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West Potomac High School
Library

THE

WIRE

WEST POTOMAC HIGH SCHOOL

West Potomac High School
6500 Quander Road
Alexandria, VA 22307
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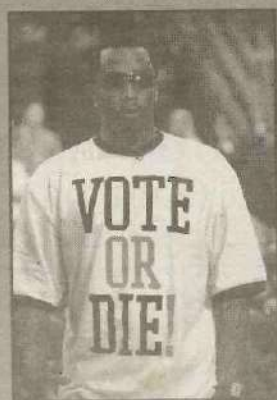
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Rhatican and Students Put Pieces of History Together

Nyisha Vann

Wire Reporter

Our very own William Rhatican has pulled together a project that is not just related to school, but a project that is going to make history. His goal is to get more information about the school and the place in which we live.

Rhatican's government students will interview people who lived through historical moments that happened in this area. Rhatican randomly selected government students from his classes for the project. This project, and the experiences the students had, will be made into a movie and developed into a book within the next year. Most of the primary sources consist of wiser, elder people. The participating students will get the chance to relive their interviewee's experiences again in order to see how much our society has changed, and in what ways it has improved or worsened. The students will also learn how slavery has impacted today's life.

Rhatican, page 5



Photo by Lakeisha Langley

(Pictured from left to right) Edith Billips, *The Washington Informer*, Alberta Hines-Webb, Ed Hines, Monta Coleman, *The National Park Service*, Viola Hines-Karbo. (Mrs. Hines-Webb and Mrs. Hines-Karbo are the great granddaughters of Charles Henry Quander, patriarch of the land.)

Accreditors Visit Our School and Give Passing Rating

Katie Staples

Co-Editor-in-Chief

On Wednesday and Thursday, March 22 and 23, our school was visited by three accreditors with the goal of assessing and evaluating our school.

Based on their evaluation, the accreditors have the responsibility of recognizing a school on its credentials and standards, with which its graduates are certified and go on to higher education. Although there was some uncertainty as to whether or not our school would remain accredited, accreditors Dr. Bruce McDade, Krista Neibert, and Ting-Yi Oel announced to the staff that as of Thursday, our school was accredited once again.

Dr. McDade, the principal of Manassas Park High School in Prince William County, said being accredited means our school has "met all standards of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). [It is] certification that the high school is doing all of the good things that it should be." Such standards include the school communicating "a vision, statement of beliefs, and mission that provide a focus for improving the performance of both the students and the school," and, "the school has sufficient human, financial, physical, and material resources to support its vision, mission, and goals," according to the SACS website, www.sacs.org. McDade added the "school [should be] safe and conducive to learning." If the school is not safe, there cannot be learning.

During the presentation Thursday, March 23, the accreditors were

able to share their opinions about our school - some good, some more resembling constructive criticism. Dr. McDade began the meeting by complimenting our school system, saying, "Fairfax County is a beacon for high-quality learning." Neibert continued by saying she saw interesting technology in use in math classes. She said, "[I saw] cutting edge technology all around the school. [The school is] enriching current teaching methods." She added our school has "established

caring environments where educators show emotion for their students. [West Potomac is] facilitating necessary requirements to fill needs of as many students you can. You are embracing racial, social, socioeconomic, and academic diversity of the students."

Safety was the accreditors' main concern for our school. Dr. McDade said, "Some underlying issues are the size of the three buildings and their accessibility. There are too many kids in the halls at once during certain times of the day, and there is graffiti around the buildings." Suggestions for improving our school included getting a more diversely represented

population in classes, specifically AP classes, as well as better securing access to school buildings.

When making a decision, McDade, Neibert, and Oel took student

Accreditors, page 5

In our school's auditorium, the accreditors announced to our school's staff that we had officially been accredited.

Photo by Lakeisha Langley

Fresher, Healthier, and Better Tasting: That's How it Should Be

Dear Editor,

An ongoing concern of administration at West Potomac is keeping upper class students from leaving school at lunch to go out to eat. Officials have tried different ways to deal with this so-called problem, but in the end have nothing to show for it. Everyday many students (myself included) rush to get in their cars, and leave for Wendy's, Pendera, or Roy Rogers. Rather than having to face the horrific ordeal of ingesting school food, many of us, and rightly so, choose to eat a more filling, sometimes healthier, and always more expensive lunch. The bland-tasting, lifeless pizza, desiccated sandwiches, or the other foods of which I dared not try, are an insult to our bodies, and it is our obligation, as members of a limited democratic student body, to not accept such rubbish.

The problem of student desertion is a problem that, like many problems in our society, is tackled head-on. But cut off the head, and the body will die. In other words, the administration (and the whole county for that matter), has an overlooked option. In order for significant results to occur, significant action must be taken. I propose an all-out termination of "Energy Zone" food stuff, and an adoption of a new, healthier, fresh plan. Freshly made pizza, salad bar, sandwiches with recently cut meat would be commonplace in this ideal scholastic luncheonette. Smells of health and youth would waft through the halls of excellence. Athletes after school would have the energy they so dearly need to compete. This school would become an example for the country.

Impractical and foolish, some might say, impossible even! How would this be paid for? Of course excellence comes at a monetary price. Raising the current lunch price by just one or two dollars would mean hundreds of dollars extra. That is plenty of money to pay a few extra cafeteria workers, or buy a few new ones. The real price to be paid is sacrificing what it takes to reform the system.

Real change must come from the bottom up. If the administration wishes to see results, they must change the system. It is basic human nature to seek the most nourishing sustenance, and we all know from psychology that punishment doesn't work. It is positive reinforcement that changes behavior. Instead of punishing students for leaving school, steps should be taken to reward students for staying in school, i.e. better food. If we do nothing to change this, we have no right to complain about the food or being punished for leaving. If we attempt nothing, our junior and senior classes will go down in school history as the classes that ran away from a fight.

Junior, Chris Weston

"I Can't Get No, Satisfaction" - or Respect

Dear Editor,

It seems that we are treated like youngsters among the faculty/administrators. When will they give us privileges that can benefit us as young students that can prepare us for young adulthood when we leave West Potomac? We can't even eat outside the cafeteria without the administrators watching our every move. At least give us some places to eat, especially since we can't even eat off campus. Also, why do we need permission to go to the library during lunch? It is not like we are not going to go, mainly since we need to do work in the library. Also, why do we have to pay to print things that have something to do with school? It seems we are always limited in the things we do. Maybe in the upcoming future students at West Potomac high can get some extra issues that can lead to more freedom at West Potomac. Thank you for hearing me.

Junior, Yasmeen Telsem

It's MySpace, Not YourSpace, You Tyrant!

There are currently 460 members in our school's group on MySpace.com (some are alumni, but most still attend our school). MySpace has become an epidemic. Facebook.com, essentially a college version of MySpace, now has a high school section, and the West Potomac group is getting bigger. However, many counties are blocking MySpace.com from the school websites, although students still find ways to get onto it at school. "There are many sites, over 300, that can get around the school's blocked websites; it would be hard to block every single one of those as well," said Derek Barrera, a MySpace and Facebook member.

MySpace and Facebook have been blocked from all Fairfax County Schools, and there are many reasons for this policy. First of all, school is not here for us to sit around and talk to friends on the internet. Also, some students have illegal pictures or comments on their MySpace and Facebook profiles. Most of the "fun" websites students look at online are blocked, so the blocking of MySpace should not come as too much of a surprise.

It seems that the real controversy is the question of how far a school should reach into a student's life. Some students understand why they block the website from school, but administrators should not have the right to discipline a student for what they posted or did on the website, whether it is Facebook, MySpace, or another blogging site. Fairfax County has blocked MySpace because it is not

an instructional site.

Students around the nation have gotten into trouble for having pictures on MySpace, Facebook, or another social networking site showing them doing something illegal such as drinking alcohol on school grounds. At East Senior High School in Mankato, Minnesota, two students were suspended after administrators discovered pictures of their students drinking alcohol on their respective MySpaces. Also, at George Washington University, campus police broke up an underage drinking party after invitations showed up on a social networking web site. In Costa Mesa, California, a middle school student faced expulsion for allegedly posting graphic threats against a classmate on MySpace, and 20 of his classmates were suspended for viewing the posting in TeWinkle Middle School. The student had even made a group on MySpace called "I hate (girl's name)." This means that administrators are going onto these sites, searching for, and reading information about their students. No matter what, administrators should not be allowed to punish us for things we put on a website, especially if it was on a personal computer after school. The line needs to be drawn.

However, students must realize that whatever we do online is bound to catch up to us. High schools, colleges, and businesses are starting to keep tabs on their students and staff by finding their personal pictures, websites, and blogs. To Students of our school: you have been warned.

RANTS AND RAVES

A RAVE FOR THE LONG SPRING BREAK! IT WAS GREAT WHILE IT LASTED.

A RANT FOR POLLEN.

A RAVE FOR THE BOYFRIEND WHICH WAS A HUGE SUCCESS!

A RANT FOR NOT TURNING ON THE AIR CONDITIONING IN THE SCHOOL YET.

A RAVE FOR OUR STEP TEAM BEING #1 ON THE EAST COAST!

THE WEST POTOMAC WIRE

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R-E-S-P-E-C-T, Please

Our Students Should Be Treated like High School Students, Not Elementary School Students

Thomas Luhring

Wire Reporter

I remember my principal at Stratford Landing Elementary as a good friend to all kids and someone who used the assistant principals for discipline. In high school, a principal should facilitate the entire administrative staff, which includes more than just assistant principals. The successful high school principal is strict and equal; he or she deals with teenagers nearing adulthood, not eight year old children who are not sure what is right and what is wrong. This school is not a family; it is a place of business meant to prepare students for life. The principal should be the boss, not the mom, giving them the respect they deserve. Mrs. Rima Vesilind is the principal of this high school. Unfortunately, she seems to believe it is full of little kids.

A boss fires employees for failing; there is no paid time off when the company is struggling. Vesilind took the mom approach and comforted the students when over half the school had a D or F on their interims. She had a full staff meeting and gave the students an early release day. The students who had a D or F, myself included, felt more like they were being rewarded than punished. She gave us recess when we should have had a demotion.

There is also a problem with her motherliness in the hallways. Christian Markson is a junior who participates in many school activities and functions. After school one day while waiting for soccer practice, Markson chanced upon Vesilind in the Springbank building. For no apparent reason, she told him to clean a room

near the band room in a tone Markson described as one a mother would use on her child. Was Markson in trouble? Was he "grounded?" According to him, Vesilind was condescending. "I get sick and tired of her treating us like elementary school kids," he said.

Not only does Vesilind treat the students like children, but she also appears to keep us separated by ethnicity in her mind. Whenever she talks about one of the biggest hot button issues this year, the elimination of some honors classes, she talks about race. In the third issue of our school newsletter, her message on the front



Photo by Lakesha Langley

cover was basically an explanation as to why she wishes to be rid of the honors classes. The idea of explaining herself is all well and good, but her reasons seem a little offensive. She writes about the need to push minority students into the higher level AP classes and mentions the problem as the minorities' fault because of their culture and work ethic. "How can we help them build the character to work hard and challenge themselves?" Vesilind wrote in the third paragraph of the third issue of *Wolvernews*. She is talking about the minorities who need to "push" themselves to higher levels of achievement. The syntax and diction in the article indicate that her reasoning is racially based. It seems she thinks minorities do not have the intrinsic

drive or work ethic to enroll in AP classes and therefore need to be pushed harder than others.

Vesilind has been inconsistent with her interactions with students, whether due to ethnicity, intelligence, or previous record; additionally, she has shown a lack of tact to go along with the inequality. At a meeting with members of the SGA, senior Karin Neal was using herself as an example of a minority with good grades and in tough classes in a discussion about the honors classes when Vesilind asked if she, "considered [herself] black." While Neal was offended at the time, she has forgiven and forgotten. "We're cool now," Neal said, demonstrating that she has seen Vesilind change her outlook.

This article is not meant to attack Mrs. Vesilind. I only want her to step back and take a look at this school. Do the students want to be mollicoddled or treated with the respect all individuals seek? Please Mrs. Vesilind, take no offense from criticisms which are meant for the betterment of your abilities as a high school principal. As you gain more experience as a high school principal, you may be better able to identify with the arrogant, ignorant youths that are teenagers. Give us a handshake instead of a hug; a congratulations instead of a Kudo; punishment instead of immediate forgiveness. We want your respect, not your loving.

More Huggers Than Hand Shakers!

Mrs. Vesilind's Response- Our School is not a Business

I had the chance to read this editorial before publication, and I want to thank the editors for a lucid and thoughtful critique. Freedom of speech, the First Amendment, is embedded in the principles of our country, and of our school. I remember some of the incidents the editorial mentioned differently, and I would have been happy to talk about them had I been asked. I still would. But the editorial reminded me that we're all under evaluation; often that's the way we correct and improve ourselves.

I am not your Mom, but I do plead guilty to feelings of family when I think of our school community. West Potomac is not a business. It's a nurturing place where young people can refine their goals, experiment without risk, make mistakes, write editorials, even pursue dead ends, without fear of financial ruin or career consequences. These things can happen only in an atmosphere of caring and support, and it's my duty to help create that atmosphere. The real world of business lies ahead for graduating seniors. May you all meet more huggers than hand shakers.

South Dakota Could Affect Us All

Kaelin Emery

Wire Reporter



Photo by Lakesha Langley

Very recently, South Dakota passed a new law that will eventually affect the entire nation.

South Dakota's decision to pass a law making it illegal to have an abortion unless the mother's life is in danger was a huge step towards a national policy. Many states had been contemplating this change, but none had gone so far as to actually do something yet. Now, eleven states are contemplating banning abortion as well. This decision, along with all the controversy surrounding it, will eventually be taken to the Supreme Court.

I do not agree with South Dakota's decision. Their new law does not take into account if a woman is raped, or if there is a health risk to the mother. The only way an abortion would be legal is if the mother would die giving birth to a child.

I am not a supporter of legalizing abortion

in all cases. If people are willingly having sex, then they are aware of the risk of becoming pregnant. If a woman becomes pregnant during an act that she willingly engaged in, in my opinion, she does not have the right to take the life of her unborn child. There is always the argument that a fetus is just science at that point - not yet a human being. "I don't agree with people who say that. The baby starts to exist the moment that it is conceived," stated senior Kenny Roden.

When a woman is raped, she should have the option to legally abort the child. While I completely understand someone's reasoning behind wanting to do so, I do not particularly support this decision, but I think that it should be an option because it obviously was not an act that the woman readily participated in. If there is a serious health risk to the mother, not just life-threatening ones, a woman should also have said option. If the mother suffers whatever impairment is brought upon her by the pregnancy, she may not be able to care for her child.

In Virginia, if a teenager wants to get an abortion, one of her parents must be

notified (not give permission) at least 24 hours before the procedure takes place. When a teenager becomes pregnant, there can be a lot of pressure to get rid of the baby. It is understandable why a teen would want to; not being mature enough, the financial responsibility, the emotional responsibility, and most of all, the effect that having a child will have on their future, but it all comes down to the fact that no matter how old they are, they are the ones who are responsible for their actions, and they must deal with the consequences that they brought upon themselves. "If you are having sex you should be willing to accept the consequences. There is a lot of responsibility that comes along with having sex and you should be ready to accept it, not looking for an escape route," said senior Maurice Leake.

Nonetheless, abortion is ultimately killing an unborn child. No one in their right mind would kill a child who is fifteen minutes old, but to some people, that same act was okay fifteen minutes earlier. It not only deprives the world of one more child, but it leaves the mother to deal with serious emotional repercussions.

Keckee's Catastrophe

Wondering Where it all Went Wrong



Photo by Lakesha Langley

We are the Champions!

Alex Keckesen

Co-Editor-in-Chief

It is a shame what sports can do to you over the season. They can throw you into the air when you get on a roll, but send you plummeting back to earth after a harsh defeat, only to launch you into the stratosphere of sports stardom. Nevertheless, they also have a weird way of giving you the feeling of always wanting more.

Unfortunately, there has always been that one question of, "Why do we even play sports?" Such a small percent of students go on to play in any professional leagues, and only those select few get the million dollar contracts that we all would die for. But does the concept of sports just fuel an ultra-competitive style to win? The attitude of giving it 110% does not even make sense, so why do we strive to get to that level?

When I think sports, I think of the team game and how they can transform you into a different person. The four major sports in our country are team games, pastimes that promote not only winning and losing, but working towards a group goal rather than for the individual. While some individuals are thrust to the forefront, it is the team's, as well as the individuals', effort that get them to win games.

But sometimes this perspective is diluted by certain individuals with rather large egos that cannot even fit into the stadium they are competing in. It takes away from the spirit of the game, and does not seem right to the rest of the players on the team. Striving for a goal takes commitment, and even though I may sound like Al Pacino from *Any Given Sunday*, I know I am right about that. Not only do large egos hurt the team, but they hurt the sport because others, influenced by the actions of few, think the selfishness that goes on sometimes is the way to play the game. Winning is winning even if it is the offense that sells the tickets or the defense that wins the championships. Sayings and clichés only get you to a certain point, but wins gets you to the top-tier of sports, and when you are on top there is no better feeling.

And sports do not always take the most skill to win; they take the dedication and the love of the game to pull off a last-second victory. We may complain about the twenty wind sprints we may be running at the end of practice, but it can only make you stronger when you strive to be the best.

No team is awarded a championship for lackluster effort or horrible organization. Championships are won by the best team on the field at any given time. They are not won by teams that did not even put in the hours of hard work, and if they are, you can disregard their trophy, because it should not even be considered a real sport anymore.

Senior Suggestions Missing in Action

Dan Jachowski

Wire Reporter

On October 12, 2005, the senior class met to discuss possible changes that could be made to improve the school. Nearly six months later, we can look back to see what suggestions have been acted upon.

At the senior meeting, the entire class broke up into groups of five or six. They then created lists of suggestions to address a number of problems and concerns that were brought up by administrators, teachers, and students. The seniors were asked what aspects of West Potomac they would like changed, what senior privileges they would like, how to solve the problem of students loitering after school, how to deter or stop vandalism in our school and community, as well as explanations of how their suggestions could be executed.

Senior Andrew Whitby felt that the senior meeting was, overall, not helpful at all. "I recall the meeting being shallow and pedantic, but there were delectable donuts," he said. He does not feel as though any of the suggestions have been noticeably worked upon, but he also does not believe it is entirely the school's fault. "The students were asking for

things that were not in the realms of possibilities," he said. Due to the impossible demands that many of the students made at the meeting, such as being able to leave school for lunch, Whitby believes the administration was unable to do much with the suggestions they received from the senior meeting. The impression that he got from the entire meeting was that the administration did not really care about most of the concerns raised, and that it was basically a waste of time.



Photo by Lakisha Langley

Assistant Principal Bruce Jankowitz had a somewhat different take on the senior meeting. He felt that some of the suggestions were good, but agreed that others were also impossible. Many more of the suggestions have been acted upon by the administration than some seniors are aware of. For example, more trash cans have been placed in the gym lobby to help eliminate trash, they have considered raising the idea of senior discounts for smaller sports events to the Northern Region Council, the

Environment club has put recycling bins in the cafeteria. The school may organize lockers by seventh period starting next year, the attendance office has been opening earlier, the senior lunch line was started in November, and seniors are allowed to leave five minutes early on Fridays. The execution of some of the suggestions was difficult, or altogether impossible. "We tried to walk a fine line between recognizing the privileges of the senior class and maintaining the dignity of an academic environment," Jankowitz said. Also, some of the privileges received by the seniors are already being abused. Signs for the senior lunch line have been ripped down twice, and students complain about not being able to use the senior lunch line when they forget their student ID's.

Although the administration meant well in creating the meeting, the execution needs to be more visible. The senior class is unable to see what is being worked on, and they are not being told about progress. The lack of knowledge leads to a belief that nothing is being done. This has caused some seniors and the administrators to have very different views of the importance the senior meeting had for the class, the school, and the community. Hopefully, the ramifications of the meeting will be more visible and appreciated by the senior classes that are yet to come.

Motivation Means More

Houston Murphy

Sports Editor

Morale: it can be the difference between whether a student goes to UVA or NOVA. It can change whether a student wants to go to school ready to learn or would rather stay home and fake sick. Morale plays a big part in a student's life, and it begins at school.

Once a student makes the decision that they would rather cruise through school than try the best they can, it is very hard to convince them otherwise. What many people do not realize is that these students don't just wake up one morning and say to themselves, "I just don't care as much as I used to." Something, or several things have trained them to feel this way; they have grown to be demoralized when it came to school.

It could have been when they observed one of their classes — a class that is very unorganized and they have no idea how their grade is even made up or how their work is

graded (and their teacher goes around in circles trying to explain how things are graded) — and they are assessed in a different way that the person sitting next to them is. The person next to them is less involved, and usually talks to friends during class and occasionally takes a nap, but gets a higher participation grade than the quiet student. This is solely based on the fact that when class discussion dies down they chat with the teacher in a friendly manner, while the observing student sits and wonders why this counts as class participation. They wonder, is it because the teacher recognizes their voice more?

This uncertainty can make a student believe they are being graded unfairly. They will continue to believe this, when all that is needed is a simple, fair explanation of how the teacher's grading system works. With this, their morale would go back up, and they would more willingly do what the teacher expects of them.

Selling Apple Cores to the Hungry

Thomas Luhning

Wire Reporter

There is a place on every Virginia driver's license for a little, red heart, identifying the citizen as an organ donor and a hero. I am an organ donor. I know my death could save another's life through my dead and useless body. Do I and countless other donors deserve money? No.

When I received my license, it said organ donor on it. The heart made me think of my heart and how they would tear up my body to get to it. Once I die, my body is a goldmine for people in need of transplants. It is a wonderful feeling to know you could help save a life and all it requires is the destruction of your dead body. Some people chose not to be organ donors because of their religion or simply because they wish to leave their body intact. This I respect and have no problem with.

The organ donors who wish to be paid for their "sacrifices," however, I have nothing but annoyance with. To be paid for being an organ donation is just self-pleasing and wrong. The reason people donate their organs is because it is helpful and they are done using them. That is like selling apple cores to the hungry. Sure, there could still be some edible parts, but most of it has been eaten. There could be two bites left on the apple and no one would buy it just as there could be two years left on a liver and no one should pay for it. The hungry would eat the munched apple, but never would they buy it. There is no reason to be paid for giving up old organs that are not being used anyways.



Photo by Lakisha Langley

Every day people die because of the shortage in organ donation. Hospitals around the world are in desperate need of organs to save lives. Should the government give cash to organ donors?

43%



35%



22%



Yes

No

Undecided



"Yes, organs are more valuable than cash so people should get paid for their generosity."
-Kenneth Llewellyn, Sophomore



"Yeah, because [doctors] don't do much to save those [people in need of organs] so they should give them money to make up for it."
-Chavais Summers, Sophomore



"It offers another incentive for people to donate organs to those in need, even though saving a life should be more than enough."
-Lexi Vlasho, Sophomore



Foreign Language Night Huge Success for School

Hooff Cooksey
News Co-Editor

"Accueille, Bienvendia, Acceptus, Willkommen." These were the many words for welcome spoken by French teacher Dan Fitzgerald to open the Foreign Language Night at our school.

The United States is made up of many different and unique cultures. Our school is also very

diverse, with people from all over the world. What happens when all of these cultures come together for one night of the year? A night of eating, socializing, festivities, and learning about new cultures. On March 27, our school hosted its annual Foreign Language Night, where families and

students were able to come, and enjoy different types of food, as well as watch performances by students from different foreign language classes.

The event began at six o'clock p.m. when students, parents, and siblings began to arrive in the school's cafeteria with different food items from around the world. The event had been set up by students from the Latin department. Students brought in quesadillas, tacquitos, enchiladas, and empanadas. There were also many desserts. One of the very unique food items brought in was a papusa, which consists of a round piece of fried bread, followed by cheese and any other toppings wanted, and ended with another piece

of fried bread. This was one of many different and unique foods brought to Foreign Language Night. The cafeteria had also been decorated with different posters featuring different languages and places from around the world. There were posters showing the many festivities in Mexico, along with Spanish words. Others had pictures of the French culture along with French writing.



After parents and students ate, they proceeded to the auditorium to view many performance like this one by our guitar ensemble.

Photo by Lakeisha Langley

Sombreros were set up around the room to make the experience seem more real. The cost of entry was free, so anybody could come: students, teachers, parents, siblings, and members of the community.

Following the dinner, there were performances by foreign language students in the auditorium. Paul Disselkoe, a French student, played his guitar and sang the song, "Je T'aimais, Je T'aime, Je T'aimerais."

There were many other performances, including dancing, singing, and interacting with the crowd. All of the performances were by somebody who was involved in the foreign language department. Whether they were students or teachers, the crowd really enjoyed the show.

The Foreign Language Night at our school was a way to bring the community and school together. It allowed people to learn about all of the many foreign language opportunities that are offered at our school. People were able to receive great food, as well as relax with their peers and parents, while enjoying the thrill of being immersed in five or more cultures at once.

Accreditors, from page 1

classes, as well as better securing access to school buildings.

When making a decision, Dr. McDade, Neibert, and Oei took student and parent opinions into account. They asked them questions that related to safety, academics, and extracurricular activities. The responses included good things about our school, as well as areas needing improvement. Junior Jesse Tobert was asked by the accreditors what he thought about the school. Torbert replied, "I told them I did not like the teachers, students, and food." He also complained about having to wake up and come to school every morning. Other questions the accreditors included how students thought the teachers presented themselves, and what the parents thought of the school's security.

Principal Rima Vesilind and staff gladly welcomed our new accreditation. Our school's high-quality staff, resources, and courses offered made McDade "enjoy [his] two-day stay. [This school has] a wonderful campus with different activities and students."

Rhatican, from page 1

and is close friends and family member with the primary sources.

The selected students will set dates and interview the sources at their homes, allowing the students to learn about how the institution of slavery relates to our school. The Quander building, for example, was named after a former slave. Many events have since taken place in the previous decades and many aspects of life have since changed.

Additional people have gotten involved since the project's initial inception. "When I first started this project, no one knew where this project was going," said Rhatican. At the past board meeting on April 19, Alexandria Mayor Bill Euille awarded several certificates to Charles Henry Quander as a result of progress made in Rhatican's project. Many of the primary sources spoke and cried while explaining how much this meant to them. "This means more to them than me just getting a grade," said senior Carrisa Davis. Principal Rima Vesilind said, "This is a very unique project, and West Potomac is a very unique school." Vesilind is extremely proud to be associated with this project. West Potomac is going to be documenting oral history—how parents, students, teachers, and history can change the world once again, is just a matter of time.



Rhatican speaks in our school's library about the book he just released.

Photo by Lakeisha Langley

ROAR Card Winners: Congratulations to the Following Winners Who Exhibited Citizenship

Rayan Abdelgader	Michael Hollins	Ben Pryor
Lliana Aguilera	Cordero Holt	Amanda Ramfey
Abdullah Ahmady	Takia Johnson	Ashley Richardson
Arsalan Ali	Mubina Khan	Shanna Richardson
Amira Alsayyad	Johnson Kim	Ronja Roberts
Tommy Austin	Jeff Labele	Lawrence Ross
Jerome Autry	Gabriel Laverdy	Andrew Scheuermann
Erica Avelar	Romarr Lawrence	Anthony Scott
Sonia Barksdale	Jose Lopez	Katie Sebring
Livonah Barnett	Danyel Martinez	Waad Shalal
Edwin Benitez	Alfredo Martinez	Reema Sikander
Griselda Blanco	Dutch McCanto	David Smith
Rebecca Boucher	Phillip McNeil	Donja Smith
Maria Castro	Eyerus Meteku	Kyle Smith
Jane Cheung	Marvin Morales	Edwin Sorto
Francisco Cordova	Jonathan Mulligan	Morgan Spring
Colisha Davis	Khalid Mumtaz	Ruth Tapp
Mario Escamillo	Orlando Narey	John Thompson
Angela Fuentes	Bao Nguyen	Tierra Dupree
Antonio Gilkey	Haroon Nowaz	Hayward Traynham
Melinda Golden	Jessica Overcash	Jose Villalta
Dilman Gonzales	Charmaine Padgett	Ivana Vukolic
Tyler Gray	Kaitlin Payne	Olja Wanc
Juan Gutierrez	Franklyn Payne	Sarah Watson
Morsal Habibszada	Mike Pelleteir	Shelby Whitney
Samah Hadi	Olvin Perdomo	Mark Willingham
Jihad Hadi	Jamie Perez	Brittany Winslow
Mohamed Hadi	Brittany Pope	Karamokoh Wurie
Christian Henderson	Thomas Powell	Malarie Younger

ST. BERNARD PROJECT
3809 Kanawha Street NW | Washington, DC 20015
www.stbernardproject.org | (202) 431-3443



TOOL DRIVE
Saturday, April 29, 2006
West Potomac High School
Cafeteria & Patio
9:00am – 2:00pm

Please donate the following items:

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| Hammers | Hand saws |
| Screwdrivers | Crow bars |
| Tool belts | Electric drills |
| Brooms | Pressure washers |
| Pliers | Wrench sets |
| Level Kits | Chisels |
| Nails | Nail gun |
| Squares | Circular saws |
| Miter saws | Rakes |
| Generators | Respirators |
| Grinders | Ladders |
| Gift Certificates – Home Depot & Ace Hardware Stores | |

*** Donated tools should be new or in excellent working condition ***

This event is hosted by The St. Bernard Project, a registered 501(c)(3). All donations are tax deductible. Tools will go to our Tool Co-op, a tool lending program for residents of St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana (outside New Orleans) who are rebuilding their homes. To learn more about this program or The St. Bernard Project go to www.stbernardproject.org.

The Road to Internationals

Students Compete in Science Fair for Prizes and Respect

Hooff Cooksey

News Co-Editor

The science fair was a great success for everyone who competed. It was even more of a success for those students who advanced to the following rounds. Students awarded first or second place in the primary science fair at our school were able to advance to the regional competition.

Here, if students were awarded first place, he or she was eligible to compete in the state fair, which occurred during spring break. Other members were also invited to the state science fair, as well as the international science fair. Many of our fellow students have had great success in the fair which took place on Saturday, March 18.

Sophomore Hunter Link advanced to the state competition. His project earned him a trip to the state fair, as well as



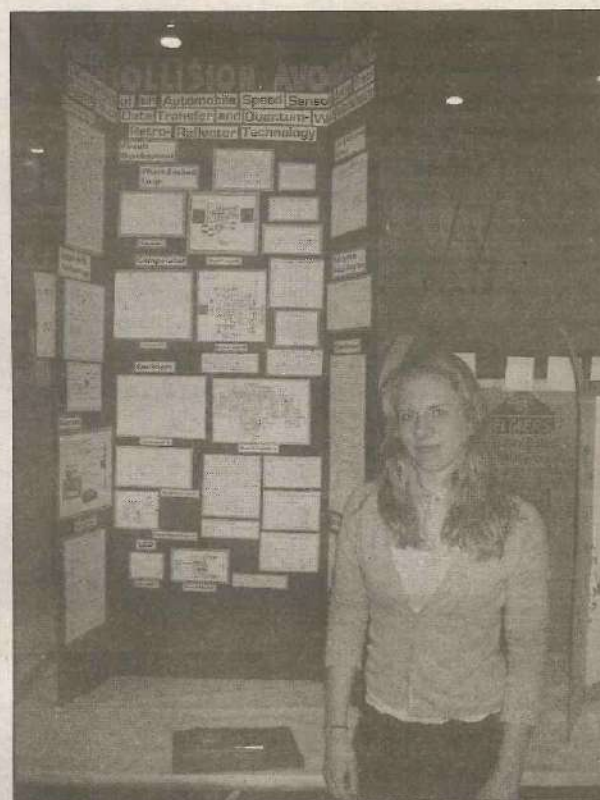
Photo by Adele Hampton

"The money was a great reward for all the hard work I did," said Link.

\$100. "I plan on buying some new Macbeth Griffon shoes or buying a large amount of stock in the company called Mexipower," said Link. "The money was a great reward for all the hard work I did." His award winning project, titled "The Effect of Sound on the Growth of Crystals," earned him a trip to the state fair over spring break. "I thought the project was very interesting and not hard to do because it was something I am interested in."

Another winner was senior Diana Burk. The theme of her project was using different colored rays (red and green) to determine at what speed a car can safely pass another car, and earned her a trip not only to the state fair, but to the international fair held in Indianapolis between May 7 and May 13. "I have done the science fair since my freshman year. I really like doing it," she said. Burk had been working on this project since August of 2005, and is still adding material to it. At the first round of the fair, which took place in our cafeteria, her project baffled the judges. Burk claimed for a student to be successful in a science fair, they need to be very attentive to detail and also pick a project that interests them, so that they will want to work on it and make the best it can possibly be.

The science fair opens many doors for people - it allows people to show their interest in things other than sports or celebrities. "Pick a project that has to do with real life situations as well as something that interests you," said Link. Science Fair is a great opportunity to really excel at something that will get you far in life, and is open to anyone who wants to participate. Many tenth grade chemistry students performed in it this year, as well as many upperclassmen. Dan Jackowski, a senior, was also invited to the International competition



Senior Diana Burk and her science fair project won a spot the International Fair, which will be held May 7 to May 13.

in Indianapolis. Seniors Katie Staples, Brad Dalton, Br Smith, Parker Fishel and others were among those selected to advance and compete in the regional science fair.

AP Tests Cause Serious Stress for Students

Dan Jackowski

Wire Reporter

Every year during the first two weeks of May, the Advance Placement (AP) exams roll around, causing students to stress out, act oddly, and celebrate.

The AP exams are tests given out by the College Board that are intended to assess students who have completed college-level course material in high school. Our school offers nineteen different AP classes, which include classes in Calculus, English Literature, Biology, Music Theory, and World History. Students, most of whom are from grades ten through twelve, take the exams every year, with a total of 1,221,016 students taking exams in 2005, according to test statistics provided on the College Board's website. The earliest course offered at our school is World History, which students can take during tenth grade. The AP exams include multiple choice and free response portions. They are graded on a scale from one to five, and many colleges allow students to test out of courses and receive credit for passing AP exam scores (a four or five).

Due to the effect that AP scores could have on students' college careers, some students begin to stress out as the AP exams approach. Senior Philip Eiseman, who has taken many AP courses, says that after the AP exams are over, he feels a sense of relief from getting it done with, but before the test he does not notice the stress too much. The night before an exam he just glances through the notes, eats a good dinner, and gets mentally ready. "Most of the classes [at our school] do a pretty good job at preparing the students for the test, so I usually feel very ready,"

he said. Although he said it is important to review the material in the weeks leading up to the exam, it is also important to leave some free time to relax. "If you spend all your time stressing out, you won't do as well on the test."

Many people believe that junior year is the most stressful academically. Junior Benjamin Pryor, who is taking AP US History, AP Chemistry, and AP Statistics, does not feel as stressed out about the three AP tests he is taking this year as he did over the one AP test he took last year because he knows what to expect. He also does not think the stress is due to the exams themselves. Rather, the workload is greater because he is taking more AP classes, which is mostly what causes more stress during junior year. After the AP exams, he said, "I feel really tired, like I used all my energy."

Dave Goldfarb, an AP World History teacher, said he only sees the AP exam as an opportunity for his students to validate their knowledge. "I do not intend to put pressure on the students regarding the outcome of the test," he said. He just tries to prepare his students as well as possible by holding review sessions before and after school and teaching them the material they need to know. During the test, he usually doesn't worry about how his students will do. Instead, he just relaxes.

Although some students do stress out about the AP tests, a lot of people see the test as simply a thing they need to do in order to get the credit for their course. So, an AP test is more a time of relief, because the courses have basically come to a close, and the one test they needed to take is now over.

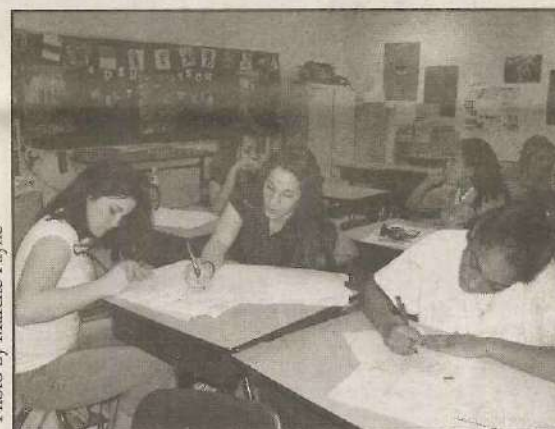


Photo by Marche Payne

The peer mediation class helps people solve their conflicts, before the conflict escalates into a fight.

Peer Mediators Working to Make a Change

Caroline Staples

Features Editor

The peer mediation class, taught by language teacher Elisabeth Collins, is held everyday during seventh period, where students learn the process of mediation, to make "I-statements" with one another such as "I feel sad when you..." or "I am mad when you..." what to actually say to the disputers, and ways in which to react to a problem.

Fights and disputes between students are not seen every day here at our school, but they are not uncommon either. If there is ever a fight, staff, security, or teachers have the responsibility to intervene and stop the scuffle in order to ensure the safety of all who are involved. If students are found fighting, they are automatically suspended, as is stated in the Students Rights and Responsibilities booklet, which every student receives in the beginning of the year and is required to sign.

Assistant Principal Bruce Jankowitz said a student who is having issues with another student or group of students will usually first go to their guidance counselor, and then to the administration if the problem remains unresolved. The guidance counselor will then sometimes refer the student to peer mediation to resolve the dispute and prevent a fight from occurring.

Freshman Danielle Davis is in the all-girl peer mediation class, where students are enrolled through a recommendation from a teacher, by asking a counselor. Davis said, "To be a peer mediator you need to have patience, be a good listener, be able to hold your tongue at certain times, not be biased, listen to both sides of an argument, be very organized, and be able to guide people through a case." So far, the peer mediation class had only two cases, which is a small number for the class, both of which Davis has participated in. During a mediation group meeting, the mediator should make the situation as comfortable as possible, not show bias, help eliminate name calling, make sure the rules are followed and fighting does not occur, and make the meeting constructive and productive.

Peer mediating has not been exclusively confined only to school, but it also applies to real life issues outside of school. The class helped Davis get through some personal problems and other troubles with friends and family being in the mediation course. "It affected me a lot, especially in the beginning."

No matter who has a problem with who, there is always someone to turn to in this school, whether it be a counselor, an administrator, a member, or a peer mediator.

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Bootleggers Beware

Thomas Luhring
Wire Reporter

Beer pong, kings, screw the dealer, flip cup, capitalism, Edward 40 hands - just a few of the many drinking games teenagers at this school play, weekend and weekday. Does this school have a drinking problem?

To answer this, many students would say no. "Teenagers like to have fun, and for a few of us this means drinking," senior Alex Miller answered. "There is no real problem, other than when adults find out." This seems to be the attitude of a large part of this school's population.

There have been instances where a group, primarily consisting of students from this school, goes into the woods of Huntley Meadows Park to drink and throw parties. The faculty knows about the acts of trespassing and underage drinking, although they do not know which teenagers are breaking these laws. French teacher Dan Fitzgerald believes "every school has a problem with alcohol." Obviously, the adults and authorities believe that at least the group of kids at our school has a problem, but what do the students of this school think?

What kind of people go to these parties in the woods? "Alcoholics," Miller said with a chuckle. "They probably go there so mom and dad don't walk in on them." He believes there is not a problem, just that some kids want to have fun. Senior Caitlin Spangler agrees with Miller, and stated, "You could do whatever you want without worrying about parents." The students at this school do not seem to think there is a drinking problem. There is an agreement that parents are a little too nosy, or care about drinking too much.

A question many parents are asking themselves is, how do their children obtain

alcohol? "I've heard of fake I.D.'s, siblings over 21 buying it for them, and even bums buying beer," Spangler said. "Everyone knows at least one person who can get alcohol." "Shoulder tapping" is a term for enticing the homeless to buy beer or liquor in exchange for a few bucks or treats, such as 7-11 hot dogs.

Such illegal activities can have extreme consequences if one is caught. Adults see this as extremely dangerous, but the students see this as more exciting.

The problems of underage drinking all come from one thing: adults who try to fight it. Grown ups who forget who they were and forget what they did forget why they did the things they did. Teenagers are the children of the hippie generation; the generation famous for Woodstock, marijuana, and other drugs. It appears to teenagers like the adults do not want the youths to make the same mistakes as the hippies. The teenagers want to be allowed to make their own mistakes. The clash of these two ideas drives teenagers and students of this school to drinking in a forest, in an empty house, in any place possible.

Adults want to know why, while teenagers want to know why not? Journalism teacher Kelcy Pierre asked me, "Why do kids drink excessively?"

Why do they drink at all?" The answer is simple. It is not allowed and it can be fun.

It's a Mad



Many of today's drinkers drink because of insecurities and peer pressure

Kevin O'Brien
Special to The Wire

It seems that nowadays, everyone is drinking, using drugs, and having sex. Wrong.

In our culture, drinking and having sex is illegal under the ages of 21 and 18 respectively. Sometimes, however, underage children succumb to pressure from their very own culture in order to engage in these illegal activities. Movies, television, and peer

pressures skew our view of actually drinking and having sex. In a survey of 100 students at our school, 50-75% of students think that: 50-75% of students drink alcohol and: 50-75% of students engage in sexual activities. How can our view of these activities be so skewed?

In a Survey of 100 students at our school, students think that:
- 50-75% of students drink alcohol
and:
- 50-75% of students engage in sexual activities

Ris Bulsi

I Thought i

Diana Blaszkiewicz
Style Co-Editor

There it is. The (insert product name) that you have been salivating over for months. You have saved every paycheck, every cent of birthday money, and even babysat for that horrible kid down that street. But you still come up short. You admire your coveted item on the shelf of your local store and inadvertently notice that there is no security device attached to it. You look around and see no employees, no cameras. You know that you should not steal, but is it that wrong? What do you do? Do you give in, or walk away?

Often, it is too difficult to resist. Teenagers are notorious for shoplifting and stealing, and although sometimes the charges are over-inflated, it is entirely justified to say that many teenagers go through a period of compulsive stealing at least once in high school. In fact, it serves as a rite of passage, something that is illegal, but seems innocent at the same time. Junior Major Sturm alleged, "Very few of my friends shoplift, but I know many people who do. I think it's wrong. If you have the money, you should buy it."

Many serious issues are involved with stealing. For one, it is addictive. Compulsive shoplifters and thieves are called kleptomaniacs, and their habit is hard to break. Most teenagers are amateur thieves and steal for their personal use. Instances where teenagers steal to make a profit or to support a drug or alcohol habit are all too common, and demonstrate how stealing can be especially harmful in conjunction with other pathological behaviors.

Most people who steal do not need to. "I think a lot of teenagers have the kind of mentality where they do not really need something, but they want it," said senior Kristen McWhirter. So what drives them to do it? Greed and jealousy, for one. Many kids who grow up in a consumer

culture have a constant need for new names and labels that are popular in colorful magazines. Stealing is a way to get everything they want. This is a twisted logic: if you can get everything you want, why steal?

Yet stealing cannot be seen as a form of entrepreneurship. It is an underhanded way of getting what you want. It is theft morally wrong, it is stolen from. According to the United States Department of Justice, the United States lost \$10 billion in losses due to theft, almost all of it from employee theft. Stealing causes economic problems and the national economy suffers from their unaccounted losses. Other devices make shopping



This year, multiple students have had their iPod's stolen.

According to the National Campaign To Prevent Teen Pregnancy:

- 4 out of 10 girls get pregnant by the time they turn 20.
- More young teens are having sex: sexual activity has declined among unmarried teens EXCEPT for those under age 15.
- 63% of teens under 18 who have had sex say they wish they had waited longer.
- More than 1/3 of sexually active teens and young adults age 15 to 24 report that alcohol or drug use has influenced a decision to do something sexual.
- The proportion of students who have had sex at least once is 47.6%. This has decreased since 1991 when it was 54%.

Mad World

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ewed? It seems that
every Hollywood
blockbuster has
a smoking, heavy
drinking macho-
man who gets all
the women in bed.
Everyday, in high
school, students'
conversations
turn to sex and

alcohol. Peers who do participate in these activities often brag and encourage others to do so as well. The number of people who actually do violate laws is blown far out of proportion by isolated cases. The martyr-effect is very prevalent. M.A.D.D. reports that underage teens make the highest percent of those involved in drunk-driving accidents, and each case is brought to the public's attention and sensationalized on the news.

In reality, the number of teens who use alcohol and have sex is decreasing, and contraceptive use is on the rise. People's actions have changed - their mind set, however, has not.



KRT/George Skene

One night of heavy drinking can impair your ability to think abstractly for up to 30 days.



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such as iPods and PSP's," said school police Officer Davis. "[Theft of] more expensive items has increased this year because of the new electronic devices." Davis highlighted that the most important thing in preventing theft is holding onto personal belongings and not leaving them unattended. "If you don't lock up your things, they can get stolen," he reminded.

Some of the items stolen in school are resold outside of school, usually by the thieves through pawn shops. However, there are ways of getting stolen goods back. Certain electronics are identified by serial numbers that can be checked in a database if found, and recovered by the owner. Cell phones are usually recovered through service providers, but only if a police report is issued. Davis emphasized that informing the police about any theft is imperative. "I encourage people who get their items stolen to report them," he said.

Theft, like all other vices, is not something that can be wiped out in one swoop, or that will die down anytime soon. In fact, as the recent resurgence of white collar crime in America's biggest corporations has demonstrated, stealing will only get more and more sophisticated. Retailers and other companies can expect bigger losses, and for shoppers, more stringent security. Penalties for stealing are very serious. Minors who commit grand larceny (stealing over \$200 dollars in goods or money) can face incarceration and exorbitant fines. Petty theft like shoplifting or car-hopping can lead to more serious crimes, such as breaking and entering or robbery. All in all, the legal ramifications of stealing can be particularly daunting for teenagers.

There is no ready solution to the problem of theft among teenagers. The only thing to do is to urge teenagers not to steal. It is not a vice that can be easily combated, but when out of control, can lead to ruinous consequences.

"We Are All on Drugs."

Kaelin Emery

Wire Reporter

The year, 2006, is very different than those in the past. These days, there are so many more expectations and pressures placed upon teens. So, what do a multitude of teenagers do? Drugs.

For a variety of reasons, some parents believe that drugs are more easily accessible than they have been in the past. Ask almost any high school student, and you are more than likely to find that they know exactly where to find the fix they crave. For the right price, almost any drug imaginable is attainable. "Drugs are illegal but they are easy to get. If someone really wants them, they will find a way to get them," commented sophomore Shannon Higgins. I think that there is a drug problem in this school. There is a great deal of stress during adolescent years and many teens deal with it by placing themselves in a drug-induced stupor.

The most prevalent drug among high school students is marijuana. "Kids use marijuana to relax. Studies have shown that it has a calming effect so people smoke it to chill out," said sophomore Brooke

Regensburg. Marijuana comes with a variety of different names such as weed, pot, reefer, or Mary Jane, but whatever the name, it still has dangerous side effects. Effects include memory loss, trouble with problem solving, red, glazed-over eyes, and distorted perceptions. There is even a day set aside every year, on infamous marijuana user Bob Marley's birthday, April 20th, where kids smoke weed all day.

While marijuana may be common, it is not the only drug circulating among high school students. Opium, which causes a sense of calm and well-being, has also started to become widespread. Cocaine and all of its seriously damaging effects is also not as rare as it used to be. Cocaine raises blood pressure, heartbeat becomes irregular, and causes users to become paranoid and suffer from insomnia, among other problems.

"[There is] drug use throughout my family, I know what it does to people and what people can become," stated junior Evan Dobbs. It all comes down to the fact that drugs negatively affect you mentally, physically and socially. While they may be "fun" or "cool" to use now, in the long run they are not worth it.

TEENS ARE INFLUENCED BY ALL TYPES OF MEDIA, BUT MOSTLY BY THE MUSIC INDUSTRY. MANY ARTISTS SING ABOUT SMOKING, DRINKING, AND HAVING SEX.

**"And since the day I left Milwaukee,
Lynchburg an' Bordeaux, France,
Been making the bars lots of big
money,
An' helpin' white people dance.
I got you in trouble in High School,
But College, now that was a ball.
You had some of the best times
you'll never remember with me:
ALCOHOL."
-Brad Paisley - "Alcohol"**

**"I got the magic stick
I know if I can hit once, I can
hit twice
I hit the baddest chicks
Shortly don't believe me, then
come with me tonight
And I'll show you maaagic
(What? What?) Maaagic
I got the magic stick"
-50 cent - "Magic Stick"**

**"I smoke two joints in the morning, I smoke two joints at night,
I smoke two joints in the afternoon, and it makes me feel alright.
Smoke two joints in time of peace, into the time of war.
Smoke two joints before i smoke two joints, and then i smoke some more -
yeah thats what i do, hey"
-Bob Marley - "Smoke 2 Joints"**

Sex and the School

Jocelyn Finrock

Focus Editor

In Virginia there is a sexual consent law. Although many students are unaware of this law, it is illegal to have sex under the age of eighteen.

In Virginia, if a person who is eighteen or older has sex with a thirteen or fourteen year-old, they face a felony charge, a punishment of two to ten years in prison, and a fine of up to \$100,000. A person eighteen or older having sex with someone aged between fifteen and seventeen faces a misdemeanor, punishable by up to one year in jail and a \$2,500 fine.

So how many students have sex in spite of these laws? When sophomore Cory St. Clair was asked how many students in our school he thought were having sex, he said, "It's gotta be at least 50 percent." Junior Tiffany Tennant disagrees with this; she says that "95%" of students are having sex. According to the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, less than half of high school students have had sex.

Each state is able to decide what to declare as the age of consent. Virginia has one of

the oldest age requirements and some of the harshest punishments. "They set these laws because it is a way to prevent unwanted things from happening, and it can mess up the young people in our society," said St. Clair. Nearly four in ten female teens become pregnant at least once by the time they are 20, according to the N.C.P.T.P. "There are too many pregnant teens and diseases, so they need set an age limit. It's like being able to drive and drink. You need an age where you can be responsible," said Tennant.

There is not much you can do to stop sex among teens. Whether there is a law against it or not, teens are still going to participate in sexual activities. "If teenagers want to do it, they will, even if they acknowledge that what they are doing is 'against the law,'" said junior Emily Wisniewski.

Although you cannot stop a teen from participating in sexual activity, laws still remain against it. Virginia places underage sex laws for a reason, and by not adhering to these laws, you may put yourself at a risk for things such as pregnancy and STD's.

Softball's Time for the Spotlight

Jon Yoo

Asst. Sports Editor

Our school's softball team has dominated the athletics at our school for the past several years. They finished their 2004-2005 campaign with a 14-3 record, losing in the regional final to perennial powerhouse, Robinson. Still, with this impressive résumé, the team has remained practically invisible to our student body. However, this has



Sophomore Elizabeth Crowe keeps her eye on the batter while keeping the first-base runner in check during a win against Lee.

not been a letdown to the team in the least. Junior Jesse Hines stated, "We know what we are capable of this year. Nothing will stop us from our goal of winning states."

This season, Hines will return with senior starters Becky Boosher, Nicole Demmel, Brittany Maniglia, and junior Kristin Massey

to lead the rather young core of the team on their quest to another district title and beyond. "The main key to our success is our teamwork chemistry. You would think with fifteen girls together as much as we are there would be problems; however, we all look after each other on and off the field," said Maniglia. This teamwork and chemistry was definitely seen in their season opener against regular opponent T.C. Williams. They

started their season off as usual with their custom huddle and chants, which helped the Lady Wolverines attack early and cruise to a crushing 15-1 win over the Titans. Massey said, "We still have a chip on our shoulders since we did not win states last year, and we sort of brought

it out on them, but that is how we expect to play every game."

Much of the team chemistry and wins are due to head coach Dennis Day. "D-Day" is definitely a player's coach. He listens to what we have to say, and puts as much time and effort as he can for this team. He shares our

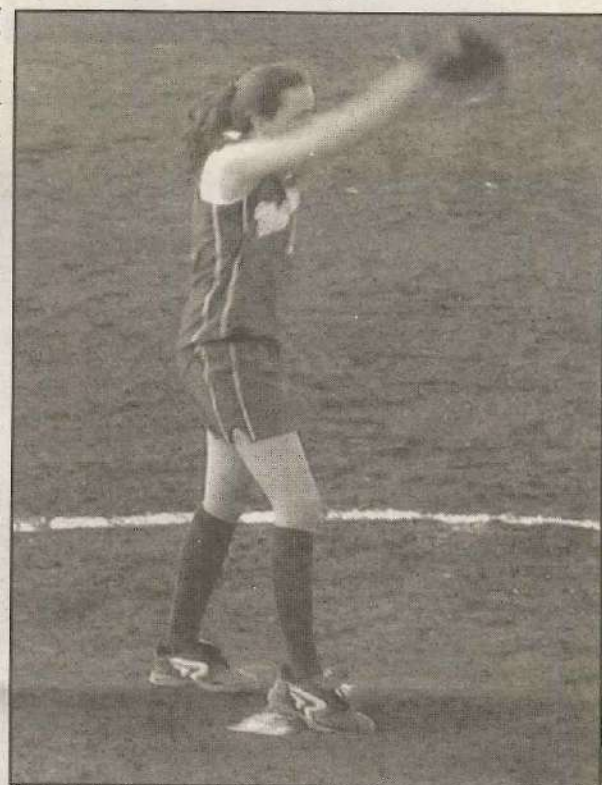
goals, but most of all he tries to understand us and puts his heart into what he is doing," said Hines. Not only has Coach Day helped the players individually, but he has helped set up the team's rigorous off-season workouts. "We started velocity this winter, which was an endurance training program formed to boost our explosion, speed, and basically work on the weaknesses that we had individually. Along with all the other off-season batting practices and fielding exercises, it should really boost our chances of reaching states this year," said Maniglia.

The team was tested tremendously during their three game tournament over spring break. Following two consecutive losses to Chantilly and Hylton, both of which did not go against their record, by a total of three runs. Many of the players felt frustrated and disappointed; however, they finished off with a win over W.T. Woodson, which included a three-run homer by Maniglia. She stated, "Both losses really took a lot out of us and our momentum. Fortunately, we were able to come out with a victory and finish strong."

The Lady Wolverines have continued the spectacular start since the break, with an undefeated record so far this season. Their seven consecutive victories, have included wins over Annandale, a fifteen run victory over South County, and a shut out win over rival, Mount Vernon. During this stretch, Demmel and Boucher have helped carry the team in true senior fashion. Demmel has continued her offensive

dominance, which included a two-run home run against Chantilly, while Boucher has pitched four no-hit games, while striking out 28 batters in back-to-back nights. With six games left in the regular season, the squad is still far off from their goal. Hines said "We know its going to take the right timing, pace, and mentality to reach states. However with what we have accomplished so far this season, I believe we can do it."

With all the hype surrounding this spring's squad, we can only hope that they will come through. However, with all their focus, effort, and teamwork, there is a feeling that they will not let us down. Massey put it perfectly. "Are you kidding me? You think anyone can stop us?"



Senior Becky Boucher leads the Lady Wolverines to a shut-out win over rival Mount Vernon. Boucher batted the Majors with fifteen strike-outs.

Lacrosse Ready to Strike

Alex Keckeisen

Co-Editor-in-Chief

With aspirations of the district tournament still in their sights, the boys' lacrosse team have put their hard work to the test, and hope to finish the season on a run.

After a convincing 9-6 win over the Mt. Vernon Majors, our lacrosse team looks to post many district wins, and currently holds a 4-4 record.

"We're really happy to compete with the top teams in the district," said team captain and junior Chris Farquhar. One of the biggest games of the season came against perennial powerhouse West Springfield. The game ended in an 8-7 loss, but not until two overtimes were well fought. The loss was tough, but it sent



Junior goalie Dan Funk defends the net during an important stretch against Lake Braddock.

murmurs throughout the district the team was ready for an opponent.

The team has also been helped by members of the football team, who perceive the sport of lacrosse as a good way to stay in shape. Seniors Mike Howell and Ernest Recker headline as the top football turned lacrosse players this year. Both Howell and Recker played on the defensive side of the football in the fall, and are now key players in the spring. Farquhar, also a captain of the football team, has been pleased with their performance and is happy that they decided to spend their last semester playing lacrosse.

Football players often bring the intensity of the big hits to the game of lacrosse. The physical nature of football often transfers

well to lacrosse with only a few skills still needed to be learned. One of the more challenging parts of switching sports is the hand-eye coordination that it takes to play lacrosse. Many of the new lacrosse players start out on the defensive side of the ball to facilitate their entry into the sport, but mostly to push other players around.

Another impact player is junior Jesse Torbert, who attended this school his freshman year, before transferring to Howard Northern High School, then coming back for his junior year. Torbert is the leading scorer for the squad this year, helping Farquhar with the transition into the offensive half. His goals have helped the team not only stay competitive, but

also win games. Sophomore John Falvey, the starting varsity goalkeeper, has also stepped up his game in anticipation for district games.

"Having a .500 record halfway through the season is exciting for us and we really want to cause some damage in the district tournament," said Farquhar. The team can clearly get wins in the tough Patriot District, but in such a competitive region, there is no room for error. Although they lost to West Springfield, the loss created the prospect of beating other high ranking teams. When they do get into the district tournament, the other seven teams will have to be waiting for a fight; otherwise our lacrosse team will be able to notch easy wins.

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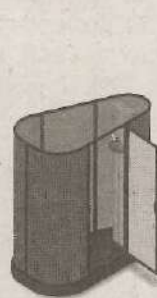
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Houey's Highlights

The Last of the Cinderellas

Houston Murphy

Sports Editor

Every March brings the NCAA tournament, where amidst the madness, smaller, less known "mid-major" schools somehow find ways to upend the seemingly unbeatable, massive programs such as Duke and UNC. These Cinderella stories usually come and go promptly, giving the nation a good feeling about an underdog team taking out a giant, but then returning to reality the very next day. This year's tournament brought a surprise that won't allow us to return to reality so quickly: George Mason University.

George Mason's unbelievable run through the NCAA tournament all the way to the final four gave us all a chance to sit back and feel good about the area team that never gets any recognition. But the best thing about this story is, no one at all just wanted to sit back and watch; we all jumped up and screamed our lungs out every time Mason made us believe even more that they should be here. Junior John Motley said, "It was the biggest Cinderella story in sports history. All of a sudden all of America knew this school."

A week before the NCAA tournament started, the field of 65 teams was chosen. George Mason was one of those teams, awaiting confirmation that they had been chosen by the committee of select coaches and administrators who were knowledgeable about how the college basketball season went. But Mason did not receive the luxury of knowing for sure that they'd get an automatic bid—they didn't win their conference tournament and was not a major school that received a surplus of publicity. All they had was a great record in an underrated

Colonial Athletic Association conference (15-3 conference, 23-7 overall), as well as a great group of players with an exciting style of play that not a lot of people knew about, but everyone was waiting to see. English teacher Bernard Cabral, who also is a professor at Mason, said, "Their run into the Final Four shot up the school's moral like nothing else." Not only will Mason benefit from their impressive run through to the

final four, but so will all mid-major schools. When it comes time for the committee to decide who gets into the field of 65, they will definitely consider the strong teams at the top of a smaller conference just as much as the mediocre teams of a larger conference, such as this year's Seton Hall from the Big East conference, the conference that received a record eight NCAA tournament teams. Seton Hall made it into the tournament with only an 18-10 record and made an early first round exit, losing to mid-major school Wichita State, who eventually went on to beat Big East major Tennessee to make it to the sweet 16.

If they knew Mason would go this far, the committee certainly would have made a stronger consideration for conference rival Hofstra. They were just as big of a bubble team as Mason, and beat the Colonials twice,

with one of the victories coming en route to making it to the CAA championship.

Mason, a university on the rise which is mainly known as a commuter school, will undoubtedly benefit greatly from their expedition to the final four this year.



George Mason fans show their support for the Patriot's first Final Four birth in the school's basketball history.

KRT/Patrick Schneider

A Different Kind of Loss

Sara Mathewson

Style Co-Editor

A team has many things to adjust to at the beginning of their sports year, including having to get used to new students coming onto the team, but also coping with their seniors who have left the team.

Seniors often have a lot of experience with their sport, because most of them have been doing it for four years or more. A team could be really good one year, but then struggle the next year because the majority of their team left, due to the fact that most of them were seniors the previous year. "When the seniors from the year before leave, we try and get ready for a younger team for the next year, and we practice a lot harder," said Chris Brennan from the varsity baseball team. During his freshman year, there were thirteen seniors who left the baseball team, which made it very difficult for the team to gain the strength they once had.

One problem that these teams encounter, besides the fact that there are now open positions to fill, there are new players on the team. Sophomore Adolfo Munoz from the JV lacrosse team said,



Our girl's soccer team will have big shoes to fill with the loss of senior standout, Nicole Gerom.

Photo Courtesy of the Gerom family

"Our team isn't bad this year, we didn't lose that many seniors last year. There are a lot of freshman and sophomores, and we all have good chemistry as is." Sometimes, however, a team loses the experience the former seniors once had, and must try to make up for it with the new players. According to Brennan, "The team must practice harder and now the new players can play just as well, if not better, without our seniors."

So with a little extra work and a little bit of bonding, any team can pull it off. When one group leaves, there is always another group, just as experienced, to fill the position. Munoz stated, "When the seniors leave, the year starts off with little leadership, because everyone is pretty much on the same level. Then someone steps up and takes the leadership role, and the team is able to get better."

More Than a Trainer

Katie Staples

Co-Editor-in-Chief

The rise in popularity and participation of school sports has led to the increased number of student athlete injuries at our school. Fortunately, our school has an outstanding Athletic Training Program (ATP) where about fifty students are helped every day by athletic trainers Jamal Dixon-Hawkins and Alissa McDonald.

Although the athletic trainers see athletes from every sport each season, the sports with the most common injuries is track and field. "Ankle sprain is probably the most common thing. Medial

and any kind of rehab you could do in a physical therapy clinic," Dixon-Hawkins said. Freshman Sinead Smith has shin splints and tendonitis, and said she does "three different stretches before practice," and after, "I ice."

Symptoms athletes recognize as those they need to see an athletic trainer about include swelling, discoloring, and nagging, persistent pain. However, "Pain is not an indication of injury. I've had people walk in with broken bones but there was no pain, and I've had people walk in with a cut and they were screaming," continued Dixon-Hawkins.



Senior Alie Brody gets taped up before her soccer game by head athletic trainer, Jamal Dixon-Hawkins.

Photo by Marche Payne

tibial stress syndrome (shin splints) [is very common, too]," said Dixon-Hawkins. Sophomore Craig Gaylord said, "I got kneed in my thigh, it's really sore." Junior Becca Vonada had a more serious injury; "I sprained my ankle playing soccer," she said. The treatment she receives in the trainer's room after school includes "stretching, exercising it, getting iced, and getting wrapped."

The treatment athletes receive is "Anything from band aids to rehab after surgery. Some athletes come in every day for the whole season. They do stretching, icing,

Injured student athletes agree that seeing the trainers after school and the therapy they provide improves their performance in practice. Dixon-Hawkins said, "We have been trained in the art of prevention, assessment, evaluation, and rehabilitation of all athletic injuries."

Dixon-Hawkins has a Bachelor's Degree in sports medicine and physical education. All athletic trainers must take a national test to become certified as well as have to be licensed in the state of Virginia to practice. "[After seeing the trainer] my ankle doesn't hurt as much. My playing is better because I don't focus on the pain as much," said Vonada. Gaylord thinks he benefits from the treatment as well. "It makes it feel a lot better. I ice my thigh and stretch and the trainer gives me advice to make the pain go away," he said.

In The Numbers

4

Number of goals scored by junior Jesse Torbert in the boys lacrosse team's 14-10 loss against Hayfield.

2

Number of wins that our varsity baseball team has had out of fourteen games played this season.

3

Number of red cards handed to the varsity boys' soccer team in a 3-1 loss to rival Mt. Vernon.

11:22:33

Time that sophomore Elizabeth Heath ran in the two mile run at Scuderi Team Challenge, setting the track team record.



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Day in the Life of... a True Character

Sara Mathewson

Style Co-Editor

Pat Triotta is a man who went from the beaches of Normandy, to the beach of Stone Harbor, New Jersey. He is 86 years old, and owns his own small little restaurant that is cherished by many people in the area.

His restaurant is called Pat's Lunch, but because of how the letters on his sign are written, many local citizens confuse his name to be "Pat Slunch". He has owned this little building for roughly 32 years. He owned a different restaurant in Wildwood, New Jersey, but had to close it because he couldn't keep up with the nighttime rowdiness of Wildwood. He bought his current place, and has been the only worker over the years. He has never hired anybody to help him, and the only time he takes off from work is to visit his family in Florida at the beginning of February and the end of March. Pat works seven days a week, waking up at three in the morning to start cooking his well-known soups. Eleventh grade English teacher Mary Mathewson recently visited his restaurant over spring break and said, "Pat has a work ethic that doesn't exist anymore. He cares about the quality of his product and his character than anything else." Pat will make you taste his soup before allowing you to buy it; he wants you to be sure of what kind you want.

His menu consists of seven different soups, although he

does not serve all of them year round. They include soups such as She Crab, Lobster Bisque, Maryland Red Crab, and Lobster, Crab, and Shrimp Bisque. Also on his menu are his famous cheese steaks, his fresh crab meat on a bun, and lobster rolls. A lobster roll is basically fresh lobster meat on a hotdog bun. Given his location, minutes from the New Jersey shore, this food selection is perfect. Mathewson's favorite food is the cheese steak and the lobster bisque.

When you go into Pat's Lunch, you can't be in a hurry. He is 86 years old, and not as fast as he used to be. He takes time to make the food that keeps him extra busy in the summer, having to serve up to twenty-five people at one time. Mathewson said, "He takes the time to do things right, to make the food but also to get to know his customers." When you go in, he will entertain you with his stories, anything from the Normandy battle (Pat was in the first wave of the battle carrying multiple hand grenades)

to how he found his wife, to whom he is still married to. "Every time I go in he has some new story from the past and the present for me. I really enjoy going in," stated Mathewson. He will always have a story for you, whether it is new or old.

Anyone who comes into Pat's restaurant, and who actually cares about good service and good people, comes back whenever they get the chance. Pat enjoys and loves what he does; his family and his profession are what he values most in life. There aren't many people who are like Pat, people who work hard everyday and push their limits beyond what many others would do in this generation. His wife has never worked because Pat has been able to provide for her. According to Mathewson, "It is not the food that makes me go back every time; I want to catch up with him and be reminded that there are true characters left in the world, people who live their lives by a code and a standard no matter how the values around them are changing."



Pat's menu offers a variety of different foods; cheese steaks and lobster rolls are in high demand.

Photo courtesy of Sara Mathewson

Life In The Rap Game

Jon Yoo

Assistant Sports Editor

Hip-hop culture has evolved significantly throughout its history. However, unlike many musical forms, rap has always been able to leave an effect on our culture as a whole. Though some of these effects have not always been positive, many of them have had a deep effect on America's growing youth, and have been a part of transforming our culture to the way it is today.

Since becoming a major music form in the 80's through pioneers like Run DMC and Slick Rick to the up-and-coming artists of today's rap, represented by artists such as Kanye West and 50 Cent, this evolution has been clearly visible. Compared to the past artists, today's rappers and MCs are different not only in their style, but also in their attitude. No one in the early 90's cared about the 24's, ice grills, or guns that surround today's artists. However, no matter the time period, rap has helped establish styles and trends in our youth across the country. Junior Zelexis Morse said, "I just love hip-hop. It makes up everything in our culture today, from our clothes to the way we speak. There is just nothing like it."

Leading into the new millennium, rap has quickly become the most popular musical form. It has grown from being in the shadows of rock and roll in the 80's, to exploding onto the scene in the 90's, and becoming the main force in music today. Its effect is not only seen in America, but in the entire global community. If you ask a kid from anywhere outside the United States who sang "In Da Club",

they would probably reply 50 Cent. If you asked the same kid who the president of the United States, they might just draw a blank. Whether it is something as simple as downloading some songs into your iPod or listening to them on you way to school, rap's influence has surpassed just being a form of music; rather, it has become a way into our culture. The key to its success is that it does not appeal to one group or race; over 50% of rap enthusiasts are white middle class males. Rap is so diverse that anyone can flow to the lyrics and grind to the beats.

Some artists throughout hip-hop history are far more than just musicians. They have been an inspiration to many, and have left a deep impact on our society. Rappers such as Tupac and Jay-Z have done more than just producing, and being MC's, and entertainers, they have touched every part of our culture not through their beats and lyrics, but through the meaning and heart that they put into their music. They talk about the same struggles and hardships that much of the world has or is going through, such as poverty. Even after a decade since his death, Tupac's music is played more than ever, and he has become one of the main icons in contemporary American culture.

Though much of today's rap is about the lavish life and style that is represented by leading entrepreneurs such as P Diddy and Russell Simmons, it is truly amazing to see how rap has grown into being such a way in people's lives throughout the world. Whatever form or era of hip-hop, it will always have a meaning and influence to its listeners.



Brett Smith

Copy Editor

Last Thursday, Hollywood legend George Lucas stunned the media when he announced the Hollywood Blockbuster, which he and fellow filmmaker Steven Spielberg are credited with making, is dead.

The news came as somewhat hypocritical, as less than a year ago, Lucas' *Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith* grossed nearly triple its original budget of over \$115 million, and became the top grossing film of 2005. Lucas pointed out, however, that although his film won the box office wars, *Sith* was hardly a contender at the Oscars, as a growing number of independent films in the industry received major awards.

According to the *New York Times*, Lucas said, "I think it's great that the major Oscar nominations have gone to independent films." Regarding the rise of independent film, Lucas told the same reporter, "Is that good for the business? No—it's bad for the business. But moviemaking isn't about business. It's about art...[I]n the future, almost everything that gets shown in theatres will be indie movies. I predict that by 2025, the average movie will cost only \$15 million."

The movies receiving awards and recognition have been the independent films made without enormous Hollywood budgets. We see a growth in the alternative to mainstream Hollywood films in the growth of independent film. Independent films that have been released in

I'm So Indie It Hurts

the past year such as *Thumbsucker* and *Me and You and Everyone We Know* swept the awards at international film festivals including Cannes, Sundance, and Berlin, but despite receiving critical acclaim, they were shown in relatively no theaters in the U.S. A possible explanation for this lies in the fact that movie theaters receive pressure from the larger distribution companies such as MGM or Sony to market movies like *King Kong*, because the makers of *King Kong* started off \$207 million in the hole. Peter Jackson's 2005 remake of *King Kong* cost over \$207 million to create. Mike Mills' *Thumbsucker*, on the other hand, cost a mere four million dollars to make, but was only shown in select U.S. theaters for all of two months. The film was not even offered an international release, despite the fact that it won both the Sundance Film Festival and the Independent Spirit Awards, to name a few.

The notion that held true in the 20th century has now proved to hold false—a movie does not get better simply by throwing money at it. American cinema is facing an era in filmmaking where art speaks volumes above commercialism; movies made independently are quickly evolving from being just the "alternative" to being the actual preference. Even Hollywood filmmakers have taken steps to make their films seem more "indie," Steven Spielberg's low-scale release of *Munich* has been perceived by most as an adaptation to this trend.

As the big budget film genre dies, the independently made movies will rein supreme—this would truly be art's victory over commercialism. Spurred by the current digital film revolution, which allows anyone with a digital camcorder to shoot and edit a near-professional level film, we can expect a blossoming of films in the not-too-distant future. No longer will movies be just something for mindless entertainment—perhaps now they will be something to learn from, something to add to our experience and our culture. Hopefully movies will be something in which to invest our time, rather than waste it.

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To Buy or Not to Buy: The High Price of Purchasing Fakes

Sara Mathewson
Style Co-Editor

Many go to New York City as tourists, but what are places like New York most known for? The bags, perfumes, and jewelry you can buy off of the street. One could argue that the illegal shopping in New York City is more appealing than such famous sites as the Statue of Liberty.

Canal Street is in Chinatown, and if you know just how to haggle, you can get either knock-off or stolen goods for much cheaper than the original name-brand would cost. Let's take Coach purses for example; a traditional shoulder purse usually costs roughly \$250. However, if you go over to Chinatown and if you know the right ways, you could get the same exact Coach purse for \$30 or \$40. The purse, of course, could be a fake, stolen, or illegally imported, or it could have been produced by underaged workers and brought over by gangs. "I buy fake merchandise from Chinatown in New York. It's a lot cheaper than the original, and you can't tell the difference between them," stated senior Karin Neal. Her favorite accessories include Louis Vuitton wallets and Chanel earrings. Senior Lindsay Goldstein said,



Not only is purchasing counterfeit bags illegal, it can support organized crime and child labor.

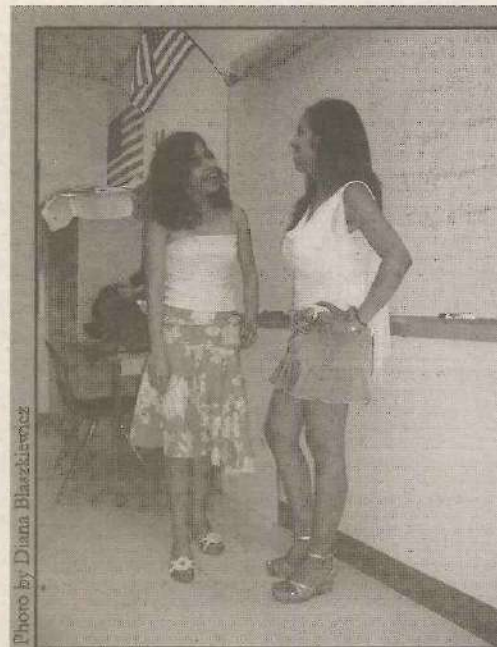
"If it looks real then yes, I would buy it. If it looks too much like a copy and not at all like the real thing, then I would just buy the real one."

But are the risks of these sales really worth it? In places like these, especially New York City, police do random "tear-throughs," in which they go through every shop and raid their merchandise. Neal said, "When I buy [merchandise] it is really scary because they take you down stairs and into cellars; it feels like I could get kidnapped at any time."

Selling goods with different names, just with the same design, however, is not illegal. In fact, it is very popular.

For example, you have the original Heinz ketchup, and then you have the exact same ketchup, just with a Safeway brand, for a dollar less.

Why is fake merchandise so appealing? Why should the name-brand of something matter when deciding on something to buy? Possibly it is the thought of having something expensive in your possession. Either way, it does not seem as though these purchases will end anytime soon, whatever the consequences may be.



Thomas Luhring
Wire Reporter

Too Sexy For School?

Short skirts and tube tops are perfect for summer, but not appropriate for school.

Spring is in the air and every time I look around me I see more and more provocative clothing. Teenage girls are walking around with revealing shirts and short skirts as the warm temperatures rise.

With less clothing, there is a question raised about the morality of our society. A walk in the park with our children may involve blindfolding them to protect them from the cleavage and exposed thighs. This feeling of ill-will towards scantily-clad women is mainly expressed by the older generation. The dress code at this school involves an attack on short shorts and string-strapped halter tops. English teacher and general backbone-of-the-school Joan Reynolds believes the biggest problem is exposed stomachs. "Bare bellies are out of fashion," Reynolds said. Her opinion seems to be that it is better to cover up.

The other side of the opinion spectrum comes from the youthful teenagers who wear the provocative clothing. The girls who are showing more skin do it for practical reasons, not because their morals are supposedly lower. "It is hotter outside in spring," said senior Lauren Shannon. "Less clothing means less heat and more comfort"

Could it be the younger generation is simply being more practical than the generation which kept as much clothing on a girl as possible? The young ladies of this generation believe so.

Teenage guys are the epitome of hormones, and probably the people who enjoy scantily-clad girls the most. Their enjoyment of the flesh could be considered part of the moral decay of which the adults speak. "I give it two thumbs up," said senior Mike Larrick, when asked what he thought of girls' provocative clothing. There is a sense of sexual tension brought up in the spring time. The main focus of adults speaking out against the skimpy clothing is the sexual promiscuity which many hormone-driven males enjoy. But even the guys can understand the practicality of wearing less clothing in spring. Larrick mentioned, "It is not like we don't do it too." Men wear shorts and t-shirts in hotter weather because of the higher level of comfort. Why should women not do the same?

Higher temperatures bring fewer clothes, which in turn ushers in higher levels of hormones. These uncontrollable feelings should be restrained so this society does not deteriorate. The lesser amount of clothing is okay, though.

Students Dressing Out of the Box

Nyisha Vann
Wire Reporter

When students look around this school, they have not doubt that we have all sorts of styles here. From prep to punk, urban to hip-hop and vintage, there are so many unique styles people can display.

Many people, however, do not even know that unique styles are meant for a reason. Trendsetters hold memories, or it is just their way of speaking out. Others have a great style and that just loves to stand out of a crowd.

Punky dressers show pride for their skater lifestyle by wearing skate shoes and chains. They

are stereotyped as troublemakers and drug abusers, but critics have it all wrong. Students over-express themselves by waking up and putting on vivid clothes. Some people just do not accept it. However, variety is the spice of life, and some admire this. "People have different styles that can't be duplicated or imitated," said senior Chantel Pough.

Many students come to school to see what the unique students wear. "If I could describe my style, I would say, mix it up...I like to stay at the top of different styles. I would say my style is very unique," said sophomore Kyle Smith. Students have an open and do not care what people think of them.

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Eight Great Eateries Near School

Jocelyn Frinfrock

Focus Editor

Within eight minutes of our school there are a multitude of places to eat. Whether you are a lover of Chinese, Mexican, or American food, you can find the perfect restaurant to suit you close to school.

Instead of just opening your eyes to the large fast food companies, here are eight restaurants, within eight minutes of the school that are delicious and offer a discreet price.

Primos: Located in Belle View Shopping Center, at the bottom of Belle View Boulevard, is a small privately owned Greek restaurant. They have a variety of Greek food such as gyros, salads, and lamb. They are well-known for their delicious pizzas that can come with every topping imaginable. With a welcoming atmosphere, reasonable prices, and amazing food, you will not want to pass up the opportunity. They have a dining room, and for those who are in a hurry, take-out.

El Pollo Ranchero: This Peruvian restaurant is right next to Krispy Kreme and across from Pizza Hut on Route 1. They have a huge menu of Peruvian food that is to die for. With a Spanish influenced theme, you can enjoy some tasty Chimichangas while listening to Spanish music and enjoying the aroma of freshly cooked food.

Dishes of India: This restaurant is not a very well-known place but the food is amazing. It is in Belle View Shopping Center and is in front of Subway. You walk down a flight of stairs and enter into a beautifully decorated Asian restaurant. You can either order from the menu or eat from the buffet, which always has fresh food where you can try a variety of different meats and side dishes. It is a quaint and quiet place to have a lovely dinner.

The Italian Deli: This quick, cheap, and delicious take-out deli is located in Belle View Shopping Center. If you are in the mood

for an Italian hoagie, this is the place to go. They have fresh Italian deli meats and cheese on warm Italian rolls. The price is very affordable and the food is very good.

Hunan Manor: Located in the Hollin Hall Shopping Center on Fort Hunt Rd, this is the place to go when you want some good Chinese food. You

will not be disappointed with this quick take-out place. With a welcoming friendly atmosphere and food that comes within ten minutes, you are guaranteed a good meal.

Panera Bread: Located on Route 1 in Beacon Hill, you can enjoy a variety of sandwiches, soups, salads, pastries, and bread. This restaurant is constantly busy with people craving their warm, fresh bread and delicious variety of soups and salads. At a reasonable cost and just up the road from the school, you will leave this place with a smile.

Outback Steakhouse: Located in Beacon Hill, this sit-down restaurant has some great food. With an Australian-inspired menu and grill, you can enjoy delicious steaks, burgers, grilled chicken, and vegetables.

Starbucks: In Beacon Hill and also next to Ruby Tuesday's is Starbucks. Though it is known mostly for their coffee beverages, they also have pastries for breakfast and sandwiches for lunch time. Go to Starbucks and you can enjoy a cool frappuccino and a yummy pastry.



Vengeance is Served

Brett Smith

Copy Editor

Larry and Andy Wachowski, the co-conspiring brothers behind the *Matrix* trilogy, had a hit with last month's *V For Vendetta*, a sci-fi thriller featuring Natalie Portman and Hugo Weaving. In the film, Weaving plays a character known only as V, a vigilante who rises against his tyrannical government—a futuristic Britain that seems to resemble George Orwell's *1984*—using tactics that edge on terrorism. He blows up buildings, murders government officials in their homes, commandeers a television studio, kills a priest—you know, all those good things.

The story is based on Alan Moore's 1980's comic book series of the same name; the original comic gathered much acclaim and controversy upon its initial release, and the

concept in movie form has now managed to do the same. V's tactics of "enlightening the people" almost always end in murder, and although the people he murders are generally framed as "bad guys who deserved it," the framers of the film casually leave out the innocent souls who logically must've perished upon the execution of V's plans. Are we safe to assume that everyone who works in Parliament is a bad guy? What about the security guards? The elevator guy? What about the clumsy maid cleaning up Mr. Belvedere's office—is she a succubus of evil? The devil in the blue dress? The antichrist perhaps? Most likely not—but nonetheless, she would've been blown to pieces, along with the evil government officials.

The audience witnesses the story primarily through the eyes of average citizen Evey Hammond (Portman),

who inevitably becomes intertwined in V's schemes; it is through her perspective that the audience is intended to draw their conclusions to the questions the film raises—to what extent is terrorism justified? For that matter, to what extent is anti-terrorism justified? If we were to deem V's actions as evil, would we therefore have to label the tyrannical government as good? Are we really left to side with a government who kills off the

"imperfect," the homosexuals and the disabled? But we have to choose one. The question that evolves—or devolves, rather, as the film reaches its conclusions—is this: Which is the lesser of two evils?

Especially considering the nation's current state of affairs, namely the war on terrorism, the film affirms a mirror of our own society. Generally, the citizens featured in *Vendetta* are happy,

as long as they're not speaking against their government or homosexual or anything—the same could almost be said for our government (I did say *almost*—I'm not digging my grave just yet, loyal *Wire* readers). Are we therefore left to compare the vigilante V to the Al Qaeda terrorists who wish to dismantle our government, or rather to Michael Moore, who wishes to do the same but in a different way? The film ends, and we are still left to ponder the answer to this question—although Evey finds her answer, the audience never finds theirs. Well, I haven't at least.

I went to see *V For Vendetta* with hopes of mindless entertainment—unfortunately, what I got instead was a series of questions and parallels that actually made me think.



Hugo Weaving (left) and Natalie Portman (right) star in the action thriller, *V For Vendetta*

Handout/KRT

The Perfect Boy Friend

Dan Jachowski
and Kristina Dahmann

Wire Reporters

An all-girl British boarding school—full of high school drama, conversations that break out into song and dance, and British accents—graced our school's stage last week in the musical *The Boyfriend*.

The show was about the interactions between high school students at an all-girl's British boarding school. The boarding school girls are all intent on finding rich, handsome, nice guys to date, and eventually marry. The lead character, Polly Browne, played by senior Erin Coffey, feels left out because her father forbids her from dating, because he fears men will only be after her money. So, Polly makes up a dream boyfriend (complete with self-written love notes) whom she has to procure for a school ball. Senior Randy Wallace plays Tony, who becomes the incarnation of Polly's dream boyfriend. More drama ensues, culminating in proposals, engagements, and lots of dances.

The colorful frocks and animated stage set were no distraction from the energy exuded by the cast of *The Boyfriend*. Between the lively songs and the swift dancing, *The Boyfriend* was a tremendous success. Each scene increasingly enthralled the audience, highlights included:

flamboyant dance moves, perfectly hit high notes and the subtle but amazing student clad band.

The Boyfriend is the first happy, song-and-dance musical put on by the school in four years. The change



Steven Minson as Pierre and Kathleen Wheeler as Dulcie (center) finish their song along with other cast members in *The Boyfriend*.

the play. Despite the difficulty, she enjoyed the experience. "I really enjoyed learning how to dance, because I don't have any training," Coffey said. Rogers, who plays Maisie in the show, felt that the dancing varied in difficulty. Rogers felt that it was mostly a change of pace, and the different skill levels of the actors made the experience more or less difficult for each cast member.

The Boyfriend was a much more fun and upbeat musical than our school normally has, which provided a nice change for the audience, as well as some variety for the performers. Constant interruption by applause and a standing ovation clearly showed the success of the musical. Hopefully next year's musical will be just as exciting and glorious!

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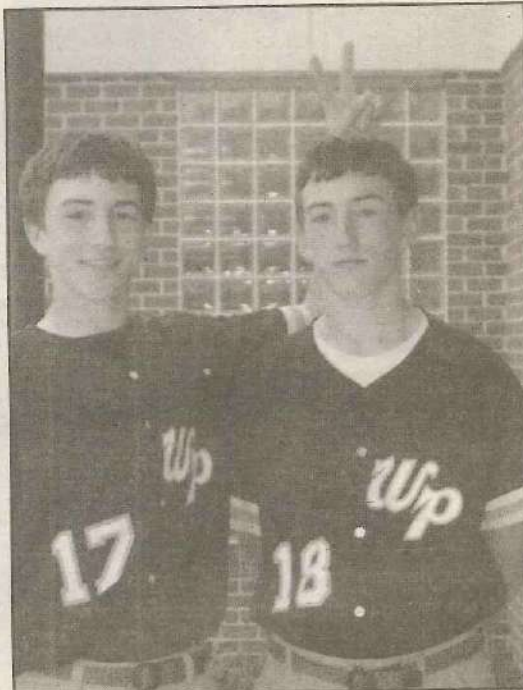
Unheard Voices...Terrific Twins!

Ben and Thom Hammond

Special to The Wire

The story begins fifteen years ago on October 23, 1990, when the new and exciting lives of Ben and Thom Hammond first began. We were twins, born within the same minute - yet not identical - with Thom being the older sibling. As twins, one might imagine that we had almost two of everything and did everything together, although most of those early days we only remember through photographs. To be honest, we both have trouble sometimes telling who is who in those old photos from back in the day. We were very well-behaved as kids, although we have been informed by our parents that we could throw a good fit, and were very picky as well. We have changed a great deal since those early days, as both our parents and friends would agree.

Growing up, we did almost everything together. We had all of the same teachers and classes, and played on the same baseball team from the very first tee-ball season. There was never one without the other. We were very shy and conservative back then, just as we are now. At school, as most people will say today, we were the quietest and most reserved kids in the class. Kids were surprised whenever we would smile, or for that matter, laugh. Even our teachers tried to get us to loosen up a bit, but we were hard to break. However, at home we were completely different, as many people have said. We had the same clothes for the most part, although Ben tends to go for blue and Thom for red. We are very close to one another and because of that, have never had a full-out fight, which many people we know today would be interested in seeing. However, if that happened, it would be



Both Hammond twins play JV baseball for our school, good luck trying to tell them apart on the field.

way too easy to tell us apart, and that would just take the fun out of it. And that brings us to the big question: how does one tell the Hammonds apart?

Well, there are many theories to this question, and over fifteen years, we have heard most of them. Some of the most common are, "Ben is taller and bigger," and "Thom's face is rounder." People think that Thom looks more relaxed whereas Ben is more serious, although that one differs from person to person. People try to point out freckles and other features that one of us has over the other, but we think that it is mainly a personal preference as to how to tell us apart. One of the new ones that we have just heard this year is, "Thom has a little twinkle in his eye, and Ben has the rugged good looks." We are not quite sure about this, but hey, whatever works. Most of the time, people just guess and hope they get it right, which is fine by us. We always get a laugh out of the different ways people try to tell us apart, but the main thing is to just give it time.

As high school freshman, we still do not smile a lot or talk very much. We have never switched classes as a

trick on our teachers, although we have been tempted many times. We do many things together, although we now are in separate classes. We have developed different personalities from one another, but we are still twins at heart. We have met a lot of new people and developed new passions and interests. We have a lot of fun being twins, and we agree that the best thing about it is that we are the same age, and therefore are very close to one another. We enjoy pushing each other, are always there for each other, and we look forward to an enjoyable four years at this school.

Are You Going To Prom?



Photo By Diana Blasiewicz

Patrick Ross,
12th grade
"It's really expensive, so I'm not sure."



Photo By Diana Blasiewicz

Christian Markson,
11th grade
"Yes, because I want to spend time with my beautiful girlfriend"



Photo By Diana Blasiewicz

Fiza Rashid,
11th grade
"Why waste \$55 this year, then spend even more next year?"



Junior/Senior Prom 2006 will be held at the Hazelton Conference Center in Springfield on May 13. Tickets will be \$55 per person.

Dance Dressing Demystified

Kristina Dahmann

Wire Reporter

Prom is a time to look your best, not only for your date, but also for your fellow classmates. There are many different types of ensembles that fit all body types. There is no way to truly know what is right for you until you try it on. However, a few helpful hints to point you in the right direction never hurt.



Dresses, shoes, purses, and jewelry, like shown above, are necessities for the junior/senior prom.

Photo by Kristina Dahmann

my money's worth. Most people forget that," remarked junior Mimi Conway.

Following the find and purchase of the perfect dress, the next common challenge are the shoes. The general consensus is that shoes should - in some way - match the dress; however, matching is not always necessary. Every dress has a certain aura--some are soft and flowing, others are thick and layered. Your shoes should match the feeling of your dress, and remember, whatever you feel comfortable in is always a sure bet. If you pick shoes that can match with any dress, you can use them after the night! "I bought shoes for prom and have used them several times since; it has saved me money, not to mention they are already broken in," said senior Katie Ellis when asked about the subject.

There are many places that are off the beaten path that are fantastic to scout out for that perfect dress. However, The Remix provides for a nice array of styles as well as sizes. Owner Stacey DiTata tends to gather a larger amount of dresses prior to prom season to ensure those who are in need are provided with a large selection. Lara Abuzayyad, the sales associate remarked about the highlights of the season, saying, "[DiTata] has focused around three eras: the 50s gowns, the 60s cocktail and the 70s polydresses."

All in all, you want to be comfortable with yourself. When picking between the five inch shoes and the adorable flats, pick the one you think you might survive with through the evening, and choose the dress that you know you can boogie in all night without adjusting.

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A Passion Named Mertins

Brett Smith

Copy Editor

He can be summed up in one powerful word: magnanimous. A shadow has been cast over the students and faculty of West Potomac high school—and its source is the jolly giant known as Taylor Mertins.

"Taylor Mertins has a maturity that is far beyond his years," professed senior Parker Fishel, longtime friend of Mertins. "He is a person that it is an absolute pleasure to be able to call friend because he is an amazing and talented person who never fails to put a smile on my face."

A generous, caring personality, Mertins forges his reputation through good deeds, acts of kindness, and of course, his superb leadership skills. In the fall of 2005, Mertins ascended to the rank of Eagle Scout, the highest status one can hold in the Boy Scouts. He also serves as a Cotillion instructor, focusing on ballroom and swing dancing—he has mastered both.

In fact, Mertins' dancing abilities, which have been described as "graceful," "delicate," and "perpetually orgasmic," earned him third place at the Mr. West Potomac pageant last year.

This past winter, Mertins was also elected captain of the varsity swim and dive team; his leadership in the pool helped guide the team to its best season in over twenty years.

"From the first day of practice forward, he was constantly helping me out—serving as my voice when my own failed to be heard over the noise of a gaggle of eager swimmers, setting aside his own practice time to help out those who needed extra assistance, helping me to remember 90-plus names, and doing whatever he could to make my first year coaching go smoothly," said assistant swim coach Christine Spaulding. "My first year at WPHS, both as a counselor and a swim coach, has been absolutely amazing, and it's mainly because I've been able to meet so many incredible students like Taylor Mertins."

With an inspiring and eclectic grasp on the creative half of his brain, Mertins finds himself fulfilled when he expresses himself musically. He is a proud member of the school's wind ensemble, has been a key constituent of the marching band for the past four years (he was also section leader, mind you), and he plays drums for the school's acclaimed jazz band. His favorite quote?—"The only proof he needed for the existence of God, was music."

"Taylor is the best natural leader that's ever been my student. And he does a pretty good ding-

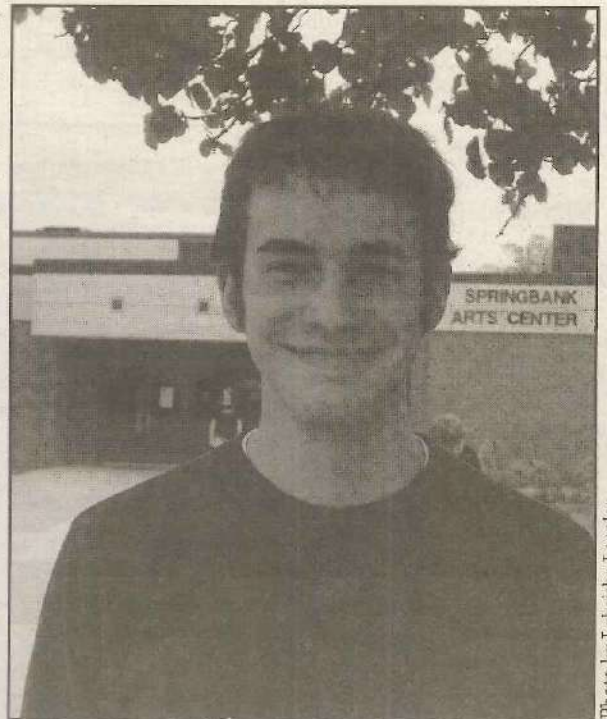


Photo by Lakeisha Langley

Taylor stands outside of the Springbank building where he practices with the Jazz Band and the Marching Band as a percussionist.

ding ka-ching," confessed Mertins' band director and mentor Steve Rice.

Outside of school, he also kicks it as a drummer in multiple student bands (six that we know of), composes his own music in his spare time, and spends his time burning mixed CDs for others. Mertins also professes a love of literature; his favorite authors are satirist Kurt Vonnegut and deep-thinker Ayn Rand.

"It's hard to condense him into a sentence," said senior Molly Turner. "What makes him so special is his compassion towards others. He tries so hard to make people happy, and he does so much for other people. Taylor really is one of the most genuinely good people I've ever known."



Photo by Lakeisha Langley

Mertins is on top of the world with trophies he has won from previous band competitions.

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Asia Takes Over America

Kristina Dahmann

Wire Reporter

Asia truly lives up to her name; she is a continent. Her skills are as diverse as the number of countries in a continent are numerous. Her interests are only paralleled by the diversity of the countries' perspective cultures.

Mernissi's biggest dream is to be a model. She is serious about fashion; she describes herself as a "fashion-crazed person." In addition, she "lives" for the show *Project Runway*. She classifies her favorite designer, Michael Kors, as clean cut, classic, and timeless. Kors designs all types of clothes, but more



Photo by Lakeisha Langley

Mernissi practices posing for a future career in modeling and fashion design.

importantly, they reflect Mernissi's character.

Mernissi has a calm persona, but is not afraid to voice her opinions – of which she has many. As we all know, she is always willing to defend her beliefs, and is never shy of a friendly debate. Mernissi is currently taking four Advanced Placement courses: Literature, Art History, Government, and Statistics. Growing up in a bilingual household, Mernissi can speak French fluently, and is currently in her third year of Spanish. Her avid participation in her seventh period Political Science class has defined her as its marquee participant.

As a fellow student in her Political Science class, senior Randy Wallace had this to say about Mernissi's outstanding contributions to the class: "Asia always had something to say, she always seemed to say it at the right time and it always seemed to make sense."

You might find Mernissi sitting at home on a cold winter's night with a fire burning, and aromas radiating from the kitchen. Mernissi is a cosmopolitan when it comes to cuisine. Her palate is never set; she is always searching to find new tastes. However, she can often found with a snack of roquefort cheese and kalamata olives, curled up with a classic

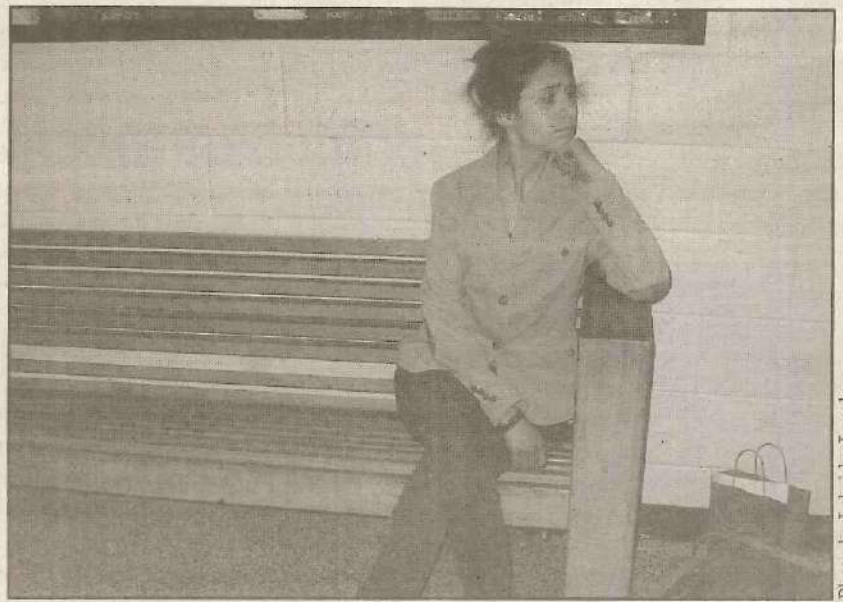


Photo by Lakeisha Langley

Asia takes time out of her day in Springbank for a quick thought on her life.

French mystery novel.

In contrast to her love of food, she has a "mild obsession" with working out. As a gym guru, Mernissi also enjoys spending time relaxing during yoga, venting during a long run along the Potomac, or contemplating extrinsic stories while fishing. She finds herself fishing in many different places, ranging from Mason Neck, to Casablanca, to Alaska.

Very inclined towards traveling, Mernissi has traveled extensively around Western Europe, spending most of her time in Bordeaux, France. Nevertheless, she does not shy away from Northern Africa, more specifically, Morocco. "I

enjoy long camel rides throughout the

Sahara," remarked Mernissi, when asked about what she spent her time doing in Africa.

When asked to a group of people, "Where is Asia?" you will be surprised how many people are able to answer the question. Mernissi is well known and loved by classmates and teachers alike. She is always willing to lend a helping hand or give important advice. Mernissi is truly a gem nested in this school, and has a "take one for the team" attitude that is rare in individuals. You can always find her helping a fellow classmate without a second thought.