan
Arts & Culture Editor

UNC Charlotte's ARTS Reps hosted its second annual CoAAPalooza in the Arts Quad on March 30. CoAAPalooza is a student-run arts festival, typically held during the spring semester, that celebrates different student organizations on campus.

Students walked through the Arts Quad and enjoyed the different activities and games and visited different student organizations near Storrs Hall.

The festival included several food trucks such as Hip Hop Smoothies, Crispy Banh Mi, Chaconia and Wrap N' Roll.

Students involved in organizations on campus showcased their participation with different activities. The members of Niner Designers customized tote bags with different prints and designs for attendees. The festival even featured more tabling by organizations such as Women in Animation, Art Club, Illustration club and Student Theatre at Robinson.

Part of the celebration showcased different performances such as the Niner Nation Marching Band, Improv Club and Dance students Choreography II excerpt.

Riley McGowan, a second-year dance student, performed with the Range of Motion Dance Ensemble, a student-run organization dedicated to creating a positive space for

students to further their creativity and passion for dance. This is McGowan's first time participating in CoAAPalooza.

"I'm a transfer student, so this is my first one," McGowan said. "To me, it's really a good opportunity to get together with friends and meet other people that are in other majors that we don't usually get to see."

Wendy Fishman, the College of Arts +

Architecture's director of collaborative works, encourages students who participated in or attended CoAAPalooza to use this opportunity to get more involved with the community.

"Go get involved, participate and meet people in other disciplines and units," said Fishman. "Get involved in all the great activities on this campus and in Charlotte."



2023 CoAAPalooza | Photos by Bethany Ivan

Charlotte SHOUT! to celebrate creativity in multi-week festival

by Annie Turk
Staff Writer

Charlotte SHOUT!, the multi-week festival celebrating four pillars of local talent: art, food, music and ideas, is back in Uptown Charlotte from March 31 to April 16.

Charlotte SHOUT!, presented by Atrium Health and Bank of America, showcases the talents of the vibrant Charlotte community by featuring over 20 art installations, the Charlotte StrEATS Festival, over 85 live musicians, workshops and more.

With over 1.8 million people visiting the festival last year, Charlotte SHOUT! brings together the greater Charlotte community to showcase the city's talent to the rest of the world.

The festival is an "opportunity as a community to celebrate who we are," said

Executive Producer and Founder Robert Krumbine. "You are going to see a lot of diverse participants, a lot of inclusivity. We make it very accessible for everyone. It is great for children. It is great for adults. Get out there and jump on a see-saw and have a little bit of fun."

The 17 days that Charlotte SHOUT! is in Uptown are filled with free activities and events for the whole family. The event schedule, with times and dates of events and activities, is available on their website. Visitors can also look forward to some surprises, including scavenger hunts with prizes.

Some of the featured activities and events include:

"The Pianodrome" at Grace AME Zion Church: an interactive art installation

combining the pillars of music and art into an amphitheater made from upcycled pianos

Local food trucks, where people can taste their way through the culinary artistry of Charlotte's chefs

The "The Aesthetics of Joy" talk: a discussion about how spaces and places affect our emotions with TED speaker Ingrid Fetell Lee as a part of the Charlotte Ideas Festival

As a 99% free festival covering over two weeks of activities, Charlotte SHOUT! is perfect for college students and families looking for something to watch and participate in.

"Everyone is going to take something different away, and I want people to take a minute and enjoy it for themselves," said Krumbine. "Find the thing that makes the art

and the ideas and music and all of that stuff and ask 'how does it resonate to you and how does it make you feel?'"

This year, Charlotte SHOUT! is highlighting a platform called MyCLT that represents everything Charlotte encompasses and how creative people and places come together.

"MyCLT is our way of putting a tag on putting together all these artists, musicians, thought leaders, etc., that are from our local region," said Krumbine.

By sprinkling events and installations throughout Uptown, Charlotte SHOUT! lets visitors explore the city in new ways.

"Enjoy what creativity can do and how so many people have put time and effort into making this something special," said Krumbine.