



WOLVES PACK UP FOR SUMMER



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NEWS

EDITORIAL: THE RE-EMERGENCE OF GUN VIOLENCE AFTER A YEAR OF COVID-19

By Kayla Henderson
Contributing Writer

After a year of the COVID-19 pandemic, normalcy seems to be returning. During COVID-19 and the quarantine period, crime rates decreased because people were just confined to their homes. But now that there is hope for the end of the pandemic, crime rates are increasing again. Unfortunately this return to crime also includes an increase in mass shootings.

While only a few months into 2021, gun violence across the U.S. is peaking. Gun Violence Archive shows that in the first four months of 2021, there have been 143 mass shootings alone. Other gun-related incidents are also rising. Deaths from murder, unintentional deaths, suicide and officer-related shootings or deaths, combined a total of 12,047 fatalities as of April 13, 2021.

Mass shootings are difficult to predict because of uncertainty of when and where a mass shooting may take place. Pew Research Center found that there is a trend in the U.S. of states that have a higher chance for gun violence. The states that rank highest for gun violence according to Pew Research Center include Alaska, Alabama, Montana, Louisiana, Missouri, Mississippi and Arkansas. States that have the lowest reports of gun violence are New Jersey, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, Massachusetts and Hawaii.

Despite the pandemic, 2020 also showed a rise in gun purchases around

the U.S., largely attested to civil unrest and the uncertainties of economic turmoil. Brookings Institute found that 2020 showed the highest number of gun purchases since 2010. After former President Donald Trump declared COVID-19 a national emergency in March 2020, Brookings Institute found that gun sales skyrocketed. 700,000 new guns were purchased during March. Later in the year, gun sales would then again spike after the death of George Floyd and the conversation of police reform. Brookings found that June of 2020 held the highest number of firearm sales since 1998, over a million guns were sold, higher than the average for firearm sales for June in other years. With this, gun totals in the U.S. would equate to one firearm owned for every 20 Americans, according to Brookings.

Even with the increase in gun sales, compared to other years, 2020 had a large decrease in gun-related deaths, but a significant increase in mass shootings with over 610 mass shootings according to data from GVA, 193 more than from in 2019.

Putting an end to gun violence has been on the political agenda for years, but political parties often disagree on what that will look like. In the current Biden-Harris administration, six key actions to reduce gun violence have been introduced in 2021, including investing in community prevention programs and nominating David Chapman as Director of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, an agency devoted to creating gun laws within the Department of Justice. In March, the House passed two pieces of legislation that help to strengthen the current gun laws and create background checks for purchasing a gun. Both bills will move into the Senate later this year.



Photo courtesy of the Associated Press

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Brittany Shivers
Editor-in-Chief

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Graphic Designer

Taylor Jackson
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LIVING WEST

UWG STUDENT CREATES NON-PROFIT FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

By Abby Grizzard
Contributing Writer

Perseverance pushes individuals to overcome hardships, and as a student with disabilities, Nemiah Hobbs embodies what it means to defeat the odds. Nemiah is a role model within her community who has used her own story to create a non-profit for those like her.

Project NEMIAH is a non-profit organization run by Nemiah Hobbs aimed to cultivate educational and career readiness for students struggling with disabilities. The goal of the organization is to create centers within various cities throughout Georgia and beyond where students that struggle with various disabilities are given an outlet to meet others with similar struggles as their own.

These students will learn tips to ensure success in achieving their goals. Some services of the non-profit include academic support from specialists in different areas of education and university tours. NEMIAH stands for “No Excuses, Making It All Happen!” which coincides with the mission of her organization.

Nemiah is highly motivated by personal experiences as she struggled with her own academic and life path. While understanding what it’s like to be a student with disabilities, her own experiences allow her to be a role model and advocate for the support these students need.

“Despite what I went through growing up and



WEST GEORGIA OUTDOORS: PROVIDING ADVENTURE DURING COVID-19

By Samara Marshall
Contributing Writer

Warmer weather and a sprinkle of sunshine is making many people eager to enjoy the outdoors during spring and summer, and West Georgia Outdoors (WGO) allows students to do just that. WGO provides students with a way to escape from school by hosting events such as camping, climbing and kayaking events on and off campus. WGO started around 10 years ago as a part of the University of Recreation (UREC) that has three parts to their program. UREC includes a climbing wall, outdoor recreation center and a trips component which faculty staff and students can enjoy. Because of the pandemic and safety protocols, a lot of events and trips were cancelled because of the inability to social distance.

“On a normal year we would be doing all types of fun trips like hiking, camping in the mountains, skydiving and so many others,” said Triatian Thompson, Graduate Assistant at WGO. “This year we have done more local trips and on campus events like our recent Campus Campout to have something to do where we don’t have to travel.”

The trip component to WGO is very popular among students because it provides students the opportunity to go on trips and explore the outdoors. Because of the recent safety protocols, the importance of being outdoors and connecting to nature is greater than ever.

“Being outside can create a calmness by just changing your environment in general,” said Thompson. “Getting outside of your element can really bring about peace and clarity. With this pandemic there has been a huge mental as-

all of my health issues such as academic disabilities and hearing loss, I’ve never let that stop me from doing what I knew I was capable of doing,” said Nemiah. “My family always had my back and was there for support—from medical appointments and hearing aids to school IEPs. Anything I needed my parents were there for me, so I never made excuses for not being able to be successful and do whatever I wanted to do with my life.”

Hobbs wants to provide the same support she received from her parents to her peers with disabilities. Project NEMIAH is set out to do the same thing for kids and teens that struggle with these same circumstances by providing support and guidance to those with disabilities.

“Project NEMIAH’s plan is to help students with disabilities receive educational resources. Before they complete high school, they are given help to decide on a path while making sure their parents are comfortable and ready to send them off into the world,” said Nemiah. “Because of what I’ve gone through, I want to help those who are going through the same things due to disabilities and give them resources that their schools usually are not giving.”

Project NEMIAH’s Facebook and Instagram pages post messages and videos that feature Hobbs where she speaks up for children and teens with disabilities. In her post she also encourages them to continue working hard despite their challenges.

“I post informational messages talking about leadership goals, ways to build yourself up and any topic that will motivate kids and teens and inspire them to be successful in their lives,” said Nemiah. “I also do weekly inspirational messages, and I’ve been posting times where I speak in podcast interviews and for organizations like Voyage ATL and the Southern Christian Leadership magazine. I share what Project NEMIAH is doing and keep my followers updated on the progress it has made.”

Nemiah and her organization exemplify an advocacy for silenced voices and a support system for those who may not have anyone else to turn to. Carrollton community members can look forward to future expansion of the business and opportunities to work with the organization as it grows.

“Project NEMIAH means a way to help others,” said Nemiah. “I love helping others and the fact that I’ll be able to work with students with disabilities like me.

“I believe this will give them the confidence that they need to be able to live their own lives and successfully be out in the world,” continued Nemiah. “The world is full of people like us, and I want their parents and themselves to not be afraid when it is time for them to move on. And I want them to be confident knowing that they can go to college and that they can get that job they want.”

Photo courtesy of Nemiah Hobbs

pect to it, and we all have been affected by it, so by just giving anyone the opportunity to try something new outdoors where students can still feel safe is a big priority for us.”

Trying out new things promotes a more active and healthy lifestyle as opposed to staying in the house all day. WGO also has programs and events that will happen in the next few weeks and the upcoming semester. “This semester we did some of our regular things like our climbing wall at half capacity, rentals for bikes and so on,” said Thompson. “We also had a West Georgia Outdoors Expo as well as Campus Campout.

“Next semester we will still be doing all the outdoors beginner friendly events but we are also going to be adding back other events like camping and hiking overnight and going on trips again,” continued Thompson.

With the many events that WGO has planned and more sunny days ahead there are many chances for students to get outside and explore the outdoors.



Photo courtesy of West Georgia Outdoors

LIVING WEST

FLATTENING THE CURVE: COVID-19 VACCINES AT UWG

By **Brittany Hall**

Contributing Writer

The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) has designated UWG as a distribution site to provide COVID-19 vaccines for students, faculty and staff.

On March 22, the students, faculty and staff at UWG received an email to request an appointment to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. The vaccination doses that are being administered are manufactured by Pfizer-BioNTech. However, only students, faculty and staff that are of the correct eligibility according to the Department of Public Health (DPH) can receive the vaccine.

“Any student, faculty or staff member who is 16 years or older may sign up to receive the COVID-19 vaccine,” said Medial Director of Health Services for UWG, Eric Heine. “But those who are younger than 18 and still are a minor will need a parent’s or guardian’s signature.

“Family members of faculty and staff are not currently routinely eligible for a vaccine here at UWG,” continued Heine. “But as soon as more vaccines become available and all persons on campus who desire a vaccine have received one

than family members will be eligible to receive the vaccine.”

As of April 1, UWG has administered over 1,000 vaccines on campus. UWG plans to fully open its campus including restarting face-to-face instruction starting Fall 2021. UWG is constantly encouraging the members of the pack to apply and receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

“We are constantly sending out daily reminders of the vaccination clinics on campus,” said Heine. “We have made various social media posts and we are currently making a video with all of the information about the vaccine and that video will be sent to all of the members on campus.”

“The main clinic where the vaccine is being administered is the Coliseum,” continued Heine. “Although when there are leftover doses, they will be administered at Student Health Services. The actual injections are being given by nurses and from Student Health Services. The nursing students from the School of Nursing will be helping out as well, but they will be supervised by clinical instructors.”

UWG providing the vaccine to their students, faculty and staff will have a positive impact on the campus. Heine believes cases on campus will decrease because of the accessibility of the vaccine.

“By getting the maximum number of students and employees vaccinated, we will markedly decrease the incidence of COVID-19 cases on campus allowing us to return to more normal teaching and social activities without the concern for major outbreaks, as well as an eventual retraction of mitigation efforts, such as masks and physical distancing,” said Heine.

SECOND DOSES OF PFIZER VACCINE BEING ADMINISTERED ON CAMPUS

By **Ashley Moore**

Contributing Writer

The UWG COVID-19 Vaccination Program allows students, faculty and staff to receive vaccinations on campus throughout the spring and summer semesters of 2021. Any UWG student or employee who is 16 years of age or older may request an appointment to receive the vaccine.

“We like every other institution have been affected by the pandemic,” said Director of Strategic Communications, Colton Campbell. “We really wanted to offer the university community an option that would be convenient for them. We’ve also really focused on making sure that we’re administering the vaccines in a safe and efficient manner.”

In March, UWG received their first allocation of doses from Pfizer-BioNTech, with 1,033 doses distributed at this point within the university. The UWG Health Services clinical staff and Tanner Health System School of Nursing faculty members and students are helping administer the vaccine. Undergraduate nursing students are supervised by faculty. Campbell says it is great to see experiential learning opportunities occur for the nursing students.

Vaccination appointments are provided at the

UWG Coliseum and are set up in concourse to avoid face-to-face interactions with other patients. Students, faculty and staff interested in receiving the vaccine can request an appointment through emails sent by the university.

It is recommended that recipients of the vaccine devote 45 minutes to the appointment. There are dedicated parking spots in front of The Coliseum for patients. Once patients enter the event, they fill out forms, check in, receive the vaccine, experience a 15 minute wait period (per CDC recommendations) and then exit the building through another door.

“It’s just a one way loop around The Coliseum,” says Campbell. “Efficiency in trying to get as many people as we can through in a given amount of time has been huge for us. We’ve tried to make it where approximately 25-30 people come through every 15 minutes.”

The university is currently in the process of distributing the second dose of the vaccine. Within a few weeks time, both doses of the vaccine will be administered. For program updates, the university recommends closely monitoring your email and trusting only official UWG communications or information posted directly on the UWG COVID-19 website. The university is thrilled to offer this service to the UWG community.

“This is tremendous news for our university community, as we are now able to begin inoculating individuals on our campus against COVID-19,” said UWG President, Dr. Brendan Kelly. “As we look toward the Fall 2021 semester, the availability of vaccines and the success we have had in slowing the spread of COVID-19 on our campus will be integral to our plans for the full complement of in-person classes and an enhanced suite of student services, activities and events.”



Photo courtesy of Miranda Daniel

LIVING WEST

ASIAN HATE CRIMES ADDRESSED AT UWG DIVERSITY PANEL

By Abby Grizzard

Contributing Writer

UWG's Center for Diversity and Inclusion hosted a panel, "Stop Asian Hate: Healing and Action After Atlanta Shooting," on March 25, responding to the recent shooting perpetuating Asian discrimination and hate. The event was held live through Zoom and was available to all of the university's students and faculty. The panel featured a plethora of speakers, including Stephanie Chalifoux, Steve Goodsen, Mai Mills, Yan Yang, Taimyr Strachan-Louider, Nisha Gupta and Sharmistha Basu-Dutt.

The event started with each panelist providing a short synopsis in their particular field of specialization or study to reflect on the events of the Atlanta shooting. The panelists covered an array of topics such as Asian hate crimes, Asian American case studies, Asian stereotypes, university counseling services and more. Throughout the course of the event, attendees were given allotted time to ask questions from the panelists.

Stephanie Chalifoux, a UWG Associate History Professor, covered stereotypes regarding hypersexualization of Asian American women in the United States and how these stereotypes coincide with the Atlanta shootings.

"Asian American women or women of Asian descent are both somewhat hypersexualized and also submissive and we need to understand where this is forming," said Chalifoux. "It's formed through these laws, through these acts, these legal codes, but it's also forming in this notion of what is cultural difference in the United States and what is immigration.

"The fetishization of Asian Women and sexual desire for Asian Women, it is not an addiction," continued Chalifoux. "But it's a stereotype that's constantly sort of reinforcing this notion of Asian Women being sort of sexually available, sort of for the taking. So I think it's important for us to kind of understand some of this context, so we can understand what happened in Atlanta or make sense of what happened in Atlanta."

Other panelists such as Mai Naito Mills, an Associate Professor of Criminology at UWG, comparatively utilized narrative anecdotes to communicate the unrightful crimes being perpetrated against Asian Americans. In his speech, Mills references a specific instance in which an Asian American was unjustly rep-

resented within the criminal justice system.

"As we have had many tragic incidents of violent attacks of Asians in recent times, one of the cases that really stuck out to me was the killing of Vincent Chin who was beaten to death by two white men in Detroit back in 1982," said Mills. "The perpetrators were charged with second degree murder, but ultimately they both played, to a lesser charge of manslaughter. They were sentenced to three years probation and a \$3,000 fine. Neither of them served any prison time."

While numerous injustices and discriminatory acts performed against Asian Americans were discussed throughout the panel in order to address the Atlanta hate crime, panelists such as UWG Professor Dr. Yan Yang described a hopeful future for Asian Americans. She expressed to event participants that acts such as these are inspiring unity and strength in the Asian community.

"This is a very difficult time, with so many crimes, so much hatred, so much violence, but I find Asians are more united than ever," said Yang. "I feel like this minority group is finally waking up. We're no longer the silent ones that just put our heads down and work hard. We unite together and make our voices heard, and this is manifesting throughout the nation in the national demonstration against anti-Asian violence."

Dr. Taimyr Strachan-Louider, a Marriage and Family Therapist at the University Counseling Center, also spoke at the event to remind students and faculty of their available resources of support through the campus.

"I realize that in this virtual time many students may not know that we are still here and we are still sources of support for them, and so at the Counseling Center, you will find licensed professional counselors who work with an array of presenting issues," said Strachan-Louider. "I have heard concerns about whether or not counselors are able to address cultural issues, and I would like to say that we do receive that type of training to meet the needs of each of our students here."

While discriminatory hate crimes against minorities are prevalent within the American culture, several of the panelists expressed the hope that can result from such tragedies.

"I think I see a lot of hope and a lot of light, and more importantly, I see a lot of social awareness and that's why we're here today. I see all this attendance, and I'm very encouraged," said Yang. "Even this panel is a manifestation of how we're all coming together, regardless of our skin color, to combat racism to raise awareness of the hardships the Asian population is going through in this country and as an education initiative."

ENTERTAINMENT



Photo courtesy of Netflix

ORIGINAL WIT IN NETFLIX'S 'PRANK ENCOUNTERS'

By Taylor Blessett
Contributing Writer

Netflix recently introduced the second season of *Prank Encounters*, which is a television prank show that calls two people in and makes them think they are auditioning for a paid role in a film or being hired for a job.

Prank Encounters is a fairly new show that started production in 2019. The second season of *Prank Encounters* has just aired April 1 of this year, making it one of Netflix's hottest commodities right now. *Prank Encounters* will surely have viewers invested after watching the first episode.

The key of the show is that the individuals chosen to participate are there to complete a task. What they don't know, however, is that there is a prank waiting for them. The pranks start with a problem that is introduced to the person that is casted. The person that is casted is in charge of solving that particular problem, but the catch is the pranks are hosted in horror themed places such as haunted mansions, abandoned themed buildings or vacant cemeteries. Unknown to the person that is being casted, the prank is to scare them and is in fact not an audition or job role.

After watching the first episode of season two, I was not disappointed. *Prank Encounters* is filled with thrilling storytelling that draws the audience at first glance. The cast demonstrates excel-

lent acting that completes the scenario and leaves the guest and audience guessing what is going to happen.

There has been speculation about *Prank Encounters* resembling too much like the earlier famous Syfy show, *Scare Tactics*, which aired in 2003. *Prank Encounters* has received negative reviews and backlash due to its lack of originality. Reviews left about the show highlighted how some viewers found it to be disrespectful because of its mocking of actors trying to find real paying jobs. Overall the show has proved its authenticity through its story lines. The story lines are full of raw comedy while also giving the audience a sense of reality, which distinguishes it from *Scare Tactics*.

To add to the many jump scares and surprises that engage the audience, *Stranger Things* stars Gaten Matarazzo as the show's host. The show also brings in other celebrities from different backgrounds to pose as actors such as Peter Giles, Mary Gallagher and Julian Gant.

After watching *Prank Encounters*, this show provides a good laugh, mystery and suspense that will keep the audience on the edge of their seats. Although *Prank Encounters* has been compared to many prank shows, this show does not lack originality or humor, in the least bit.

MYSTERIOUS POSSIBILITIES IN NETFLIX'S NEW TELENOVELA 'WHO KILLED SARA?'

By Madison Creech
Contributing Writer

Who Killed Sara? was released on Netflix on March 24 and has gained a lot of attention from mystery lovers.

The Spanish language show is a thrilling murder mystery that follows the main character Alex, played by Manolo Cardona, who is convicted of a crime he didn't commit. Alex has recently been released from prison after serving 18 years of his 30-year sentence. He had been convicted for his sister's "accidental" death. When he is released, Alex can only think of one thing—revenge on Rodolfo Lazcano. Alex believes Rodolfo is to blame for his sisters' death and that it was not accidental but a murder. Things soon become complicated because of an anonymous texter that is sending Alex messages trying to convince him that Rodolfo didn't commit the murder. Within all these events, Alex quickly starts having feelings for Elisa, played by Carolina Miranda, Rodolfo's youngest daughter.

Netflix knows a lot of their viewers enjoy a good murder mystery. With the addition of rich, attractive and powerful characters, it's certain to grab viewers' attention. The drama in this show is captivating and intriguing which led me to keep watching past the pilot. The show also has melodrama



Photo courtesy of Netflix

that shapes it into a telenovela that is also contemporary. There are many different characters in the show which can be hard to keep track of who is who.

I feel as though a lot of TV shows these days the audience has to get through the first show or the pilot. The ending grabs the viewers' attention with a cliff-hanger which makes the viewers want to keep watching that show. With that being said, this TV show is no exception. If a specific viewer enjoys murder mystery shows or even documentaries that follow murder mysteries, I highly recommend Who Killed Sara?

With shows like this, the possibilities seem endless. Anyone on the Lazcano boat could have killed Sara. It is almost as if Alex himself had asked the audience to help with the mystery and we were going along and helping him. The feeling of the show is energetic and it also has a good story the audience can follow. Each actor portrays their characters well allowing a superb performance. And finally, it kept my attention right after the first episode until the very end of season one of Who Killed Sara?

ENTERTAINMENT



Photo courtesy of Mike Rosenthal

JUSTIN BIEBER FINDS HIS VOICE WITH ‘JUSTICE’

By Abigail Cummings
Contributing Writer

Justin Bieber, a name synonymous with screaming fans, has released his sixth studio album Justice. This album is his most diverse to date as he draws inspiration from R&B and Christian genres. His new album debuted at the top of the Billboard charts and already has fans singing the lyrics at the tops of their lungs.

This album is unlike any other Bieber has released because it draws heavily on his Christian beliefs and values. Songs such as “Hold On,” “Anyone” and even the obvious “Holy” each have alliterations to the Bible or God in some way. By doing this, Bieber has widened his audience allowing for Christians to take intrigue into his newfound religious beliefs and has contributed to the success of the album.

Also, a big influence on this album is his wife, Hailey Baldwin Bieber, whom he married in 2018. Love songs are some of the more memorable songs an artist can create, and Bieber delivers just that with songs like “2 Much,” “Somebody” and “Lifetime.” The listeners can hear and feel just how much he has matured since his previous relationships and how Hailey has been a positive influence on his overall life.

His album also gets dark at times, touching on subjects not many have the guts to do. In his song “Lonely,” featuring Benny Blanco, he sings about how hard growing up in the spotlight was and how even when he is surrounded by millions of people, he still can feel lonely. He alludes to his infamous arrest in 2014 and his drug use with the lines “And everybody saw me sick/ They criticized the things I did as an idiot kid.” This is also seen in his song “Unstable” featuring The Kid LAROI where he mentions being sick, but “you” always loved him. This “you” perhaps means God, his wife or even his fans. Allowing his

audience in to see the darker side of him gives this album humanity which his others sometimes fail to do.

His choice of featuring artists also adds to the achievement of this album. He incorporates a wide variety of pop, R&B and rap artists into his songs, amounting to a total of 13 features on Justice. He includes up-and-coming artists such as The Kid LAROI, to more notable artists like Billboard Award winner Tori Kelly and Grammy nominated Chance The Rapper. This vast incorporation opens his music to a wider audience and allows it to be heard by more than just fans of Bieber himself.

Bieber includes an interesting interlude on track seven of Justice. The track is aptly named MLK interlude and is a minute and a half of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. ‘s “But If Not” sermon that he delivered at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, GA in November of 1967. One can conclude that this sermon is where Bieber found the name for his album. His inclusion of the speech also helps to bring light to the events that have been happening for the past year in America. Perhaps this is his way of paying homage to tragedies that took the lives of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. He also opens his album with a line from MLK Jr. that says, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” I believe his inclusion of these two clips helps the listener to relate and understand how music can help heal and educate on important matters.

Justin Bieber has created another smash hit that is sure to earn him Grammy nominations. This might just be his best album yet. Fans are sure to come running once he announces a tour because this is the kind of album that should be experienced live.

ENTERTAINMENT



LOCAL BAND VIRGINIA AVE. FINDS GROWING SUCCESS

By Kayla Henderson
Contributing Writer

2020 was a whirlwind year of confusion and boredom for many people. A lockdown that was predicted to only last two weeks turned into months of sitting behind phone screens and waiting for the world to come back to life. Separated from the normal routine of everyday life, time seemed to sit still.

Yet, Will Roberts used the free time as an opportunity to create. He began to strum chords on his guitar and knew what he was making needed a bigger outlet than just the melodies stuck in his head. After a FaceTime call between friends in Athens, GA, a newly found band was formed...Virginia Ave.

The band has five members: Katie Crabtree, Garen Griffin, Zach Keung, Andreas Marsh and Will Roberts. Because of lockdown, the creative process looked a little different than it usually would for the beginning stages of a band. Long calls, voice memos and sending song lyrics through group chats was how the band spent the first few months.

“Virginia Ave. would not exist, in a weird way, without the pandemic. It gave all of us more free time in lockdown to start to have that creative process,” says Will, Lead Guitarist for Virginia Ave. “I set up a recording studio in my room where I would record on my guitar and send it to the rest of the band in Athens. That is how we made a lot of our music.”

Will had labeled song samples “Virginia Ave.,” named after the street he lived on in LaGrange, GA. The name stuck, and the band had its name.

Growing up Will had always had a strong relationship with music. Much of the style he plays today he attributes to the music he was surrounded by when he was younger.

“I think that music is so intertwined with emotion and our everyday lives,” says Will. “There is hardly a time where I don’t have headphones in listening to something.”

“My dad always had music playing in the house. It was a little bit of everything from gospel to Al Green. We listened to it all,” continues Will. “A lot of that led to me begging my dad to teach me to play guitar. He taught me what he knew and in freshman year of high school, and then I started taking lessons.”

Virginia Ave. falls under the umbrella of the alternative genre, written with hints of soul, folk and blue-

Photo courtesy of the Will Roberts

grass. The band’s *Outside* EP was released in late 2020 featuring four tracks, including the group’s first single, “Time Rolls On.” The EP came together through the process of collective songwriting. Each band member helped to write and create the lyrics in each of the songs.

“We have taken a big workshop approach to writing within the band, which I learned a lot from my own creative writing classes,” says Will. “One of the most important lessons I’ve learned is that any critique is valid when we all are coming together to write.”

“We never come down on each other’s ideas,” Will continues. “At first, it can be really uncomfortable when saying how to improve on something, but we all have been able to have constructive conversations about how to create the best piece we can for our sound.”

Will admits he feels the band will continuously work to figure out exactly what Virginia Ave.’s sound is. Despite all of the band members returning back to their college classes, the band has been working hard to continue to create content together.

“Moving forward we want to release more singles this year and eventually an album,” says Will. “Soon we would like to start doing more covers while in the process of writing.”

Aside from their own work, Virginia Ave. hopes that they can cover other artists and add their own Virginia Ave. spin to the songs they cover.

“There are a lot of unwritten rules about covering like justifying how you want to cover it and making it different and your own,” says Will. “We’ve tossed around some ideas like Paul Simon or The Velvet Underground. Whatever we choose to cover, we want to make it our own and have our own spin on it.”

March will mark one year since the creation of Virginia Ave. The band hopes that they will continue to do what they love. Over the past year the band’s fanbase has grown to more than 5,000 streams of their EP “*Outside*” on Spotify. Last year, they were also able to play their first COVID-19 safe live show in Athens, GA.

“Working with your friends is so rewarding. I am so thankful we get to do what we do,” says Will. “We do not have a belief that we will ever get famous, but in the end, it’s about how much fun we had while doing it.”