

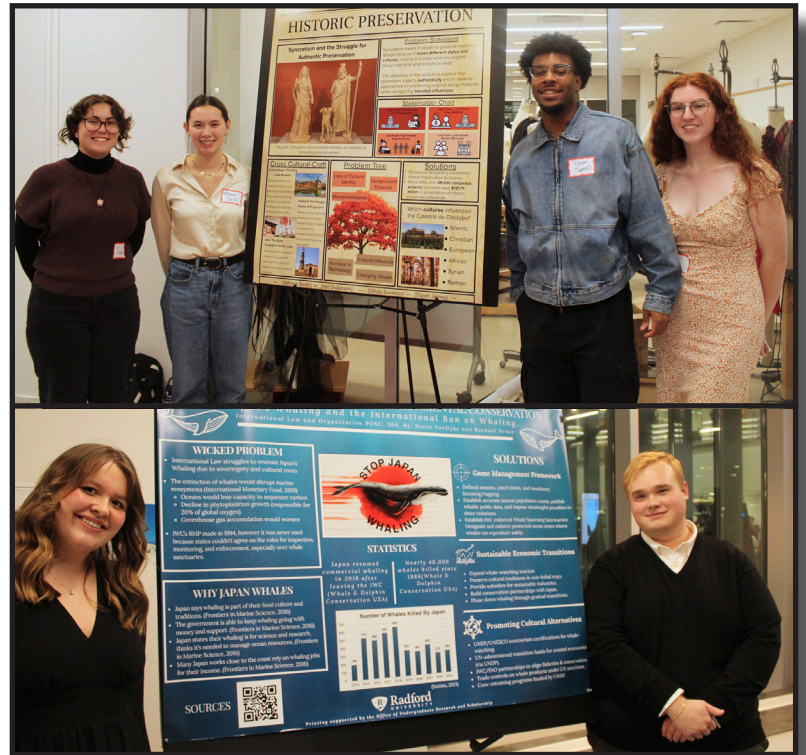
## Wicked Festival IX Hosted in Artis Center Last Week

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The Artis Center was covered in student projects that featured complex problems, and innovative solutions for the ninth Wicked Festival last Thursday. From environmental issues to food insecurity to presidential age limits, students tackled the “wicked” problems that persist in the world every day.

**Dr. Paige Tan**, the director of Wicked Festival, said this has been one of the most purposeful aspects of her teaching career. “To find the colleagues and the students who want to solve these tough public problems, it’s just so meaningful to me, and just the diversity of things that they’re working on...I’m delighted,” said Dr. Tan. She highlighted some of the skills it takes to produce a Wicked Project, not only must students display teamwork and problem-solving skills, but also confidence and persistence.

After the presentations, guest speaker **Jessica Wirgau**, the CEO of The Community Foundation of the New River Valley, spoke about the need for communities and understanding the people around us. She highlighted the many charitable acts that the CFNRV participates in and urged students to get involved with the community and work towards implementing the change they advocated for during the festival. Following this, four categories of awards were given out, including Rising Star, Impactful Solution, Distinguished Research, and Outstanding Presentation. Each award was presented in bronze, silver, and gold levels. The winner of the gold award in Outstanding Presentation went to **Za’vionna Green** for her presentation titled *Censored Medicine: What the Government Doesn’t Want You to Know*.



Students Left to Right: **Kat Dickinson**, **Athena Smith**, **Dajon James**, **Olivia Swortzel** - **Maggie Fulk**, **Devin VanDyke**

Photo Credit: Morgan Wade

**“I did a lot of research on the healthcare system and how poor it is. It started off as a theory and turned into something more...it’s about a system change, and I definitely think that’s reflected in my project,”** said Green.

Over 200 projects were presented at this semester’s Wicked Festival, with such an array of different complicated issues and creative solutions, students must find a way to make their project stand out. **Dr. Tan gave one tip on how to present a successful wicked project: show humanity.** “Have a hook that really grabs people...make it human for the people that are just walking by, then use that as a chance to really connect.” Dr. Tan says, **“That’s what I love about Wicked Festival, it is students talking with other students about things they care about, there’s nothing better than that.”**

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## “Trashion” Event Showcases Design Department Creativity

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The Department of Design held a “trashion” show inspired by Disney’s “Cruella” movie, which challenged four groups of students to create four outfits solely made from discarded paper and plastic recyclables. Each group had two hours to deliberate, design, and create their Trashion works of art while also having the movie cruella playing in the background for inspiration. After two hours each group was able to create amazing garments with the resources that they had there were trash bags, bubble wrap, wrapping paper, and even using Scantron paper. With those items they were able to make three dresses, one with a train behind it and even



a men’s suit. Each group was able to make these beautiful works of art in with the resources and time they had and executed it perfectly, and you are able to see these wonderful garments yourself by going to the Artist center and scanning the QR code so

you can vote for the garment you like the most and want to display in their window!



Photo Credits: Morgan Wade



# Government Shutdown Effects On Air Travel Increasing Before Holiday Season

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As the federal government shutdown stretches into its 41st day, the ripple effects are now hitting the skies. **The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) announced a sweeping 10% reduction in air traffic across 40 high-volume U.S. airports, causing widespread safety concerns and a critical shortage of paid air traffic controllers.** Since the shutdown began on October 1st, air traffic controllers have been reporting to work without compensation, and non-essential FAA employees, including safety inspectors and maintenance personnel, are being furloughed. Many are calling out due to financial strain or fatigue, leading to major staffing gaps at large hubs like Atlanta, Chicago, and New York. As our economy continues to stifle our communities, now is the worst time for individuals to lose their jobs. This attack on the working class has families stressed over how long this government shutdown will last, and if business will return to normal and their jobs will return to them once the government has resumed its duties. FAA Administrator, Bryan Bedford, acknowledged the pressure, stating, **“We’re seeing signs of strain that compromise the integrity of our airspace. This reduction is about preserving safety above all else,”** however passengers are already feeling the strain. Cancellations and delays have surged, particularly at airports like LAX, JFK, and O’Hare. Airlines are scrambling to rebook travelers and adjust schedules. Delta and United have issued statements urging patience and promising to “limit disruptions where possible” but the timing couldn’t be worse. **With Thanksgiving travel looming, industry experts warn that the reductions could create an economic nightmare of travelers.** This issue affects communities state wide, especially within our own community. Students who live out-of-state and out-of-the-country must now face flight cancellations and boarding complications in order to return home for the holidays, which for many is a daunting setback. As the government shutdown



Photo Edit By: Brandon Whitaker

stretches on, there is only so much that the FAA can provide in these difficult times. While negotiations in Congress remain stalled, the FAA has warned that further restrictions may be necessary if staffing conditions worsen. For now, the agency is prioritizing safety over convenience, even as public frustration mounts.

The government shutdown now exposes vulnerabilities in how air traffic control is governed. Advocates call for the separation of air traffic systems from political gridlocks to ensure issues like this do not arise if the government becomes compromised. They state how our air traffic systems should take inspiration from models in Canada and New Zealand that maintain continuity during government disruptions. This issue is more than just an annoyance to travelers, it is a safety risk for everyone involved. As one weary passenger at Reagan National put it, “It’s not just about missing a flight—it’s about feeling like the system is flying blind.” As we hopefully come closer to the end of this government shutdown, we all must keep in mind how many people are directly affected by this disruption. How many families and friends are now being forced to fly with a system that is only running at 90% capacity. Which in hindsight may feel like a lot, but that 10% could mean the difference between life or death for hundreds of people.

# Puff, Puff, Pass: The Logistics of Medical Marijuana in Virginia

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At the ripe age of 19, I was diagnosed with Fibromyalgia, a chronic pain disability that affects just about every part of your body. Despite proper medication treatment and lifestyle changes at times pain persisted, sleepless nights erupted, and my muscles refused to work the way they should. Hence came a discussion with my doctor about the occasional use of medical cannabis. The last two years medical marijuana has got me through flares, has soothed my muscles, and has helped me reduce the sleepless nights of pain. However, there's still a lot of confusion and misconceptions around medical marijuana, such as how is it legal in states but federally illegal? What happens if you are caught with medical marijuana, and what about age restrictions, how did I get access to it before 21? Well today we are going to be diving into some of those questions in an attempt to educate you on the medical marijuana system.

**Legal Logistics:** Our first question comes down to why and how it's legal state wide but not federally. Basically it comes down to states having their own rights/autonomy to dictate medical marijuana laws. Furthermore, medical marijuana is legal in Virginia, because state laws allow for its use and the state has created a regulated system for medical cannabis dispensaries, even though federal law still lists cannabis as a Schedule I controlled substance. Meaning that even though federal law speaks against it, state law takes precedent here.



Photo Credit: Getty Images

Another important point is that while recreational marijuana is 21+, medical marijuana is 18+, which is another effect of state laws.

**How Much is Too Much:** When it comes to carrying/possessing medical marijuana, it is broken up into two categories: Flower/Bud and all other products, such as edibles, tinctures, vapes, and more. According to Virginia law, “medical marijuana patients may be dispensed and carry up to 4 ounces of botanical (flower) cannabis per 30 days.” However, there are different specifications for other types of cannabis products, the specified possession limit for cannabis products is a 90-day supply. Such products, as defined under the law, may contain up to 10 mg of THC per single dose. Unfortunately the law is unclear on what constitutes a 90-day supply and simply notes that it is “up to the pharmacist discretion”. What about getting caught with medical marijuana, well it depends on how much you're carrying and where you are carrying it. Of note, if you carry medical marijuana in your car it cannot legally be within the reach of the driver in any capacity. Also what's important is no matter the location you cannot have more than either four ounces of



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flower or an ambiguous 90-day supply of other cannabis products. Anything over the listed amounts could impose a fine or even jail time depending on the amount you're carrying.

For example, more than four ounces, but less than a pound is a "Class 3 Misdemeanor (first offense), punishable by a fine of up to \$500" even if you are over 21 or/and have a medical card.

**Medical Dispensaries:** How does a medical dispensary work, is it regulated, and what are the differences between medical marijuana and recreational marijuana? Well firstly when you go into a medical dispensary either with your physical or digital medical card and ID card, they will link your account to the barcode on the back of your state issued ID. This way they can "log you in" each time you visit and keep track of how much marijuana you buy and how often you visit- as well as when your medical card is due for renewal. Next let's look into regulation. Medical dispensaries are under regulation but they vary state to state. The Virginia Cannabis Control Authority is the primary regulatory body overseeing the licensing of medical marijuana dispensaries. They regulate the products dispensed, the employee guidelines, how much marijuana can be present in such products, and the quality of marijuana. That brings us to our next point, what is the difference between medical and recreational marijuana. Well it mostly has to do with the level of Cannabidiol, present in recreational marijuana tends to be higher than that of medical. As medical marijuana tends to contain more THC, the active ingredient in cannabis. Not to mention that based on my experiences, recreational products aren't required to list all of their ingredients in a percentage like format, only in a way similar to that of food products, whereas medical marijuana is required to list them with the percentages of each ingredient.

**Medical Card Cons:** Let's be realistic for a second, as much as medical marijuana is hugely beneficial to many people including myself, in helping us to live healthy and functioning lives, there are some cons that come with owning a medical card in Virginia. Firstly according to federal law you cannot own a firearm as you are technically an "unlawful user" of marijuana. Meaning that you cannot hunt, you cannot have the right to defend yourself, you cannot shoot for sport, or own a firearm for any other reason. Another thing at risk may be your employment as there are no laws that protect you from your employer firing you on the basis of marijuana use. Many companies that drug test have every legal right to deny you employment or end employment despite the holding of a medical card. Another main issue for those with a medical card is the fact there are limited amounts of legal medical dispensaries in Virginia. Meaning that patients may have to travel farther than those using recreationally for medical only, regulated marijuana.

In conclusion, while medical marijuana has been a life-changing tool in helping me and many others manage pain, sleeplessness, and other various issues, it also exists within a complicated legal and social framework. Virginia's state laws have allowed patients like me to find relief through a regulated system, but the ongoing federal illegality, unclear possession limits, and restrictions surrounding firearm ownership and employment show that the system is far from perfect. Despite these challenges, the benefits of medical cannabis for chronic pain patients are undeniable, and greater education, awareness, and reform could help bridge the gap between its medical value and the laws that still limit its use.

# 2026 Grammy Nominations Released

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It's that time of year again — the nominees for the upcoming annual Grammy awards have been announced, and it's going to be a tough decision for some of these categories. The 68th Annual Grammy Awards airs on Sunday, February 1st, just days before the heavily anticipated Super Bowl LX, with halftime performer **Bad Bunny**. The Puerto Rican rapper was nominated for several categories this year, after previously being 'snubbed' when fans felt that his work hadn't been recognized in major categories. This year, with his nominated album *Debí Tirar Más Fotos*, and hit song 'DtMF' climbed the charts globally. Will the Recording Academy finally give Bad Bunny the recognition the rest of us believe he deserves? To win a grammy and perform at the Super Bowl in one week would be one for the books.

The "Big 4" categories are always the main talking points across social media: Album, Song, and Record of the Year, and Best New Artist. For Album of the Year, we have some familiar favorites like **Tyler, the Creator** for *Chromakopia* and **Sabrina Carpenter** for *Man's Best Friend*. The Record of the Year category focuses on recognizing a single performance, as well as production/engineering. Nominees include **Chappell Roan**'s 'The Subway', Bad Bunny's 'DtMF', and **Kendrick Lamar** and **SZA**'s iconic collaboration for 'Luther'. Song of the Year focuses more on songwriting instead of production. Nominees for this award include "APT." and "Abracadabra".

As for Best New Artist, it's a heated race of several talented artists. Nominees include **Leon Thomas**, **The Marias**, **Addison Rae**, and **Sombr**. My personal favorites, **Lola Young** and **Olivia Dean**, two brit-pop icons. Debate has sparked online about these nominees. Primarily about whether some can really be considered



Photo Credits: Getty Images - wzd.com

a 'new' artist or not. Such as **Addison Rae** and **The Marias**. Which one is your pick?

**Music and film also collide at this year's ceremony. One that stands out is Sinners, a 2025 horror hit directed by Ryan Coogler, who is also known for Black Panther and Creed.** The movie quickly gained popularity, with familiar faces such as **Hailee Steinfeld** and **Michael B. Jordan**, earned 97% on Rotten Tomatoes, and grossed over \$366 million worldwide. The iconic soundtrack, with its bluesy and jazzy sound, was nominated for a few categories such as Best Compilation Soundtrack and three songs for Best Song Written for Visual Media. If you still haven't seen the movie, I highly recommend you check it out.

The 2026 Grammy Awards will air in February, and are set to stream online on Paramount+, as well as broadcast live on CBS. Highlights and other related content can be found on the Recording Academy's YouTube channel and their website. Whether you're rooting for Bad Bunny or Sabrina Carpenter (or an up-and-coming artist), it's shaping up to be an exciting show. Will you be tuning in?



# A “Chu Era” for Radford Men’s Basketball Starts with Home Opening Win

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Season one of the Zach Chu era is off to a hot start following two home wins against Western Illinois and West Virginia Wesleyan. Game one featured a crowd of over 1700 in the Dedmon Center and the student section was filled with members of the “Chu Crew,” a new promotion for students that included a pre game pep rally and free Chu Crew shirts. The influx of energy from the students helped Radford get out to a 22-9 lead in the first 10 minutes of the half. The next ten minutes saw WIU grab seven offensive rebounds leading to 11 second chance points that cut the Highlanders lead to six heading into halftime.

Western Illinois didn’t let off the gas following the break, going on an 18-8 run and taking their first lead of the game, 48-44. In the final ten minutes of the game Minnesota transfer **Brennan Rigsby** made his mark on the game. Rigsby came in the game with six minutes remaining and immediately hit a three to increase the lead to four. The next possession he wrestled for an offensive rebound and tapped the ball back to Tyson Brown for a layup. He totaled five points, three offensive rebounds with an assist and a block in the final six minutes to help Radford on a run that would secure the win, 80-75. This win marks the first collegiate win for Zach Chu as a head coach who shared his feelings after the game,

**“It meant everything and I say that because we told these guys before the game they showed up on June 9th. We got a brand new staff who generally haven’t worked together. A brand new team of guys who have never played together and not one of these players have played for me...to lose the lead in the second half to go down in the game and to come together as a team...it’s what we talk about- everyday, it’s who we are and who**



The “Chu Crew” in the student section Photo Credit: Morgan Wade

**we have worked to become. That all coming to fruition in game one means everything.”**

Clemson transfer **Del Jones** had command of the offense the whole night, scoring a career high 22 points and consistently wowing the crowd with his acrobatic layups. Jones was asked about how he stays so composed in high pressure situations and what Coach Chu told the team to keep them focused,

**“It’s just basketball at this point, you kind of get used to it. I’ve never been the type to shy away from big moments, it just comes natural for me... (Coach told us to) stay composed, stay with it, we know they were going to go on runs, it was talked about before the game. Just being able to take the punches and give ours back.”**



Del Jones attempts a layup Photo Credit: Morgan Wade

This win marks the first time since 2015 that Radford has won their home opener against a division one opponent.

# Highlander Highlights: Tournament Recaps for both Soccer Teams, Women's Basketball Gains First Win over Emory & Henry

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## Women's Basketball

After two tough road games against Wake Forest and Georgia Tech the Highlanders finally hosted their home opener against Emory & Henry, cruising to a 69-36 victory. The High's were aggressively driving the ball throughout the game. Despite poor shooting in the first quarter they managed to get to the line 11 times with 25 total attempts in the game, nearly matching their season total of 28. **Angelina Nice, Anaiah Jenkins and Ellie Taylor** all scored in double figures and senior guard **Kirah Dandridge** added six points and a team leading ten rebounds. The win against the Wasps marks the 193th career victory for Head Coach **Mike McGuire** which ties for most in program history. McGuire commented after the game, **I've worked with a lot of good players that love basketball. The fact that we've had 193 wins in 12 seasons is just a testament to a lot of people**

## Men's Soccer

On Wednesday November 5th Radford faced Presbyterian college for their first round matchup in the Big South Conference tournament. Presbyterian got the scoring started in minute 25 but later it was junior midfielder **Hiromasa Iwai** who tied the game at one a piece. The Highlanders outshot PC 7-5 in the first half and goalkeeper **Ben Miller** notched four of his six saves. Presbyterian grew more aggressive on offense and outshot Radford 10-1 in the second half and back to back goals in the 84th and 85th minute sealed the game for the Blue Hose, 3-1.



Kirah Dandridge (left) and Head Coach Mike McGuire Photo Credits: (left) Brandon Whitaker, (right) Radford Athletics

**and a lot of hard work and perseverance. Being a student athlete is not easy. We've had some highs; we've had some lows. I just appreciate the administration for trusting me to lead this program. This is a wonderful place."**

## Women's Soccer

Matthews North Carolina was the site the semifinal Big South soccer match between Radford and High Point resulting in a 1-2 loss for the Highlanders. The Panthers got the scoring started in the 31st minute and retained a 1-0 lead heading into halftime. A trio of seniors helped tie the game as forward **Paige Olson** sent a pass across the field to **Lilly Short** who set up **Ashley Loundermon** for the teams lone score. Short and Loundermon had six and five shots respectively and each earned all tournament honors for their performance. The team as a whole outshot High Point 18-8 with seven shots being on goal. High Point would score the go ahead goal four minutes later and hold defensively down the stretch to advance in the tournament.