

BY ELIJAH KING  
 Riverside High

**Alex Donatelli, East Mecklenburg High**

Individuals such as Rachel Maddow, Anderson Cooper, Pete Williams and others who identify as LGBTQ inspire young journalists like Alex Donatelli, East Mecklenburg High '19.

"I think that in our culture you have to work that much harder to be respected," said Donatelli, who identifies as LGBTQ. "I think a lot of LGBTQ representation is on YouTube, like fan fiction and stuff. It's more like things created by people our age or older on non-traditional platforms."

Thanks to a rise of more nontraditional media sources such as YouTube, BuzzFeed and Reddit, members of the LGBTQ community enjoy more exposure when it comes to the issues that matter to them, she said. Rather than integrating into mainstream culture, people are starting to find ways to be true to themselves.

"Respectability politics is seen as less important and people try to break away from it," she said.

**Kaden Edgeston, Kinston High**

Criminal. Angry. Rowdy. Ghetto. These are just some of the stereotypes of African-American culture Kaden Edgeston sees portrayed in the media.

"I feel like we are portrayed as stereotypes all the time, such as 'ratchet' or 'uppity' kinds of black people," said Edgeston, Kinston High '19. "The views you get of black women are very stereotypical, and so our representation in media is very biased."

The number of African-American journalists working at daily newspapers around the country has dropped 40 percent since 1997 – representing a loss of almost 1,200 journalists – according to the American Society of News Editors. This can discourage young black writers from pursuing journalism careers.

Unless students like Edgeston can help change the trend. "I feel like I do have the capability to change it," she said. "I feel like anybody has the power to change anything that they see wrong in the world. It's just the fact of you putting yourself out there."

**Elise Trexler, West Henderson High**

The polarization that's grown more intense in national politics in recent years has spread to high schools, and students in the political minority say they don't always feel like they have a voice.

West Henderson High is a small, predominantly Republican-oriented school, said Elise Trexler, West Henderson High '20. She said the one-party dominance can be a threat to freedom of expression. While her journalism class feels safe, she said, "There are other classes where I feel like you can get bashed and torn down if you say something."

In a world where media sources are accused of morphing into biased sources because of their surroundings, young writers are now beginning to feel secluded.

"Our school is definitely more right wing," Trexler said. "It's a small town. You've got a lot of very religious and conservative people."

**José Valle, NCSMA assistant**

BY KATELYN VARGAS  
 Cardinal Gibbons High

NCSMA assistant and former Summer Institute participant José Valle is an undocumented Latino born in El Salvador and raised in the Outer Banks in North Carolina.

While he was in high school, Valle said about eight foreign exchange students enrolled at First Flight High. He remembers them having trouble connecting with the other students because of the language barrier.

Valle, being in that situation before, knew what to do. He wrote an article for his high school newspaper that introduced the new students to the school in both English and Spanish.

"They were so humbled and appreciative when I spoke to them," Valle said. "They felt cared for at the school."



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY LAURA STROUD, CHRIST COVENANT SCHOOL

Students at the N.C. Scholastic Media Association Summer Institute have the tools to represent a wide range of backgrounds and perspectives in their newsrooms. From left, Kaden Edgeston, Kiyana Banks, José Valle, Yosselin Benitez, Alex Donatelli, Elise Trexler and Lochlyn Casey.

# Out of the shadows

## Institute participants talk about inclusion in the newsroom

BY KATELYN VARGAS  
 Cardinal Gibbons High

José Valle remembers being the only non-white person in his high school newsroom, and the paper's first nonwhite male editor-in-chief.

He felt like he had to work harder than others to earn the respect of his peers.

"I never want to be looked down upon just because of the color of my skin," he said.

Valle, NCSMA assistant, graduated from UNC in May and is preparing for a career in media, an industry that's been criticized in recent years for a lack of diversity in both coverage and staffing.

Minorities make up 16.6 percent of the workforce in U.S. newsrooms, according to the American Society of New Editors 2017 diversity survey.

The lack of media diversity can help reinforce stereotypes and the idea that the voices of people from underrepresented groups don't matter.

"It is very crucial to provide ways to understand who the voiceless people are and why they feel that way, and to give them the tools to try to represent their communities better," said Livis Freeman, teaching assistant professor at the UNC School of Media and Journalism.

Freeman is the director of the Chuck Stone Program for Diversity in Education and Media, and is frequently called upon to help high school and college students deal with racism and discrimination in the newsroom and beyond. Chuck Stone was a well-known columnist and journalism professor who mentored many student

journalists of color.

Freeman aims to help rising high school seniors who are minorities and dedicated to working in journalism and media to live as full, contributing citizens in the newsroom.

"Our goal through the program is to give them the tools to be as successful as possible when they write," Freeman said.

Valle said a diverse newsroom creates more well-rounded coverage that reflects the full community.

"Having diverse people is nice, not because it meets a quota, but because having all those different viewpoints helps communicate exactly what is happening," he said. "Everyone has a different perspective on different topics and having diversity helps create a well-rounded and strong story."

# Journalist of the Year makes her voice matter

BY BETHANY LEE

*Christ Covenant*

On Dec. 6, Time Magazine announced its Person of the Year as the Silence Breakers, women and men who spoke out against sexual assault. Time honored them for their courage, for their inspiration and “for pushing us all to stop accepting the unacceptable.”

The same day, the principal at First Flight High in Kill Devil Hills told the school’s newspaper staff that it would not be allowed to publish an anonymous letter to the editor about sexual assault or the accompanying illustration.

But Arabella Saunders, co-editor-in-chief of Nighthawk News Magazine, would not accept the unacceptable. Her passion for truth and empathy sparked a broader conversation about free speech in high school and was a major factor in Saunders’ winning portfolio in the North Carolina High School Journalist of the Year contest.

“It felt really great getting it because I put a lot of time and effort into everything I’ve done and it definitely made me even more passionate about journalism,” Saunders said.

The NC Journalist of the Year award includes a \$3,000 Rachel Rivers-Coffey Scholarship, presented during NCSMA Summer Institute. Saunders went on to compete at the national level and was named a runner-up for national Journalist of the Year, earning an additional \$850 Sister Rita Jeanne Scholarship.

Alternates for NC Journalist of the Year each received \$1,000 scholarships. Jamie Cummings and Caroline Bowers of T.C. Roberson High and Aidan Bennett of Northwest Guilford High were named alternates, while Alex Berenfeld of Providence High and Cecilia Whalen of East Mecklenburg High also received special recognition.

Saunders’ portfolio included a collection of stories she had written and leadership initiatives she’d used with her staff, but her battle to publish the letter and drawing deemed “too provocative” by her principal especially proved her devotion.



PHOTO BY EMMA BANCROFT, FIRST FLIGHT HIGH

Arabella Saunders, First Flight High ‘18, holds a sign at the Women’s Rally in Raleigh. The sign was made from a drawing by Lauren Kerlin ‘18, which was censored from publication.

“My initial reaction was, ‘No, we’re going to publish this,’” said Saunders, who set up meetings with the principal, tried to meet with the school superintendent and talked to the Student Press Law Center. “It was insane how motivated I was and how able I was to write. I was so tired. I was doing so much research. I was up late at night. It was all I was thinking about.”

Saunders even took the issue beyond the school,

designing T-shirts, creating buttons and printing signs with the censored artwork and caption “My Voice Matters,” a quote that she felt embodied the struggles of victims of sexual assault and of journalists facing unjust censorship.

The letter and drawing were eventually published in a censored form, but Saunders hopes to use this example to change the publication policy.

“It’s not OK to be censored,” Saunders said, adding that administrative censorship leads to self-censorship: students cutting ideas before even considering them in fear of being censored.

Other schools have also faced censorship issues. The principal at Northwood High censored a story about teen pregnancies, which made students cautious when presenting story ideas, said Joshua Eisner ‘19. At Northwest Guilford High, students were forced to cut a story about abortion several years ago, said Sydney Thompson ‘19, but the staff is allowed to cover more controversial topics now despite having a policy of prior review.

The issue of free speech in high school publications is an ongoing national debate. The Student Press Law Center’s New Voices campaign aims to pass student free expression laws in each state. Since 2015, 14 states have passed New Voices legislation and five others have legislation pending.

Saunders is hopeful that legislation will increase freedom for high school journalists, but she believes it starts with individuals speaking out about censorship. It starts with silence breakers.

“Even when people are pulling you down, it doesn’t hold you back,” Saunders said. “Your voice matters.”

## ARABELLA'S ADVICE

- Fight censorship. Don't just let it happen.
- Be organized and have a game plan.
- Use your outside resources.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help.

## Student press navigates challenges of reporting controversial topics

BY EMMY TRIVETTE

*First Flight High*

Good grades. Good conduct. On track to graduate with the Class of 2016. For one senior, it was a typical spring day as he prepared for a typical school day at Durham’s Riverside High.

Then came his arrest and detainment by immigration officials. And then came a decision for members of the Pirates’ Hook newspaper staff: How much of this student’s private but public battle over his immigration status would they tell? And how would they tell it?

“Members of our school protested for him to finish high school,” adviser Bryan Christopher said. “That he should be allowed to finish an education, that was a controversial story because it was very political. Not everyone in our school or community agreed that he should be released back to school.”

Christopher and his journalism students – a diverse staff that includes a number of bilingual reporters – communicated with the senior and his family and argued in editorials that he should

be able to return to school and graduate with his classmates. Coverage about the students in the local and national news raised awareness, and the Department of Homeland Security eventually released the student.

For the Pirates’ Hook staff, stories like this consistently occupy their pages: They tackle five to 10 “controversial” stories a year.

“A friend of mine who’s a journalist in the (Raleigh) News & Observer said that every story you write should have something in it where someone somewhere is uncomfortable. Otherwise, it’s just advertising,” Christopher said. “To be a good journalist, you have to find information that other people haven’t seen yet.”

Sexual assault, gun violence and abortion are some of the controversial topics frequently confronted in high schools across the country. For every district, these issues are handled with various levels of care by student publications.

Private school publications have to weigh how important it is to cover controversial topics with how much damage it could cause to their school’s reputation.

Jennifer Harrison, adviser at Cardinal Gibbons Catholic High, declined to be interviewed about her staff’s coverage of controversial topics. Brandy Caton, who advises The Pride at Hickory Grove Christian in Charlotte, said the staff approaches those topics cautiously.

“We do things from a Christian worldview, where we try not to hurt the reputation of the people or the school,” Caton said.

But if talking about a controversial topic meant inciting positive change, would private schools take the risk to deliver their message?

“I think it’s hard because you have to consider everyone’s sensitivities, but at the same time you can’t let that affect truth,” said Katalina Uribe, ‘19, of Carmel Christian’s Blue and Gold. “You have to find a balance between the two.”

From focusing on stories about teacher-student interactions on social media to cultural appropriation, Blue and Gold has written about topics that divided the student body. The Charlotte Observer even published a Blue and Gold column about cultural appropriation.

“People would rather pretend it’s not real than face the problem slapping them in the face,” said Blue and Gold’s John McManus, Carmel Christian ‘19.

For Madison Clark, Northwood High ‘19, writing controversial stories for the Northwood Omniscient may not render the same reaction of the student body or catch the attention of a large paper like the Observer. Nevertheless, her staff has strict concerns when it comes to protecting the anonymity of students who wish to talk about private matters.

“If they wish to remain anonymous, that’s their choice,” Clark said. “Let them know if, for example, a college searches your name and it pops up you were a heroin addict or something, then it may restrain you from going to the colleges of your choice.”

No matter how they go about it, though, it’s clear that student journalists must find ways to deal with private and controversial topics that will make a difference in their schools.

“So while timeliness and prominence matter, so does controversy and conflict,” Christopher said.



Ela Rybak, Notre Dame High broadcast student, interviews Zaria Ziglar, Hickory Grove Christian, for her feature on why students choose UNC and the college admissions process. Rybak said that through the broadcast program she has learned “the importance of footage that relates to the main topic of the film.”

## Truth seekers

PHOTOS BY HAILEY EVERAGE  
HICKORY GROVE CHRISTIAN



Chase Miller and Emma Pauler of Northwood High work together to brainstorm innovative ideas to increase traffic to their website. Miller said he has been “learning about the morals of online news and how to get the most coverage to make an online edition as unique as a print edition.”



Bonnie Zhang, East Mecklenburg, gives her undivided attention to mastering the techniques of cutouts during the design track. Zhang learned basic design skills that will help her staff next year.



Kylah McGee, Leesville Road, enjoys herself on Franklin Street while setting up to film footage for her video package. McGee is experiencing all the detailed work that goes into producing a film.

# For Gen Z, the news is where they find it

BY MORGAN DAVIS  
Hickory Grove Christian

Emma Pauler, Northwood High '20, considers herself someone who keeps up with the news.

But she's not pulling up the CNN website or reading the print edition of a newspaper on a daily basis. Instead, she's more likely to learn about current events by scrolling through her social media feeds.

“I feel like social media just generally reaches more people than a lot of news sources because I personally don't go on CNN every day, but I do go on Instagram and Snapchat every day, so I'm more likely to see something on there,” she said.

Pauler's experience — reading the news that's shared by friends and brands and presented via algorithm — is increasingly common among high school and college-age readers. According to a 2017 survey from Pew Research Center, 67 percent of Americans report that they get at least some of their news on social media, with 20 percent doing so often.

But while this way of getting news is convenient, some students at the NCSMA Summer Institute raised concerns about passive news consumption.

“I feel like I can get information (through social media) that I wouldn't have known otherwise,” said Scunnya Hadabi, Providence High '20. “But sometimes the information I get isn't accurate or it's missing important pieces, so I have to do more digging than I usually have to get that accurate information.”

Chase Miller, Northwood High '20, said

he takes proactive steps to make sure he's reading news from trusted sources and is cautious about believing every news story that crosses his feed.

“Social media has definitely streamlined the process of how we take in news, made it easier and faster (to) receive news, but it has also aided in the rise of fake news and made it possible for biased/deceptive news sources to reach people,” Miller said.

Emily Mertz, West Henderson High '19, had the experience of learning about a news story on social media that inspired her to seek out more information.

“Last summer, my friend's grandfather was murdered in our hometown and I found out about that through Instagram,” she said. “I was just scrolling through and I saw a ton of posts about how he had gone missing and no one knew where he was and that led me into further research.”

Social media can also enhance the way that student journalists reach and engage with their student body.

“We maintain each of our social media accounts so we can keep our rich media going,” said Sydney Thompson, Northwest Guilford '19. “And we have a Twitter where we try to conduct polls and get information for our paper through Twitter and that has been vastly successful.”

At Prince George High, the staff makes Snapchat filters for students to use, among other social media outreach, said Maddison Shawpey, Prince George High '20.

“We do a lot of engaging things to try to reach out and make sure everyone knows what's up,” she said.

## WHAT IS THE WORST TREND YOU HAVE PARTICIPATED IN ON SOCIAL MEDIA?

BY LAUREN MORISSETTE  
Hickory Grove Christian

“I remember one time on our newspaper Twitter we did a poll asking the question, ‘Is a hotdog a sandwich?’”

- Madison Clark  
Northwood High '19

“We did the mannequin challenge (at our school) and it was our pinned tweet for like two years.”

- Joshua Eisner  
Northwood High '19

“Finsta, like a funny Instagram. I still have one, but I hope no one ever sees it when I'm 30, but right now I'm OK.”

- Molly James  
Enloe High '19

“I remember on Instagram, people would take (and post) pictures with the white borders. All the squares would get messed up. It's just something I would never do again.”

- Camryn Bryant  
Cambridge High '21

## Kay Phillips winners praised for service

BY LAURA STROUD  
Christ Covenant School

Disa Stephenson wasn't planning on coming to the NCSMA Summer Institute this year. In fact, it had already started when she received a text from her former student, Michelle Kurilla, inviting her to the NCSMA adviser's luncheon.

Stephenson was pleased to receive the invitation – but had no idea she would be walking away with an award. She was presented with the Kay Phillips Distinguished Service Award on Tuesday at the Carolina Inn along with Janet Cooke from Clayton High.

Both Stephenson and Cooke have long histories with NCSMA, including being president of the advisers' association at one point. They both come from diverse backgrounds, Stephenson with a background in business and Cooke with experience in community newspaper and radio. They also are well loved by their students.

"When you put so much hard work and so many years into something, and then you finally feel like it's gotten noticed – she never did it for

recognition – but I think that being appreciated is something that she can't put into words," Kurilla said. "She is someone who isn't afraid to speak the truth, but she does it in love. I think she has impacted a lot of students because she's allowed us to see things from different perspectives."

Stephenson taught at Fayetteville Christian for 11 years and has been involved at NCSMA for 12 years. Jan Reid nominated her for the award.

"She never fails to boost me up, to give me an idea or to encourage me to go in a different direction than I'm currently going," Reid said, explaining that Stephenson worked with her Cape Fear Academy students as far back as 2006 to help Reid's struggling program. "She did it all out of the goodness of her heart."

Reid also nominated Cooke for the award: "She puts up with a lot. She doesn't necessarily have the support of her administration or colleagues," Reid said. "She's just tough, she's fair and she's giving. And that's how the good teachers are."

NCSMA Director Monica Hill said Cooke is known for her humor within the advisers' association. "She is just one of the funniest people you



PHOTO BY LAUREN VIED ALLEN, SPECIAL TO THE RUSH

Kay Phillips (left) and Jan Reid present Distinguished Service Awards to Janet Cooke (top photo) and Disa Stephenson on Tuesday.

will ever meet, and her students love her for that," Hill said. "She is hysterical."

## 'Cheerleader' for student media wins NCSMA Administrator of the Year honor

BY LAUREN MORISETTE  
Hickory Grove Christian

The students at East Mecklenburg High have a saying: "In Parker we trust."

It reflects the support, care and guidance Principal Rick Parker gives to the school's student body. In particular, the student media staff members at East Meck are given the ability to express themselves without prior review.

Censorship is virtually nonexistent at the school because of him,

said adviser Bill Allen, who advises The Talon newspaper and a new literary magazine.

"From the day he came in as principal, we discussed it and I told him prior review was not a good idea," Allen said. "He said, 'We trust you.' That as much as anything else is the whole issue that we run into with press freedom for high school students, is the willingness to trust the students and the adviser to do the right thing."

Parker received the N.C. Scholastic Media Association's

Administrator of the Year award at the Summer Institute.

Student journalists at East appreciate their independence.

"(Freedom from censorship) gives you a chance to explore all the horizons that your school has to offer and freedom to investigate," said Ashleigh Fields, East Meck '19.

Parker encourages the students on the publications staffs.

"Unlike most schools, our students love our principal because he is someone who really cares for the students, is actively involved, always

interested in what's going on, and is the biggest cheerleader for everything," Allen said. "Knowing that our principal trusts them to have responsibility to do what is right sets the kids free to explore and express themselves freely."

Kate Carroll, East Mecklenburg '19, wrote the story about Parker after he was named the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Principal of the Year: "He's sort of a celebrity at our school. He supports us and is probably one of our biggest fans of our newspaper."

## Introducing the 2018-2019 NCSMA student officers



**PRESIDENT**

**Casey Medlin**  
Cape Fear  
Class of 2020  
(910) 508-9223

Q: What do you think should be changed law-wise or school-wise to create more free press?

A: "To actually dig into the real issues and get the full story."



**VICE PRESIDENT  
LITERARY MAGAZINE**

**Gayatri Chopra**  
Providence High  
Class of 2019  
(980) 244-7007

Q: Why do you think it's important for students to have free press?

A: "In the real world people don't sugar-coat things and it's important that we learn that lesson now so that we're more prepared for the future."



**VICE PRESIDENT  
YEARBOOK**

**Katherine Pauley**  
Fayetteville Christian  
Class of 2019  
(910) 322-9513

Q: Tell me about a time something you tried to publish got censored.

A: "Well, we have prior review so it goes without saying that we can't publish anything dealing with LGBT, politics, stuff like that"



**VICE PRESIDENT  
NEWSPAPER**

**Kayla Jystad**  
TC Roberson High  
Class of 2020  
(828) 707-8626

Q: Why is it important for students to have free press?

A: "Sometimes the most important thing to cover is the thing no one wants to talk about"



**VICE PRESIDENT  
VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS**

**Emmy Trivette**  
First Flight High  
Class of 2020  
(252) 202-8626

Q: Why is it important for students to have free press?

A: "We have fresh eyes. We can look at topics differently than a lot of adults who are handling the issues."



**VICE PRESIDENT  
ELECTRONICS**

**Maci Clark**  
West Henderson High  
Class of 2020  
(828) 489-4258

Q: Why do you think it's important for students to have free press?

A: "Expressing where we stand on current events is really pushing us into the next level of becoming the leaders and knowing how to express ourselves."

### UPCOMING NCSMA EVENTS

**OCT. 18, 2018**  
Central Carolina J-Day  
UNC-Chapel Hill

**OCT. 15, 2015**  
Northeast Piedmont and  
Southeast Piedmont  
Regional Workshop  
UNC-Chapel Hill

**OCT. 25, 2018**  
Northeast and  
Southeast Regional  
Workshop  
East Carolina University,  
Greenville

**MARCH 15, 2019**  
Application Deadline  
Chuck Stone Summer  
Journalism Program for  
Diversity  
UNC-Chapel Hill

**APRIL 1, 2019**  
Application Deadline  
Carolina Sports  
Journalism Camp  
UNC-Chapel Hill

**JUNE 17-20, 2019**  
Sports Writing Camp  
UNC-Chapel Hill

**MORE DATES  
TO BE RELEASED**



This edition of The Rush was published during the Summer Institute from the offices of The Daily Tar Heel at UNC-Chapel Hill.

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