

Too Good to Eat?

Battlefield senior earns raves for her creative cakes

» BY JENNIFER WALDERA
For InsideNoVa

From a young age, Ava DeWald was an avid artist. Her artwork has been featured in Prince William County's All-County Art Show.

Now, the Battlefield High School senior is crafting elaborate edible artwork in the form of creative cakes that she sells via her home-based startup, Ava's Cakes.

In the kitchen of her mother's home in Dominion Valley in Haymarket, the young baker creates the sweet concoctions after school and on weekends. Since 2018, she has sold about 300 cakes, ranging from elegant tiered creations adorned with flowers, fruit or sugar pearls to playful versions incorporating unicorns, dinosaurs and rainbow layers.

Ava began baking as a way to stay active after an injury and subsequent surgery prevented her from returning to the soccer field. (She did later become a coach for the Virginia Soccer Association.)

"I watched all the baking shows and thought it was so easy," she said. "Then, I realized it wasn't really that easy."

She described her first cake, an Easter-themed cake with lemon and strawberry layers and yellow frosting, as being atrocious. However, her mother, real estate agent Lilia DeWald, insisted that the cake was cute and tasted delicious.

Ava continued to hone her skills, watching shows like "Cake Boss" and "Sugar Rush" and practicing in the kitchen. Eventually, she landed her first paid job creating a wedding cake for Amy Covell-Sharek (her guidance counselor at Ronald Reagan Middle School) and Andrew Sharek (her eighth-

grade civics teacher).

Amy had remembered that Ava made a batch of cookies for her class when she was in eighth grade. "I had one and it was amazing," she said.

While the couple was already impressed when they did the tasting, they said they were blown away by the final cake on their wedding day. At 3 feet tall and 2 feet wide, the two-tiered cake was vanilla-flavored with a strawberry compote. It had traditional white icing and was adorned with white and purple flowers. Ava hadn't intended to charge the bride and groom for the cake, but they tipped her generously.

"It was incredible," Amy said. "We never thought it would turn out so beautiful."

The cake wound up as the impetus for word-of-mouth advertising (buoyed by her mother's social media) that garnered Ava an inundation of orders. She now



Ava DeWald finishes up a cake in her mother's kitchen.

LUKE CHRISTOPHER | FOR INSIDENOVA

makes one to seven cakes a week, depending on the time of year and her schedule.

One enthusiastic repeat buyer of Ava's cakes is the local owner of Aloha Driving Company, known in the community as Aloha Bob. While Ava was enrolled in the school's driving classes, Bob learned about her cake-making from Ava's classmates.

"When I found out from the other students that she was a baker, during the driving lesson I asked her about it – she was too modest to tell me before," Bob said.

When Bob wanted to give his neighbor a golf-themed cake, he turned to Ava.

"It turned out gorgeous," he recalled. "It had grass that looked like grass, a flag, and it tasted great. They were amazed that a student made it instead of it coming from a bakery."

Since then, Bob has ordered two other birthday cakes that he said were equally as good.

While Ava is planning to attend college next year (with aspirations to become an elementary school teacher), she plans to continue baking until then, as well as on weekends when she returns home from school.

"I really enjoy doing it," she said. "I've been able to meet a lot of new people through orders and deliveries and become a little more involved with the community."

This article originally appeared in the Haymarket-Gainesville Lifestyle Magazine, published by InsideNoVa.

Battlefield High School senior Ava DeWald has made and sold about 300 cakes since 2018.

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Ava DeWald's golf-themed cake, along with several of her other creations.





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HOW WE VOTED

BOARD OF COUNTY SUPERVISORS CHAIR	
	Votes (Pct.)
Deshundra Jefferson (D)	60,431 (51.4%)
Jeanine Lawson (R)	56,789 (48.3%)
SCHOOL BOARD CHAIR	
	Votes (Pct.)
Babur Lateef*	57,397 (49.5%)
Carrie Rist	47,409 (40.9%)
Kim Mehlman-Orozco	10,650 (9.2%)
STATE SENATE: 30th District	
	Votes (Pct.)
Danica Roem (D)	29,730 (51.5%)
Bill Woolf (R)	27,802 (48.2%)
HOUSE OF DELEGATES: 21st District	
	Votes (Pct.)
Josh Thomas (D)	13,572 (51.5%)
John Stirrup (R)	12,737 (48.3%)
HOUSE OF DELEGATES: 22nd District	
	Votes (Pct.)
Ian Lovejoy (R)	15,814 (52.6%)
Travis Nembhard (D)	14,189 (47.2%)
COMMONWEALTH'S ATTORNEY	
	Votes (Pct.)
Amy Ashworth* (D)	68,453 (53.4%)
Matt Lowery (R)	59,339 (46.3%)
MANASSAS PARK PARI-MUTUEL WAGERING	
	Votes (Pct.)
NO	1,791 (58.9%)
YES	1,251 (41.1%)

* - Incumbent

Results as of Wednesday afternoon. Absentee ballots postmarked by Tuesday will be counted if received Monday, Nov. 13, by noon. See vote totals for more races on Pages 2-9 and visit InsideNoVa.com for updates.

DESHUNDRA'S DAY



Prince William County Board Chair-elect Deshundra Jefferson speaks to supporters during the county Democrats' victory party in Manassas on Tuesday night. TAVAN SMITH | FOR INSIDENOVA

Jefferson will be first Black woman to lead county board

» BY BEN PETERS
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Democrat Deshundra Jefferson on Tuesday defeated Republican Supervisor Jeanine Lawson in the race for chair of the Prince William Board of County Supervisors, becoming the first Black woman to hold the office.

Jefferson's rise from obscure political figure to leader of county government in less than a year underscores Prince William voters' dissatisfaction with current incumbents.

Through her primary win in June over Democratic incumbent Chair Ann Wheeler, who outraised her by a 5-1 margin, and her defeat of Lawson, the most senior member of the board, Jefferson ousted two of the most powerful women in local politics. Wheeler and Lawson rarely saw eye to eye and their antagonistic exchanges were frequently the source of consternation in the board room.

Lawson's defeat means she will no

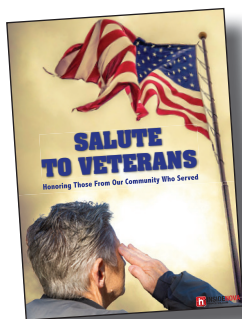


Potomac District Supervisor Andrea Bailey was one of six board incumbents who were reelected Tuesday. TAVAN SMITH | FOR INSIDENOVA

JEFFERSON » PAGE 17

INSIDE

A special pullout section honoring local veterans



Hundreds sign up for Gateway hearing

Commission begins review of contentious data centers

» BY BEN PETERS
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The Prince William County Planning Commission on Wednesday began its highly anticipated public hearing on the contentious PW Digital Gateway data center project, a meeting that officials were expecting to last more than 24 hours.

Commissioners will render recommendations on two rezoning requests by QTS Realty Trust Inc. and another by Compass Datacenters. The companies combined aim to build 23 million square feet of data centers on roughly 2,100 acres along Pageland Lane in western Prince William near Gainesville in what would become the largest data center corridor in the world.

GATEWAY » PAGE 19

HOW LONG CAN IT GO?

» Nearly 300 people signed up to speak at the county Planning Commission's Digital Gateway public hearings, which began at 2 p.m. Wednesday. If the speakers use all – or just most – of their allotted time, the hearing may well last more than 40 hours. Follow our coverage at InsideNoVa.com

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BACK-TO-BACK . . .



Freedom head coach Darryl Overton (middle) celebrates after the Eagles defeated Highland Springs 42-34.
DOUG STROUD | FOR INSIDENOVA

Freedom holds off Highland Springs for second straight Class 6 state title

» BY DAVID FAWCETT
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CHARLOTTESVILLE

Kam Courtney stood off to the side by himself while his teammates swarmed the middle of the field, hugging and laughing with each other.

The Freedom-Woodbridge senior would join them in a moment. But for now, Courtney, his face flush from crying, needed time to himself to soak in the dueling emotions tugging at his heart.

His high school football career was over. But, man, what a way to end it.

In the game fans wanted to see when the season started back in late August, Freedom defeated Highland Springs 42-34 to claim its second straight Class 6 state title Dec 9 at the University of Virginia.

The Eagles are the first Prince William County high school football program to claim back-to-back state titles since Hynton did it in 1998 and 1999.

The showdown between the defend-

ing Class 5 and 6 state champions lived up to its billing. After the Eagles jumped out to a 28-0 second-quarter lead that led fans to consider the possibility of a running clock starting in the second half, Highland Springs battled back to get within eight points twice before falling short.

Courtney played a big role in keeping the Springers (13-2) at bay and helping Freedom (14-0) win its 29th straight game. The University of Indiana commitment ran for two touchdowns, converted a critical first down on a fourth-and-1 and grabbed an interception.

So much to take in. And so much to let out. Why not savor it?

“This was a little different than last year,” Courtney said. “I knew I was coming back to play one more season. It’s overwhelming.”

Tristan Evans-Trujillo understood. His face was streaked with tears as well – for all the same reasons.

With all of its key skill players back from last season’s 15-0 state champion, Freedom was expected to be in this position. But it’s one thing to say you will do it and another to see actually happen.

For Evans-Trujillo, the senior quarterback who finished his high school career as the state’s all-time leader in career touchdowns (121 this season) and single-season touchdown passes (61, last season), Saturday’s outcome was a crowning achievement.

He posed for photos with his teammates and made sure he took, at his request, one with his linemen. They lifted him up and then, under center Walter Hughes’ specific instructions, let their quarterback down gently. Evans-Trujillo also gave credit to Overton and most all of to God.

“With God, all things are possible,” Evans-Trujillo said.

On Saturday, nothing was certain until time ran out after Highland Springs, with the ball, got a first down at its own 30-yard line after a pass completion.

“I was a little nervous until the clock hit zero,”



Jeffrey Overton Jr. jumps over a Highland Springs defender en route to one of his two touchdown runs.
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FREEDOM » PAGE 19