



Hungry? Eat up abnormal foods featured in the center spread.

Thursday, December 10, 2009

Opinions, 3

Photo by Courtesy of Clip Art



What part does saving our Earth play in students' lives?

News, 4

Photo by Michaela Accardi



What were parents' opinions on Touch Base conferences?

Sports, 9

Photo Courtesy of Christophe Gubbaud/MCT



What will be the best winter sports games/meets to see?

Movies, 11

Photo Courtesy of MCT Campus



Find out what students thought of the movie *Paranormal Activity*.

Style, 10

Photo by Nia Copeland



How do students feel about being adopted?

People, 12

Photos by Nia Copeland



Learn about two senior girls who happen to have the same name.

Budget cuts will impact students



Photo Courtesy of Joe Burbank/MCT

Like the classroom shown in the picture above, students are concerned, across Fairfax County, that students will not receive adequate attention as class sizes increase.

GWEN FISHEL
COPY EDITOR

On October 19, the Fairfax County School Board released a list of projected and proposed budget cuts that total over 176 million dollars, with plans to cut many programs that will affect future and current students.

According to a Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) press release on October 19, projected plans for ways to make up lost money within the school system include increasing of class sizes by one student, paying by for the Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) end of the year exams as a student responsibility, and cancelling elementary foreign language (FLES). Band and orchestra programs in elementary schools, as well as a loss of need based teachers and staff at all levels, would also be cut. The proposal also comprised of cuts to full day kindergarten in many of the county's elementary schools, increased fees for community users of FCPS buildings, and a fee for all those participating in sports. There are also plans to cut over 1,700 job positions within the county, which falls under staffing of all forms. However, all of these cuts only total \$63.6 million, which means that more will have to be cut in order to cover the deficit.

Many students and teachers are responding to the effects that these proposed budget cuts

will have on them, and the programs with which they are associated. Senior Moira Fagan said, "I feel that the budget cuts the schools in Fairfax County are facing will have a negative impact on participation in AP classes and after-school programs, like band." If these budget cuts are indeed approved, it may mean that students enrolled in AP classes will have to pay for their end of the year AP exam. Fagan said, "I think that having to pay for AP classes will discourage a lot of people from signing up for them, and that the county will lose many smart students to this decision."

Varsity girls' soccer coach and physical education teacher Jean Coder said that she thinks making students pay for sports "[is] just a blatant attempt to make money off of athletes." Coder also said, "Most all of the other budget cuts are designed to save the county money by cutting a program or service...making athletes pay is not cutting a service. How will making athletes pay save the county money? It might offset some expenses such as bus transportation for teams, but it stands to make way more money for the county than to save money."

Also, students in band and orchestra programs will not have as much experience when they reach high school, if they are not given the opportunity earlier. Color guard captain senior Caitlin Dougherty said, "If they

See Budget on page 4

Students decide to take action

EMILY GRIFFIN
NEWS EDITOR

A large group of students were gathered in the senior parking lot in the morning waiting for the clock to tick to 7:20. When 7:20 arrived, the students left the parking lot and headed to the attendance office to pick up a tardy pass to their first block class.

On Wednesday, November 18, approximately 247 students, which were mostly seniors, were late to school resulting in one unexcused tardy, according to attendance records. The seniors said they were protesting against all of the changes that have happened this year (in particular, the new tardy policy). Senior David Burns decided to protest "because of the absurd and ridiculous policies set forth..." "I completely agree with the need to maximize learning time, but how can this happen when barely-tardy students must go to the attendance office only to get to class ten minutes late, not ten seconds?"

This happened again, on Thursday, November 19. Students in grades 9-11 protested the changes by coming in at 7:30, like the seniors had done the day before. Approximately 212 students had an unexcused tardy to their first block, according to attendance records.

Like many of the teachers and administration, Principal Cliff Hardison did not see this protest coming. Hardison commented, "I thought everyone was about learning. Being late to class would inhibit learning. I would have preferred the protest to occur after or before school."

One of the many things that the students were protesting for was to change the tardy policy. Hardison commented that "this is not a new policy. The FCPS [Fairfax County Public School] Attendance Policy has been in place for years. The FCPS Student Responsibilities and Rights document, on the first pages, outlines various Code of Virginia mandates, including student conduct and compulsory attendance until age 18. If you look further, on page 6, Chapter 1, I quote, 'Student responsibilities include regular school attendance, conscientious effort in classroom work, conformance to school rules and regulations...'"

Many of the protestors feel that the point has not been understood by the administration. Burns commented that "the point has not been

See Protest on page 4

Graduation date conflicts with holiday and religious obligations

STEPHEN HOWELL
REPORTER

Recently, there has been concern and controversy at West Potomac over the date of graduation, Sunday, June 20. However, Principal Cliff Hardison has said that the date was the best option the school had.

The Sunday of graduation is also Father's Day. This has upset many teachers, who would normally have family plans for that day. "I am not pleased, but it is what it is," said Student Resource Officer Marvin Goodley. "Father's Day was quite a surprise though," Goodley added. Goodley is a father of two and would usually have plans on that Sunday. Seniors have also been disappointed with the situation. "Graduation is affecting my beach-week plans. It is supposed to be Friday to Friday, but now we had to change our dates, and were going to have to wait almost a week after school ends," said senior Erin Parker. Many other students have voiced their opinion against graduation.

"I don't like it at all. Graduations supposed to be during the week. Why would anyone want to graduate on a Sunday? I have church, too," said senior Mason Kraut. Many at West Potomac will be forced to leave their typical religious obligations. Teachers who are

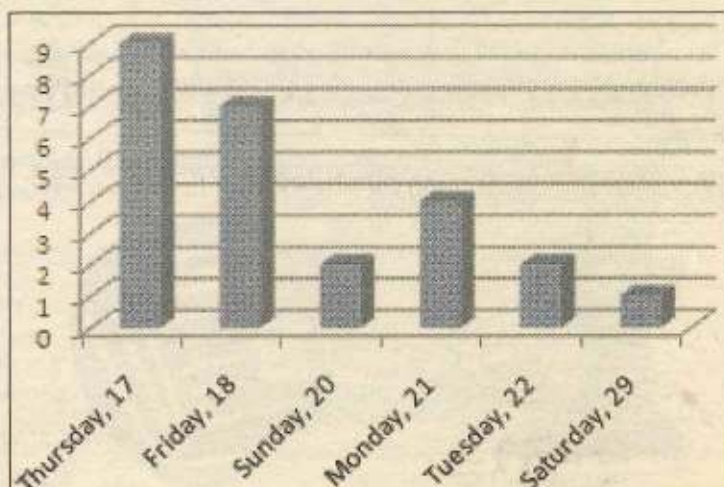
scheduled to serve at graduation will also not be compensated overtime.

Graduation dates are determined by a lottery system across Fairfax County Public Schools, and they are subject to the availability of facilities. Hardison said that if our school were to use George Mason University's Patriot Center, graduation would have to be at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, June 23, a day after school ends. Hardison then scheduled graduation to be at Robinson Secondary School's field house on Monday, June 21. "As I worked with rising senior parents, this decision appeared to be unacceptable," Hardison says.

Graduation was then changed by Hardison to the current date. "I thought there was some merit with this as in a kid's graduation is a great gift to a dad. It would fit with the community's expressed desires of not using Robinson, and West County are having graduation.

Potomac seniors would not have to wait until mid-week after school ended to graduate," Hardison said.

The Patriot center costs \$10,500 to rent, while Robinson's field house costs only \$3,000. This year, West Potomac paid for it since the senior class did not have the money. Of the 24 other FCPS schools, only our school and Westfield



Graph Created by Emily Griffin

The graph above indicates which days schools in Fairfax County are having graduation.

AP ES students help save the world

MICHAELA ACCARDI
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

GWEN FISHEL
COPY EDITOR

Taking AP (Advanced Placement) Environmental Science has been eye-opening this year. The first unit was about water waste and pollution, not only from freshwater sources, but from groundwater sources as well. The current unit is about ecosystems and biodiversity. Throughout these two units, one thing has become increasingly apparent. All sources of earthly destruction point to the actions of the human race.

In class, we first began learning about water, its properties, and the pollution of water itself. Many of the facts and figures presented were staggering. For example, only about 0.024% of the earth's supply of water is available as liquid freshwater and by 2020 premature deaths due to water-borne disease will be approximately 34-76 million people. In addition, according to the UN, between 2 billion and 7 billion people will face water shortages by 2050. It must also be said that there are frequent fights in the Middle East over water sources. Senior Mallorie Calvert said, "Before taking environmental science, I was not aware of all the water I was using every day. Now, I am more cautious about the water I use daily."

Now think about what each student does to contribute to this number. This includes flushing the toilet, taking a shower, washing hands, and drinking. Most would think that all of these ways to use water are not wasteful. In reality, multiply this by the entire population of the earth. Now, that is a lot of water.

Luckily, there are some ways to decrease water use that are virtually unknown by the student body. No, do not stop taking showers. Families can instead purchase low-flush toilets, and even flush toilets only when necessary. This will also

save money when paying the water bill as well.

Most students at our school occasionally clean up trash in a park or along a river and sometimes might go so far as to grab recyclable items out of the trash can and place them in the recycling bin. The overall majority, however, fails to do much of anything to keep our planet healthy. It is very rare that students make compost piles in their backyard, take home a can when they cannot find a recycling bin, or are even aware of the fact that their actions affect the environment. Each day, students at our school wake up and use the restroom. How many of these students think about the fact that when they flush the toilet, they are contributing to one of the largest sources of water waste? Senior Michelle Gilmore said, "Mrs. Sikes has done a great job teaching us new ways to save our environment, now everyday I think about the consequences of my actions."

While it may be impossible for one individual to stop water waste and pollution all together, there are many ways that students at our school can help to further prevent them. According to *Living in the Environment* (the AP Environmental Science textbook), wasting less water, utilizing water-saving toilets, shower heads, and energy efficient washers and dryers, making sure that one's family septic tank is not faulty, fixing one's leaky faucets, using recycled water for irrigating crops, washing cars, etc., and taking short showers are all ways that students can help prevent this crisis.

AP Environmental Science teacher Erin Sikes said, "I think that one of the things that students do not realize is that they have an intrinsic ability to make change and influence others... APES students should act as they talk... They have the ability to make change, and are bright enough to apply what they have learned to life."

So, think twice, because it is not alright.

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RANTS and Raves

A **RANT** for wasting money on new security cameras.

A **RANT** for the new alien-like bells.

A **RAVE** for *The Wire* earning a "First Place/Excellent" rating by the VHSL.

A **RAVE** for the cross country team going to states.

A **RAVE** for the arrival of college basketball.

A **RAVE** for holiday food.

FLEX becomes only a memory

As many students at our school may have noticed, FLEX is no longer what it used to be.

Implemented at the beginning of the 2006-2007 school year, FLEX was meant to be a period for "enrichment purposes." Students were expected to participate in what their teachers had planned for the FLEX period. However, students, after the first month, were able to "flex" out and make up work or get extra help in the classes in which they were experiencing difficulty.

Now, with a new philosophy in tow, the administration has decided to limit FLEX to an extra instructional period. Instead of being able to use FLEX for what it was originally intended for, students are now participating in an extra "regular" class period. Teachers use this period as they see fit, whether it is review, lecture, class work, or testing.

However, we believe that the students who are at risk of falling behind will get even further behind. If one takes the time to think about the issue at hand, it is obvious that by going another class period forward when these students did not even understand what was taught the day before, there is a larger risk of students failing these classes.

The FLEX period was meant to help provide students with extra time, so that students could divide their time in their classes after school. With the late buses only being on Wednesday, there is a greater need now for this period than there was before. FCPS has a long history of sending forth well rounded students into the competitive world. However, how are students supposed to thrive both in academics and extra-curricular activities, if the administration is not allowing them to flex out?

There is a mutual understanding between the students and the administration that aspects of the FLEX policy needed to be changed; however, not to this great of an extent. Why not implement the strict attendance policy for this year's FLEX classes, and in turn, allow students to FLEX out? Many other high schools in the county have workable "FLEX-like" periods, why can we not? While we are not denying that students skipped FLEX last year, we feel that with the current, stricter attendance policy, students will be more hesitant to take advantage of the system. Nevertheless, responsible students are confused and many feel that they are being directly penalized for their irresponsible peers.

If you have an opinion on a school-related issue, please submit your **Letter to the Editor** of 250 words or less to Room 418 Quander or e-mail us at: laura.zitnik@fcps.edu. All submissions become property of *The Wire*.

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Homework: a student struggle



ANNA DREYFUSS
REPORTER

Every teenager knows what it is like to have two hours of math, one and a half hours of science, conjugation worksheets in French and a project due the next day. Yes, homework has been getting a bit ridiculous lately.

It is not necessary to stay up until one a.m. three times a week, doing pointless projects that do not teach the subject at all, but only teach how to draw stick figures and search Wikipedia and Sparknotes. "Teachers give so much homework, because they can't find an interesting way to teach it to us in class. They say that we should just learn it on our own and 'practice' what we took notes on," said sophomore Christal Everett.

What is the point of all this homework anyway? Is it for students to actually practice the material or to give us work to do, so they can put more grades in the grade book? A study from Stanford University says that out of 2,700 high school students, two-thirds of them are "often or always" stressed about homework. Fifty percent complain about headaches, sleeping problems, or exhaustion and twenty-five percent of them use stimulants, like Red Bull or No-Doz. Still, adults always complain how cranky and lazy teenagers are.

History teacher George Coe replied to this statistic saying, "I think students should figure out the right balance between regular and advanced classes and learn how to organize themselves to do all the work." Students should figure out how to balance their classes, but when more than half of the students are stressed or overwhelmed and half have exhaustion or sleeping problems, teachers should get the hint that their homework ethic is not going so well.

The National Education Association

said the age amount of homework a teenager has a night is about two and a half hours. Most students would be rolling their eyes at this statement. If it were true, we would not fall asleep during PowerPoint presentations.

If only the teachers would start talking more to one another about how much homework they are giving in class. "We don't have enough time to teach all the material in class, so we expect kids to read all the material," said Coe. But they need to find a better solution to this problem rather than telling us to read the textbook and answer twenty questions about insignificant things that will not be on the test. A good solution to this for math would be ten math problems a night. It is not necessary to do sixty of the same types of problems. Either they know it or they do not. One can easily find out if they know the material with ten problems. Thirty minutes in every other class will do.

The worst is gym homework. "The only reason they give gym homework is so it seems like an actual class and people take it more seriously," said sophomore Charlotte Cummins. But students do not take out your anger on the gym teachers. Fairfax County added this to the curriculum about six years ago. "It's good to have gym homework, so the students who cannot physically do all the activities, like run the mile, can make up the points in the homework, so they can still pass," said gym teacher, Tyrone Strother. Gym homework is still useless to the students who can run the mile however. As much fun as googling badminton courts and rules is, it is a waste of time, better spent reading or even watching Animal Planet for half an hour.

All in all, when students start their homework at about 4:00 p.m. and finish up at 10:00 p.m., it has gone way too far and has become a huge controversy everywhere.

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LARGE AND IN CHARGE

LUCAS ALEXANDER
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



During these modern times, people either believe that racism is dwindling away or at its peak and many factors have contributed to this. The United States of America has grown from slavery to now having an African American president. In spite of this, the ignorance of some people is keeping racism alive. Clearly, strong racism against African Americans, Muslims, and other ethnic groups still exists, but the fact that people point out certain racial issues is one factor keeping racism alive. If racism really was not an issue today, no one would care about or even notice race, and the fact that people are happy that we have a African American President solely because he is African American is just as racist as those who are angry that we have one. If it really was not an issue, those people who are proud of it would not make the fact that President Obama is African American a point of emphasis.

Since the time of slavery, people have made it seem like the only sort of racism that exists in this country is whites against anyone else, and this is just not true. All forms of racism exist and an example of this is historically black colleges like Grambling State University, who cater to a heavy majority of African American Students, with demographics like 88% Black and 1% White, with 11% unreported, according to collegeboard.com. If any school chose to cater to only whites, this would be deemed as racist, and schools like Grambling should adjust their demographics to accommodate a more modern philosophy of equality. Slavery was almost 150 years ago, and while it was a horrible and racist part of American history, people need to realize that whites today did not institute it, and a large portion of the population of America today have ancestors that were not even living in America during

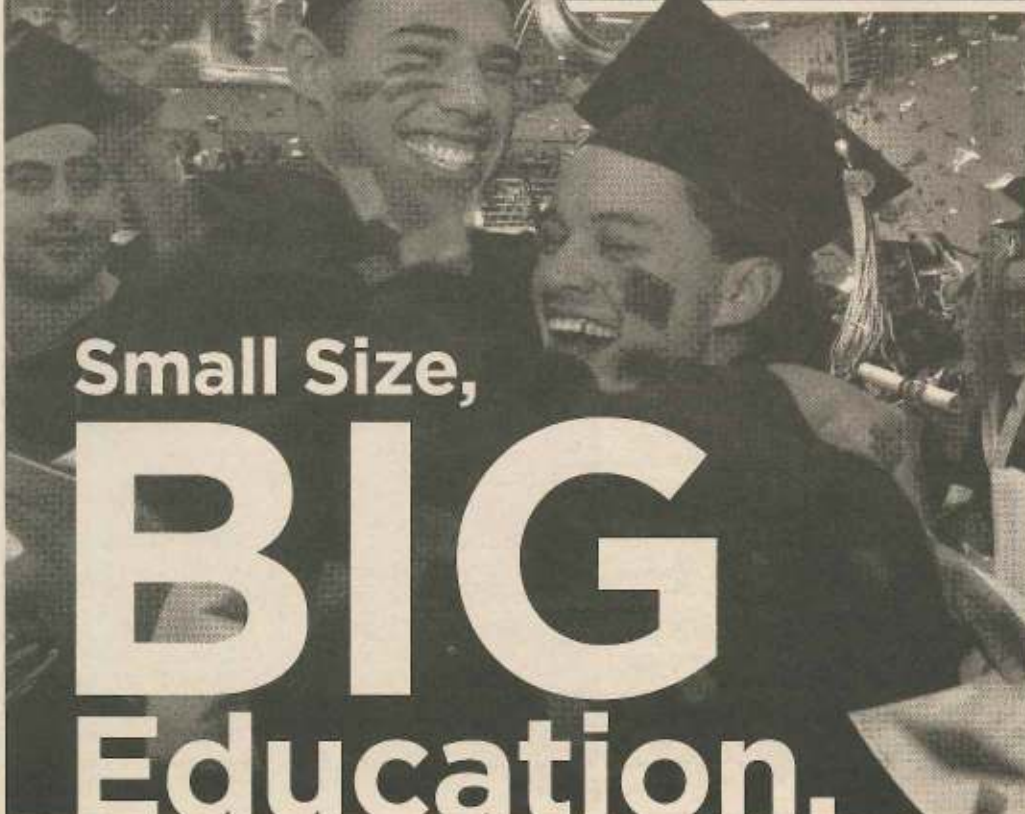
that time period. If people really want racism to end, they need to realize that it exists in all forms, against all people, and use that to lead to ways to solve it.

During Spirit Week at our school, one of the designated days was Decades Day. Normally for this day, students choose ridiculous outfits from random decades like the 70's or 80's and just have a retro look. However this year a couple of students took it too far. Certain students decided to wear Black Panther outfits to school, as if to be dressed up as part of the 1960's when the Black Panther Party was formed. This, to me, was racist and summarized what is wrong with racism in this country.

Obviously, I am sure the students did not intend to promote black supremacy or things of that nature, but the fact is that is what their outfits represented. According to Encyclopedia Britannica, the Black Panther Party was a 1960's-70's Black Power movement "that called for the arming of all blacks, the exemption of blacks from the draft and from all sanctions of so-called white America, the release of all blacks from jail, and the payment of compensation to blacks for centuries of exploitation by white Americans." Now, like all organizations, there were extremists and moderates in the group, and not all of the members were violent or racist, but the connotation of those outfits is the racism of the movement. The fact that the school administration did nothing about it, as it is a violation of the SR&R to dress in a gang related way, and these students were even featured in the morning news, shows the problems with how racism is dealt with.

Had these been white kids wearing white supremacist outfits, they would have been in trouble and asked to remove the outfits. In this country and in this school, it has become acceptable to join groups such as the Black Cultural Alliance, but if there was a White Cultural Alliance, well, the idea could not even exist because it would be immediately stopped because of the racism it showed. I am not advocating for any negative consequence for these students; however, I am saying that it is the responsibility of our school, and even our country, to prevent things like this from happening.

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Parents and teachers meet at Touch Base

MICHAELA ACCARDI
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Touch Base conferences may have been run as they have been in the past, but behind the scenes, there was a bigger story to tell.

"From a parental standpoint, I am happy with the new grading scale," said parent Diane Gleason. "It [the grading scale] levels the playing field for seniors involved in the college application process. I think there should be a common grading scale nationwide to do so even more." Like Gleason, parents were pleased to see their child's grades rise due to the recently changed grading scale and additional grade boosts for advanced level courses.

Although parents were generally happy with the rise in grades, many did not know what the actual grades were. Grades were supposed to be sent to the homes of students last Friday, November 6, after teachers were given two work days to complete their grades. Additionally, teachers were permitted to work from home for the first time on these days. Due to widespread illness though, the due dates for grades were pushed back, and grades were sent Tuesday, November 10 – the day before Touch Base conferences. "Why is there not a system to go online and see grades?" said Gleason. When reminded of Blackboard, Gleason confirmed that she had never seen her daughter's grades posted on Blackboard after three years of high school. "If they can't [post grades online], why is there a touch base conference in the first place? I know there's a lot more sickness this year, but there's a way to turn it [assignments] in, in this age of technology," said Gleason.

Parent Gayle Gilmore confirmed Gleason's statements on the lack of knowledge parents and students had regarding grades. "Meredith [her daughter] doesn't know her grades," said Gilmore. "Since I don't know her grades, I'm just flying blind here." Without knowing their child's grades, parents could not knowingly go to speak with teachers in whose classes their student was struggling. Lines were generally 10 to 12 people long and at best took 10 minutes to complete. At 8:26 am, Principal Cliff Hardison capped parents' time with teachers to "three to five minutes" to continue easy progression through the lines.

The knowledge that parents had of their student's grades largely depended on the teacher. While some teachers were reliable in handing out grade sheets consistently and emailing them to parents, others only returned one grade sheet to students a quarter. Sophomore Hind Tatby said, "I know all of my grades. All of my teachers email



Photo by Michaela Accardi

Many parents showed up to Touch Base to find out their students grades.

my parents." Lack of effective communication between administration and parents also was a feature of the two hour period. Parents were unsure of when the conferences actually began - student planners claimed conferences began at 7:20 a.m., while the school website said that they began at 7:30 a.m. "The parents are wild! No one knew what time touch base started, I saw one woman yelling and screaming because another woman got into the gym before 7:20," said parent Freddie Markson. "I was afraid to walk into the gym because someone would probably get mad and think that I got in here because I know people," said Markson.

While parents were unhappy with the lack of information given to them, the main purpose of conferences remains to provide effective communication between parents and staff regarding students. However, some reoccurring problems arose that have difficult and unknown solutions. "60 percent of the parents here are already involved in the school," said Gleason. An anonymous teacher agreed and said, "Most of the parents that are here have kids in AP classes. The parents of the kids that don't come to my class aren't here."

Still, Principal Cliff Hardison felt that the exchange of information between parents and teachers proved to be invaluable. He said, "Let me express that the professionalism exhibited and the effort exerted yesterday during our Touch Base demonstrated what makes West Potomac Faculty and Staff tremendous! Parents expressed to me many times how they so enjoyed dialoging with their children's teacher."

Budget cut proposals impact public schools

Continued from page 1

made elementary school cuts, our bands would definitely start to decrease in size and ability. By the time the students in my band reached freshmen year, they had already been playing instruments for at least four years, but if they make the cuts, future freshman would only have two years of playing experience going into high school."

Increased class sizes are another thing that can take away from classroom resources and a student's learning ability. Spanish teacher Jamie Heath said that while she loves teaching freshmen, class sizes can be overwhelming. "...I already have 31 freshmen in all Spanish One classes. So you tell me?" Heath said.

According to the Associated Press, this could be the largest budget cut in the past 20 years. The cuts include \$18 million less funding than last year, which coincides with growing numbers- more than 5,000- within the school system. This seems to be an issue in many of the neighboring counties as well.

Washington Post said the money from the federal stimulus program allowed the budget cuts to settle as this number, instead of cutting deeper. Nevertheless, many of the school board members fear the potential harm in these cuts. Chairman Kathy L. Smith said, "This year, programs are likely to be eliminated entirely. There is no trimming around the edges anymore."

She also said that FCPS must still maintain its overall excellence. "We are not a bare bones school system." Board member Jane K. Strauss said that cuts are going to affect everyone, "What we are trying to get people to understand is you are all at risk this time."

Sophomore Alex Wong said, "Also, with the economy how it is now, cutting as many jobs as they're talking about is one of the worst things you could do."

As of now, these specific cuts are just proposals. Also according to the *Washington Post*, Superintendent Jack Dale will present the formal and more in-depth budget to the school board in the month of January. There were several community forum discussions held across the county to get feedback from various groups on the budget reform, on October 24, October 29, and November 14. Director of Budget Services, Kristen Michaels said that it is "just an overwhelming figure."

Students and administration discuss ongoing issues

Continued from page 1

made clear. Too much of the hierarchy in the school has no idea what actions are for which cause."

Hardison said, "How do you protest the request to be on time?"

"I have listened to many [protestors]. The protest seemed to embody a few concerns, including tardy, flex, safety measures, traffic, signage, cameras, being deprived of an opportunity to take higher level courses, confusion from some students as to why other students cannot or choose to not get to class on time, and to my delight, WP's use of resources. Faculty and West Potomac leadership, including student leaders, will discuss and address student concerns on an ongoing basis. Communication is important," said Hardison, in response to students' concerns.

"Consequences are natural. Like in physics or in karma, for every action there is an equal reaction, students who enter class tardy or who miss class, miss instruction. Since some students need encouragement, administrative detentions will be assigned for students who are tardy to first or second periods three or more times in a nine weeks.

Teachers, depending on their respective departments, will implement consequences for tardy students. These consequences are implemented to encourage students to attend class on time. More, if a student chooses to be consistently late, then the student is insubordinate and not complying with school rules," said Hardison, regarding consequences awarded to students if they are consistently late.

Commenting on the protest's success, Burns said, "The only success of the protest is that it got the attention of the administrators. Other than that we haven't gotten too far." However, Markson thought the protest was unsuccessful and "We need to do things everyday and be consistent about it in order for it to be successful."

Hardison said, "This probably depends on one's perspective. Communication is always good. I would have preferred that students work through student leadership and that student leadership communicate the students' confusions or ideas about the attendance policy."

A good aspect of this protest has been that teachers have expressed that they have engaged students in conversation and dialogue and even been able to connect the protest to class, such as government and history."

Economy cripples local private schools

CAMILLE DiFOLCO
REPORTER

Ever notice how many people there are at school, crammed together in the cafeteria, jam-packed as they navigate tiny hallways, and inundating seemingly spacious classrooms?

According to a recent article in *The Fairfax Times*, overcrowding in public schools within Fairfax County can be contributed to the poor economy. Private schools, which have seen declines in admission rates as high as 13% this year, are being hit hard. Consequently, public schools were flooded, especially at the start of the 2009-2010 school year, with untold enrollment increases. Most of these transfer students were rising freshmen, as parents prefer to make the switch during the gap between junior high and high school.

Senior Moira Fagan, who transferred from private school

said, "It was strange going from a school where the class was small and I knew everyone in the high school to a school where the class has 500 people."

Superintendent Jack Dale recognized this drift of students from private to public schools as a main component of the rising enrollment in Fairfax County Public Schools in his budget presentation to the Board of Supervisors. With more people choosing the free public school alternative to pricey private schools, the county must adjust its budget to suit more students, resulting in budget cuts. Often these cuts target music and arts programs. Those students who do remain at private schools are increasingly requesting financial aid.

Interestingly enough, the same economic troubles that are causing the switch from private to public schools are also operating the other way around, though on a much smaller scale. For those who can afford it, the smaller class sizes and intimacy of private schools are much more appealing than crowded public schools. Principal Eileen Hanley of St. Paul VI Catholic High School of Fairfax told *The Fairfax Times* that parents were attracted to the private school environment and that the Fairfax County budget cuts have "been an ally" in recruiting new students. Private schools also tend to cling to the same music and arts programs that are being cut in public schools.

Junior Emily Smith, who transferred from St. Mary's Catholic School in fourth grade, explained the different focuses within public and private schools: "In private schools, the emphasis is on English, grammar, and writing, while public schools focus on math and science."

Junior Katie Wyskoczka added, "In public schools... the work load is [smaller] but more challenging and time-consuming... Also, not having a uniform was a big adjustment... it was crazy to believe that public school was so lenient about the dress codes since at [St. Mary's] we couldn't even wear nail polish."

These distinctions can also have an effect on which schools kids and parents choose. But with the economic turmoil of the time, who can afford the luxury to choose? Take heart, though. According to both Smith and Wyskoczka, "Public school allows you a lot more freedom, so perhaps the economy is doing us a favor."



Photo Courtesy of timwoda.com

Private schools, like Bishop Ireton (above), have been losing students to public schools because of the poor economy.

Annie McCann, a student and artist, fondly remembered

KATIE WOODWARD
REPORTER

November 2nd marked the one-year anniversary of the death of Annie McCann, the West Potomac student whose death last Halloween brought attention to the life of a talented artist and great friend.

Annie is remembered as a devout Catholic, whose appreciation for life was portrayed in her artwork and in her endless love for her dog, Breezy. She was a dedicated Yankees fan, and loved rock bands such as Coldplay and the Killers. At school, she was an honor roll student who was "really quiet," said senior Erin Parker, "but once you started talking to her you would really enjoy the conversation."

When word spread of the would-be senior's death, students at West Potomac quickly organized a candlelight vigil in Annie's honor. In suit with school tradition concerning a student's death, the rock was painted and left alone for several months. Many students also attended a wake for Annie at Good Sheppard Catholic Church, where they were able to view much of her artwork. Senior Peter Coffey gave students the opportunity to continue to express their respect for her by selling blue bracelets with "Live Your Life---Annie McCann" written on them.

While many questions are still being asked about Annie's shocking death, it is clear that her presence remains missed in the West Potomac community. Over the four day weekend, students painted the rock black to commemorate the anniversary. On it, they painted messages for Annie, and expressed their wishes that the Yankees would win the World Series for her, as she was a well-known fan. A ceremony was also held to plant a tree in her honor, and which is marked with a temporary plaque inscribed with "Annie McCann- Daughter, Friend, Great Student, and Artist." At the ceremony, senior Chyna Johnson-Owens sang "I Hope You Dance" by Lee Ann Womack, and also remarked that Annie was "really quiet, but was once you got to know her she was really funny."

Many students are part of a Facebook group in her memoriam, titled "God's Got another Angel RIP Annie

McCann," where over 500 have joined to share memories and photos. Students can still be seen wearing the blue bracelets. When asked what comes to mind when they think of Annie, the answers are nearly unanimous- "smart," "sweet and caring," and always, "really funny." Students praise Annie's artwork, which senior Tiara Suggs recalls as "amazing- in the sense that you had to look within the art for the real picture" and describes as a style of art "no one else was able to achieve."

We, as a community, stand behind Annie's parents as they continue to wait for solid answers from the Baltimore police, whose investigation of her death has been excruciatingly slow and half-hearted. In the meantime, we remember Annie for her artistic and comedic contributions, and lasting positive impact.

On Friday, November 6, a tree was planted in Annie's memory. Many teachers and students that were in her classes last year showed up to the planting. Two teachers in particular showed up for the tree planting. These teachers were English teachers Kelcy Pierre and Colin O'Grady. The tree was planted in front of the Springbank building. Pierre was Annie's English 11 teacher and last year her sixth period class passed out the bracelets that said "Live Your Life." They did this to raise money to purchase the tree that is now in front on Spingbank.

English teacher Collin O'Grady thought "the planting was gorgeous. Kelcy Pierre did a great job of getting everything ready for the tree. I was happy to see many students and the McCann family there."

Both Pierre and O'Grady think that Annie should be remembered for many things. Pierre wants Annie to be remembered for her "sense of humor, her artistic talent and abilities, and also her compassion." In addition Pierre hopes that "people are inspired to create beautiful works of art [like Annie has done]."

O'Grady would like for Annie to be remembered for "mostly her smile. She was the happiest kid and no one could make her have a bad day even if class was boring or difficult. She just never had a bad day."

Annie has left a long lasting impression on many of her peers and her teachers.



Photo Courtesy of McCann family

Annie McCann was a student and a gifted artist at West Potomac. In her memory, faculty and students showed their appreciation to McCann by celebrating the life of a friend and classmate, that was unfortunately lost last year.

Seniors get new privileges

MAGGIE GRADY
BUSINESS MANAGER/ASST. FOCUS EDITOR

Older people always say "age has its privileges." This is now true for our schools oldest students, the seniors, who have earned new privileges for the 2009-2010 school year. On Fridays, seniors are allowed to leave seven minutes early from school, allowing them more time to get to their cars and leave. Also, there are booths in the cafeteria that are reserved just for them. In addition to the reserved booths, seniors are now allowed to use the bathrooms across the cafeteria by the College and Career Center.

Senior parking spaces are allowed to be decorated with chalk throughout the school year as well. A new senior lounge has been added under the porch by the English work room. As for materials in the lounge, new furniture has been ordered, but there are no plans for other items, according to Principal Cliff Hardison. Science teacher Erin Sikes-Thurston has Advanced Placement (AP) Environmental Science classes that are currently working on the pond courtyard and other parts of the school to make the school more eco-friendly. Once the project is completed, seniors may also be allowed access to the courtyard as well.



Photo by Nia Copeland

Clockwise from top left, seniors Madelina McNeil, Brian Linnell, Jessie Vennell, and Caitlin Dougherty enjoy the booths reserved for seniors during lunches.



Photo by Nia Copeland

Seniors are allowed to decorate their or their friends' parking spaces for any occasion that they wish, such as birthdays. This will only be allowed in the senior parking lot, pictured above.

The senior class officers worked hard in order to receive these privileges. "The senior class officers were great negotiators," said Hardison. Senior class officer Frank Gerow is happy with the new privileges the seniors have received. "Getting to leave class early is always a good thing and I am excited to see how the senior lounge will turn out," said Gerow.

Although Gerow is happy with the outcome, there are some additional things he and the other officers would have liked to change. For example, instead of getting out early on just Friday, they wanted to get out early on Mondays as well. This way, Mondays could seem more bearable. "We just wanted something a bit more, because no one likes Mondays," said Gerow. Another thing the officers tried to change was what they could decorate their parking spaces with. Currently, seniors can decorate their parking spaces with chalk, but "We also tried to fight for the use of paint on our parking spots instead of just chalk that would just wash away," added Gerow. Hopefully, seniors will be able to earn new privileges as the year goes on.

News Briefs

EMILY GRIFFIN
NEWS EDITOR

Sesame Street Celebrates Anniversary

The popular children's show Sesame Street celebrated 40 years of television success. When the show premiered on November 10, 1969, it became an instant hit. It received positive reviews from Newsday, which said it was "a unique display of cooperation between commercial and noncommercial broadcasters." Writer Michael Davis commented that "it became the rare children's show stamped with parental approval."

Sniper Executed

Back in October 2002, a sniper shot and killed 10 people in the Washington, D.C. and Northern Virginia region. The sniper, John Allen Muhammad, was arrested on October 24, 2002. His trials began in October 2003 and continued until May 2006. On November 10, 2009 Muhammad was sentenced at Greenville Correctional Center in Jarret, Virginia by lethal injection.

Election Results

Elections were held on Wednesday, November 3, 2009 for multiple positions. Republican candidate Bob McDonnell won the position of governor over Democratic candidate Creigh Deeds. The position of delegate went to Democratic candidate Scott Surovell, instead of Republican candidate Jay McConville. Republican William Bolling won the position of Lieutenant Governor over Democratic candidate Jody Wagner. The Attorney General position went to Republican candidate Ken Cuccinelli II instead of Democratic candidate Stephen Shannon.

Fort Hood Shooting

On November 5, 2009, there was a shooting at military base Fort Hood in Texas. Major Nidal Malik Hasan is the prime suspect in this case, in which he is accused of shooting 13 soldiers and leaving 42 dead, according to CNN.com. Hasan worked as a psychologist on the army base and was going to Iraq to fight in the war. According to multiple sources, like CNN.com, Hasan did not want to go to Iraq and that may be the main motive for the shooting.

what passes these days....

ALEX FABRIZIO
FOCUS EDITOR

introduction

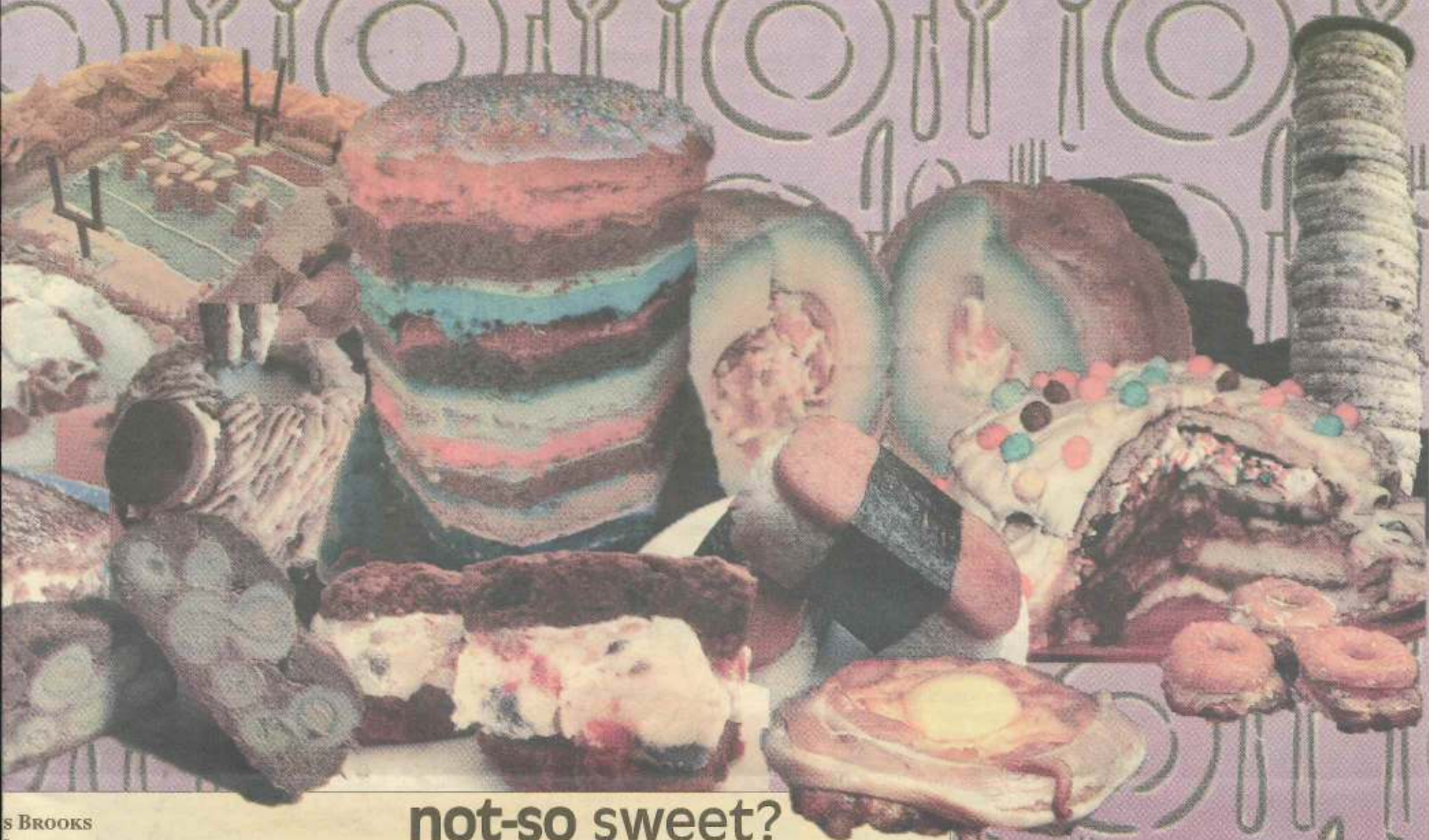
American culture has revolved around food for quite some time. One of our fundamental holidays is based solely on a feast of decadent foods (Thanksgiving!). With that said, there is more than enough delicious food around the country, but sometimes one can stumble upon some disgusting or strange food creation/combination. These things have become spotlighted on the interwebs through websites like the avclub.com and thisiswhyyourefat.com. The avclub.com has a series called "Taste Test" where they film and review food peculiarities on a regular basis. Some foods they have "taste tested" include a hamburger in a can and bacon vodka. Thisiswhyyourefat.com on the other hand is a website where readers submit disgusting combinations of foods they have eaten such as "the Pizza Taco" and "the Widower." These websites illuminate that strange foods are much more commonplace than most people think.

JACOB ALEXANDER
CO-OPINIONS EDITOR

strange snackage

Thanksgiving can be a time to experiment with unusual foods, and snacks are a great way to do that. There are plenty of odd snacks that go great with Thanksgiving. For example, cranberry critters fit well because cranberry sauce is a traditional Thanksgiving item, and in this case the jellied cranberry sauce is cut into Thanksgiving shapes. Other good snacks that can be eaten at Thanksgiving dinner are edible pilgrim hats, made from a marshmallow on a cookie or cracker with jelly beans for the buckle, a cornucopia snack, or a bagel turkey. The cornucopia snack can be made by putting fruit snacks, Trix cereal, and/or real fruit such as grapes into a sugar ice cream cone. The bagel turkey is made in the shape of a turkey using a bagel body, lollipops for legs and feathers, and candy corn for the eyes and gobbles. Although these are great for the Thanksgiving theme, there are also other great weird snacks to try such as waffle nachos, or waffles topped with nacho cheese, sardines, and shaved chocolate, or a cheese wiz and jelly bean sandwich, which is composed of a sesame seed bun covered in horse radish, jelly beans, and cheese wiz. All of these odd snacks, whether they are Thanksgiving themed or not, are great snacks to experiment with, especially around the time of Thanksgiving.

es for food



S BROOKS

not-so sweet?

Common desserts at the Thanksgiving dinner table include pie and cheesecake, some like to eat strange desserts, like Finnish Vispipuuro. Finnish Vispipuuro, otherwise known as lingonberry porridge, is a fluffy mixture usually made with lingonberries, but can also be made with blueberries. To make the porridge you mash berries together with sugar and salt, boil the mixture, strain, add semolina, and cook for 15 minutes. This results in a whipped delight. Another dessert is fried Twinkies. Most high school students love the cream-filled sweets, but deep frying them is a whole new idea. To fry the Twinkies, put them in a pan of hot vegetable oil until they become crisp. Once this is done, put a popsicle stick into the Twinkie so it can be eaten like a corndog. Yet another fried treat is fried ice cream. To make it correctly, cover the ice cream in batter, and briefly fry in oil. Fried ice cream is very popular in Mexican, Chinese, and Japanese cuisines. If these desserts are ever spotted, make sure to give them a shot! Who knows, they might be surprisingly delicious!

JOSH BELANGER
ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

eclectically savory

Thanksgiving is a time of tradition and spending time with family that you do not exactly know. Usually, the menu consists of turkey, mashed potatoes, stuffing, and assortment of casseroles and sides. After the meal is done and everything has been eaten up, except the leftovers of the turkey and that weird dish your aunt made that nobody wanted to try. What makes that dish different than the others; is it the funky smell, or made of the only ingredients you see are cucumbers and carrots and you decide that the sweet potato casserole with marshmallows seems more appetizing. Possibly it is the name, such as a turducken which is a turkey and a duck and a chicken somehow combined; or blood dumplings which are from the Sweden culture filled with reindeer blood and salt with bacon and butter. The biggest turn off to eating food is knowing what is really in it. After one knows what scrapple is made of it, he or she may never want to know what is really put into a hot dog. There are many weird foods out there and it is your choice to eat them or to stay away. Here are some pretty weird and strange foods: blubber, Spam, rocky mountain oysters, and mollejas (fried chicken gizzards). A majority of people enjoy food and the pleasure and good tasting meal could have on them, but watch out for the foods that might ruin your day and your stomach.

Coffey Talk



Photo by Peter Coffey/Mac

PETER COFFEY
SPORTS EDITOR

As you are probably already aware, our track coach, Don Beeby, has recently retired. While I was writing my news article covering this event (postponed until the mid-December issue), I got an overwhelming number of responses from his former athletes. Due to so many positive reflections, here are some of the quotes left out of my news story:

"He not only inspires you to be the best out on the track or cross country course but in the class room and in life. He knows how to get the best out of his athletes and propels you to take bigger challenges beyond athletics and to stand up to any challenge life throws at you. Not only is he a coach but a lifelong friend and someone who motivates you to be a winner in life." Amy Goode- class of 1990

"He doesn't care if you're all-state or the slowest kid on the team. He's going to treat you the same. He's not afraid to call you out if you're slacking on the track or in the classroom or if you have a mysterious hickey on your neck or throw a wild rager when your parents are gone." Kelly Carmichael- class of 2008

"His knowledge and passion for the sport is truly admired by his athletes and his peers and it is these qualities that have made the West Potomac program what it is today. From a personal standpoint, I can attribute my success, respect, and passion for the sport to everything that he taught me as my coach" Elizabeth Heath- class of 2008

"When I ran for Beeby there was one thing I really valued from him, his honesty as a Coach. Beeby was honest before and after races, he always told us what we could achieve as runners and what not. Best time of my high school days was running under such a role model." JD Rojas- class of 2005

"He always made me believe I could do more than I believed possible. Beeby had an innate ability to get the most out of his athletes. You wanted to run fast for him, to surprise him, to get that look of amazement. For me it only happened once or twice, but it was enough to make me want to work hard to get it again. He's achieved enough and coached enough to retire, but he will be missed, and never forgotten." Frank DeVar- class of 2006

"Beeby had a huge influence on my time in high school. It was through running that I learned the difference between pushing through mental weakness and pushing too far, and Beeby was a huge motivational factor. It was that learned strength which carried me to succeed not only in collegiate running but in academics as well." Diana Burke- class of 2006

"He expected a lot from his runners, and usually got it. It didn't matter if you were first or last on the team, he had (has) an innate ability to push people to their limits." Gene Manner- class of 2000

"Beeby inspired a fire inside me, challenged me to never stop pushing my limits. Many people have encouraged me along my long journey but the man who started in all was Beeby. From when I was his slowest miler to his fastest, he stood patiently beside me with a shoulder to cry on or a smile to celebrate with me... Beeby has given me this gift, a fearless resolve in the face of absolute impossibility." Kelly Jemison- class of 2007

Without a doubt, Beeby has been the most influential coach to walk to halls of West Potomac. While he is stepping down from coaching, his legacy and championships will last forever. Congratulations Beeby on a outstanding career.

Redskins embarrass fans with poor performance

LUCAS ALEXANDER
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

For the past couple of years, the fans in Washington D.C. and Virginia have been plagued by the pitiful plight of the Washington Redskins. Washington, who plays in the extremely competitive National Football Conference (NFC) East, has now fallen to the bottom tier of teams that have ruined themselves because of bad draft picks, bad ownership, and bad coaching. Their play is comparable to that of a team like the National Basketball Association's (NBA) New York Knick's, who have also managed their way to the bottom of the NBA.

Despite a good defense, the Redskins have failed miserably this year. They have a horrible offense, and up until week 10 had failed to score more than 17 points this year. The offense has been their Achilles' heel, ranking 26th, 21st, 18th, and 22nd in the league in the four offensive categories (Points, total yards, pass yards, and rushing yards). They have to deal with a sporadic quarterback in Jason Campbell, a deteriorating offensive line, and old, washed up wide receivers.

Last year, the Redskins showed a lot more potential through the first eight games, jumping out to a 6-2 record that had people throwing Jason Campbell's name into MVP consideration. However, a 3-9 record this year has more people calling Campbell a bust. With last year's collapse in the second half of the year, falling to a 9-7 record and missing the playoffs, comprised with the poor season this year, the claims grow more frequent by the week. This lack of progress is starting to bother some of the kids at West Potomac, like sophomore Davis Beveridge, who said "[The Redskins] were in over their heads in the second half of the year, it was very depressing."

Aside from the division games, the Redskins have had the easiest schedule in the league up to this point. They have played the winless St. Louis Rams, Kansas City Chiefs, Detroit Lions, Tampa Bay Buccaneers, and Carolina Panthers. The Redskins are now accountable for the Lions first victory in over two years, and both the Panthers and Chiefs first victories of the season. The Redskins season also has West Potomac students, like senior Matt Cunningham, upset. Cunningham said that "It is embarrassing to be a fan right now and it is hard to realize they are one of the worst teams in the league."

The way the schedule played out, week seven was the first time the Redskins actually faced off against a team that had

won a game, the 3-2 Philadelphia Eagles. This was because they played the New York Giants in week one, who obviously had yet to win a game. Still, the Giants have had their own problems of late, and the loss to the Giants looks worse because of it.

All of the drama surrounding the collapse of the team caused Head Coach Jim Zorn to lose his play calling duties to a previously retired Sherman Lewis. Lewis went from calling bingo games at a retirement home to being an offensive consultant for the Washington Redskins. Zorn even resorted to benching Jason Campbell out of the second half in favor of backup Todd Collins during their 14-6 loss to the Chiefs to try to give the team new life. Low and behold, that tactic did not work either.

There has been a lot of talk about the job security of Zorn as well. Because of the loss of play calling duties, suspicions have arisen about if his job may be the next thing he loses. While the

Redskins have said they are standing behind Zorn for the rest of this season, there is no guarantee that he will continue to be the Redskins coach into the future. If Zorn loses his job, his replacement would be the seventh different head coach since 2000, averaging almost a new coach every year.

The majority of these problems are being put on the back of Dan Snyder, the Redskins team owner. He has attempted to make moves to make the team better, like signing Deangelo Hall and Albert Haynesworth to multimillion dollar deals; however his moves have failed to focus on improving the offense. His decisions are now being questioned more than ever by people like Beveridge, who said, "I think [Snyder] needs to stop thinking he's the coach." Cunningham added that "Dan Snyder spends unnecessary money on players that are past their prime and he needs to focus more on picking up young players with more potential and hiring the right coaches instead of switching them out every few years so that [the Redskins] can rebuild and become a solid team again."

The Redskins have also been good at giving fans hope, like with wins over the then division leading 6-2 Denver Broncos, 27-17. But as always, the following were heartbreaking losses like a 7-6 loss to the Dallas Cowboys, and then two games that got away in a 27-24 loss to the Eagles and a 33-30 OT loss to the New Orleans Saints. These close division losses in the last two weeks have hurt the season even more, and it will be interesting to see where they turn next.



Photos Courtesy MCT Campus

Photos from left to right: Jason Campbell gets sacked, just one of many times this season. The disappointment of this season is evident on the face of head coach Jim Zorn. Cornerback Carlos Rogers gets walked on as the opponent scores a touchdown.

Volleyball battles breast cancer on the court

SHIRINE LOGHMANIAN
REPORTER

The pink uniforms were not a temporary mixup. They were worn in recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness Month which is in October.

All three of our volleyball teams took part in a nationwide tradition to recognize breast cancer by holding a "Dig Pink" game.

The teams played against Woodson on October 27, which doubled as our volleyball team's senior night. Although the freshmen and varsity teams were not successful, the JV team led a miraculous win.

Regardless, the night was not about who won, it was focused on helping our community by raising Breast Cancer awareness and raising money for the Dig Pink campaign, while also recognizing the participation of four seniors.

The event first began with a speech by English teacher Mary Mathewson. She spoke to the audience about her own and the women in her family's experiences with breast cancer. Sophomore Cheryl Barnes said, "Mrs. Mathewson's speech was very touching. She went through a lot of hardships. It was inspirational." She was first diagnosed over two years ago and she says it has had a pronounced impact on her life and family. Mathewson said, "It's brought us closer together. We are all united in participating against breast cancer: fund raising, education, and awareness."

When discussing how our community can help eradicate this disease Mathewson stated, "I think mankind is capable of anything, particularly in a field where so much progress has already been made."

Helping to eradicate this disease isn't only about money - although that's part of it - it's about education and awareness so that when a diagnosis occurs, it's an early one. That is just as important as raising money for research." The Dig Pink match served not only as a way to raise awareness and fund raise for breast

cancer relief, but also our volleyball team's senior night.

The Dig Pink match also recognized four senior volleyball players: Molly Bowdring, Mallorie Calvert, Linnea Markson, and Madison Tindle. Other members of the team decorated the gym with various pink balloons and decorations, including a balloon arch, made pink jerseys, put up signs with the senior's names, and decorated their cars.

The volleyball team's time and effort was well spent. The school raised over \$3,500 toward the fight against breast cancer and the night ended with our school and community successfully coming together to help raise awareness and celebrate the team's four seniors.



Photo Courtesy of Mallorie Calvert

On October 27, the volleyball team participated in a "Dig Pink" game in which they wore pink jerseys in honor of Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

New girls' basketball coach hopes to bring success

NIA COPELAND
PHOTOGRAPHER

For the past couple of years, the girls' basketball program struggled to find a coach that would benefit their organization.

In the past four years, the teams have gone through four different coaching staffs. They did not prove to be very beneficial or of much assistance to the program. This year, our school is bringing in a new coaching staff, once again, and there is a lot of pressure put on them to rise above past coaches and make our girls' basketball teams successful.

Last year, the girls' varsity basketball team won one game outside of the district and zero games inside of the district, leaving them with a horrifying record of 1-21. The record two years ago was not much better, nor was the year before that. "The past years haven't the best," said Varsity basketball player junior Katie Wyskoczka, who has played for the basketball team since her freshman year. "Most of the coaches weren't dedicated, and often wouldn't motivate, but would tear down players. That may have been one of the reasons our records have been so awful the past couple of years."

The new coaches this year are Coach Vincent Tate and Coach Anthony Crawford. So far, they have organized conditionings in the gym and weight training in the weight room every day after school for the girls. "The new coaches are strict," said Wyskoczka. "But strict training is needed because we need to be whipped into shape. The conditioning is hard, but I can already tell that this season is going to be tons of fun." Many returning players feel that the new coaches are a lot better and will do much more to help make them become a success.

Ravynne McFail, a senior on the Varsity team, feels that this season will be more victorious than any other season that she has participated in over the past four years. "This will be my

fourth and last year playing basketball at West Potomac," said McFail. "Last year, we only won one game so my goal is to win more games than any year I've ever been here."

Beating last year's record should not be too hard for the girls, considering that they are starting fresh.

Players are mainly trying to wipe out bad memories so that they can move on and do bigger things in the upcoming season. Wyskoczka and her fellow JV teammates are really excited to begin the season and start winning some games. "Having a new coach every year was never helpful since no one could get along in the past," Wyskoczka said.

"The previous coaches were not on the same wavelength as the players, causing a lot of tension these past years," Wyskoczka continued. Tate has already stepped up and got more students involved by motivating us to go to open gyms and meet scouts from local colleges which is going to help us this season and in the seasons to come. This year is going to be different and my main focus is to win and make bonds with the new coaches and players."

Both students and players are very frustrated with the program and are itching for a better and more successful season. Junior Jennifer

Long is an athlete at West Potomac and would really like for the girls basketball team to do better this year. "I really enjoy going to the varsity basketball games on Tuesdays and Fridays," she said. "It's always fun to see our team win and it would be nice if we could have a winning and very triumphant season this year!"

The program is in great need of change. Hopefully, the new coaching staff will transform our losing team into a successful, powerful, and victorious program.

"The most important thing about playing a team sport is learning to cooperate and get along with others," said McFail. "It's important that we have a program full of dedicated and enthusiastic players and coaches that are united and ready to win!"

Overall, the freshman girls' team has struggled for years. The new coaching staff will hopefully create new life for the teams and hope-

fully have a great season.

Rumors have recently surfaced that Tate's goal is to get the girls to make playoffs for the first time in a year. This is a major step for the girls team.



Photo by Nia Copeland

The girls' basketball team received a new coaching staff this year, which includes Coaches Tate and Crawford.

Winter sports teams enter the season with high hopes

A preview of the upcoming season for the sports teams at West Potomac

TOMMY FRIEDERICH
ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

Winter Track:

Without coach Don Beeby running the show this year, the winter track team wants to continue their dominance running behind senior leaders Peter Coffey and Peter Stebbins. The girls side of the track looks really good too; seniors Julianne Bigler and Sarah Jane Underwood hope to return to the district championship that was won in 2000. The track program will hopefully stay one of the best in the district without Beeby. Sal Olivo added, "We have me, Coach Dietz and Coach DeCoster who have been with the team before, so it shouldn't be too much to handle. When asked what the team needs to be successful, Olivo replied, "we need full commitment from our athletes and drive and determination that we can count on in our runner and throwers." On the other side of the runners, winter track has a good number of shot-put throwers. Dustin Hess is going to be throwing for his first time, but with his athletic ability he hopes to do well and help the track team success.



Photo courtesy of Scott Plunkett

On the left, Junior Mark Hanak runs vigorously at his indoor track meet.

Boys Basketball:

With returning seniors Martez Redfern and Matt Cunningham, the varsity boys' basketball team looks like they have a lot of senior leadership and many wins in their future. After a disappointing season last year, superstars juniors Jalen Dawson and Daryl "Scooter" Copeland hope to lead the Wolverines to a playoff run this year. Copeland said, "Hopefully we can have a couple of people step up and play well. Without that, our team won't be as strong." The boys team faces a tough Patriot district this year including powerhouses T.C. Williams and Hayfield. Coach David Houston hopes to turn this year's team into one that will be remembered. Cunningham added, "Yeah, we're about to have a great season." Hopefully this prediction is true, and the basketball team can have a phenomenal season.

Girls' Basketball:

The girls' basketball team is full of young players, but at the same time they are stacked with a lot of talent. Sophomore Mealnie Boykin a returning varsity player said, "Being on varsity as a freshman was a challenge, but now that I know what I have in front of me, I think I and the rest of the team will have a very good season." The girls' basketball team has an all new coaching staff this season lead by Coach Tate that will hopefully revive the girls basketball program. Just as the boys, the Patriot district is stacked with T.C. Williams who is always extremely competitive in the district. Another returning sophomore Caroline Kelly said, "Yeah I think we'll be competitive, especially with this new coaching staff."

Wrestling:

Returning district champion senior Stephen Howell hopes to bring home another championship to West Potomac. Last year, the wrestling program was revived by the class of 2012 which brought almost 15 new wrestlers that hope to bring many championships back to West Potomac. With seniors like Howell and Sammy Amady leading the way, the wrestling team hopes to be very competitive in districts this year. Senior Evert Lorenzen said, "We are going to be really competitive this year, especially in the class of 2012 which has approximately 10 kids wrestling." Senior Louis Litchford adds, "If we keep the intensity from last year, we should do very well." The wrestling team includes some strong people that will hopefully take home some district championships.

Swim/Dive:

An under-the-radar team of West Potomac is the Swim and Dive team. After meeting their expectations from last year, the Swim and Dive team always add new swimmers and divers such as sophomore Livvy Mickevics. Mickevics said, "I am really excited to swim this year, I always swam in the summer, it is going to be nice to swim for the school and add some competitiveness to my game." The swim and dive team include some very athletes such as Evan Jenkins and sophomore Emily Hauptle. A majority of their meets will be held at either Mount Vernon Recreation Center and then their district will be held at Lee Recreation Center.



Photo by Bryan Jacobs

The Swim/Dive team hopes to have a successful season.

Off the bench

TOMMY FRIEDERICH
ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

Senior Varsity Football quarterback Colin Mathewson throws for 1,200 yards and 11 touchdowns in an injury-plagued season.

Varsity Football is defeated during the senior night game 6-34.

Junior Varsity Football completes the season on a high note winning 20-6.

Freshman Football completes a romp over Anandale 36-7.

Catie Lieback finishes 87th out of 150 at the Virginia State Girls' Golf Tournament.

Volleyball team falls in their first round match of the District tournament 0-3.

Girls' Cross Country team finishes 4th at the Virginia State Championships.

Boys' Cross Country Team finishes 9th at the Virginia State Championship.

Varsity Volleyball team ends with a 3-13 record.

Varsity football finishes at 2-8 with a season due to unlucky injuries.

Varsity Volleyball ends the season at 8-8 and a lot of big wins.

Virginia State Girls' Cross Country Championship winners include:

- 1: Lake Braddock
- 2: Midlothian
- 3: West Springfield
- 4: West Potomac
- 5: Maggie L. Walker Gove
- 6: Osbourn Park
- 7: Lee-Davis
- 8: Thomas Jefferson
- 9: Deep Run
- 10: Mountain View

Virginia State Boys' Cross Country Championship winners include:

- 1: Mountain View
- 2: Oakton
- 3: Midlothian
- 4: Lake Braddock
- 5: Mills E. Gwin
- 6: Grassfield
- 7: Maggie L. Walker Gove
- 8: Western Branch
- 9: West Potomac
- 10: Stafford

MUST WATCH

Do not miss Alabama take on Texas and the other BCS Bowl games to come.

Gay-Straight Alliance finds new student enthusiasm

Group hopes to lower school-wide homophobia, and increase tolerance for minorities.

BRYAN JACOBS
STYLE EDITOR

The meeting began at precisely 2:15 p.m., after the buses had cleared the afternoon rush and most seniors and juniors had turned the keys into their ignition, blasted their music and went off to go home. However, a dedicated group of students stayed back in room 435 discussing bake sales that would breathe life into their small yet dedicated group. This group is the Gay Straight Alliance (GSA).

For many years, GSA was an obscure group, filled with the high school's misfits and outcasts.

The only people that would show up for a meeting were "The President, Vice-President, Secretary and maybe one or two others," said current president, junior Alexander Tyson.

However, this was before Tyson took the reins of power into his hands. At the first Gay-Straight Alliance meeting in September, the turnout was over 45 people. In the October meeting, the turnout had dropped to 14. However it was still a far greater number of participants than the group has seen since its founding.

The meeting began with emphasis on fundraising and financial stability. "How about a fashion show? No, how about bake sales?" suggested members of the group at the beginning of the meeting. This continued for a solid thirty minutes.

That was until special education teacher Kathryn Nelson, cosponsor with history teacher Herbert Daniel, said, "Look, we have a reporter. Why don't you let him ask a couple questions...Maybe a mission statement?"

The group looked puzzled as if they did not know what their mission statement was. "Oh, right," said Tyson.

"GSA is supposed to bring together all genders and sexual orientations to promote awareness and protect staff and students from hate that they might face in the community."

"We want to heighten awareness and promote acceptance," he said with a large grin.

The group of white, Hispanic, black, and Asian students all broke out in a cheer which also reflected the diversity of the group. "Yeah, we just need to lower homophobia in the school environment, and in general. People who are different should not be looked down upon, but should be cherished," said GSA secretary Mariela Mira, complementing Tyson's remark.

The meeting quickly moved to a very different subject as the group became more vocal and comfortable with their settings. There were reports of homophobia by several students from our school, mostly homophobic slurs and chastising for their sexual orientation.

A GSA member named Asha, who wanted to keep her last name private, is bisexual.

She said, "During gym, I was chastised for my sexual orientation and most girls said, 'No, you're gay so you should not be in the lockers with us or even near us.' Do

you know how much pain that put me through?" she said with a cringe.

Her friend and companion Jasmine Beatty quickly comforted her and said, "See! This is what we are working against. It might not look like you have hurt someone, but honestly it can hurt them a lot."

The next question that was brought up was if gays are treated different along racial lines. Hispanic sophomore Mariela Mira quickly spoke up.

She said, "Well, I don't really get along with my family, but it is harder for the guys. I have an aunt who said if she found that one of her family members were gay that she would kill them and drop them at the bottom of the Potomac River. Ironically, her daughter turned out to be gay. She got disowned by her family and is currently homeless. It is just an awful situation."

There was a gasp from around the room. She continued and said, "But yeah, I have lost a lot of friends since I have come out, too. Only the true friends are the ones that I have kept."

Reports of homophobia in high school settings, especially youth, have become more common and rampant as the term "gay" has been used as a synonym for "bad."

According to the Massachusetts Department of Education, which studied the word usage of the term "gay" in high schools have found that "the average high school student in the United States hears 25 anti-gay slurs times per day." This comes as no surprise as many of the students in Gay-Straight Alliance have been called demeaning names such as "faggot," "dyke," or "queer."

This year, the Gay-Straight Alliance plans to help lower homophobia in the school environment and become more vocal in the community.

"All are welcome," they said in unison at the end of meeting.



Photo by Bryan Jacobs

Junior Mariela Mira talks with a fellow GSA member on the situation for gays in school.

Adopted students claim regularity

ANNA DREYFUSS
REPORTER

Since about five million Americans today are adoptees, students probably know more adopted people than they might think.

Many adoptees are roaming the hallways at West Potomac.

They are really not that different from non-adopted kids though. "No, we are still people with parents...they just happen to not look like us," said sophomore Matt Kuhbach, adopted at the age of four from South Korea.

Twenty thousand children a year are adopted from foreign countries, with Guatemala, China, and Russia being the top three.

Although it is common, there are still difficult aspects of adopted life. "It's definitely difficult not knowing who your real parents are and it bugs you that you don't know what traits you got from them or if they look like you or not," said Kuhbach.

"In my opinion there is no hard part about being adopted, but I guess it would be cool to see what you would be living like if you were not adopted," said adoptee, sophomore Lucy Goddard.

Adopted from China at the age of nine months, Goddard reads a lot of books about China to better understand her cultural background.

She hopes to go back China to see if she remembers what it was like there, and to see the adoption center she used to live in.

Kuhbach did go back to South Korea last summer on a homeland tour with

other adoptees to see his birth country and got a chance to see his orphanage.

Kuhbach thought it was weird. Everyone looked like him and his parents were finally the ones who stuck out. "I felt like I was home," said Kuhbach.

For many adoptees their adoption is not a public issue, because they blend in with their families.

People only notice the multicultural families. Most adoptees would say the most annoying part about being adopted is all the questions, comments, and stares.

As normal as it seems to have parents of a different race to adoptees, some people just think it is the strangest thing.

The questions are what every adopted kid can relate to: "So, those aren't your real parents?" "Do you remember what it's like?" "Why did your real parents give you up?" "Are you actually adopted?" "It's like, enough already!" said Goddard. "I especially hate when people feel bad for us...like it's more of a positive thing than a negative, but some people just think of it as our parents just didn't want us."

Freshman Kevin Gross is another adoptee. He is an unusual adoptee in the aspect that he does not want to meet his old parents.

"I wouldn't want to meet my birth parents, because there are so many horror stories about adopted kids meeting their parents and they would feel like strangers more than parents," said Gross.

Though multicultural families look different from the majority of families, they are really just like any other family. Their rich diversity is the only difference.

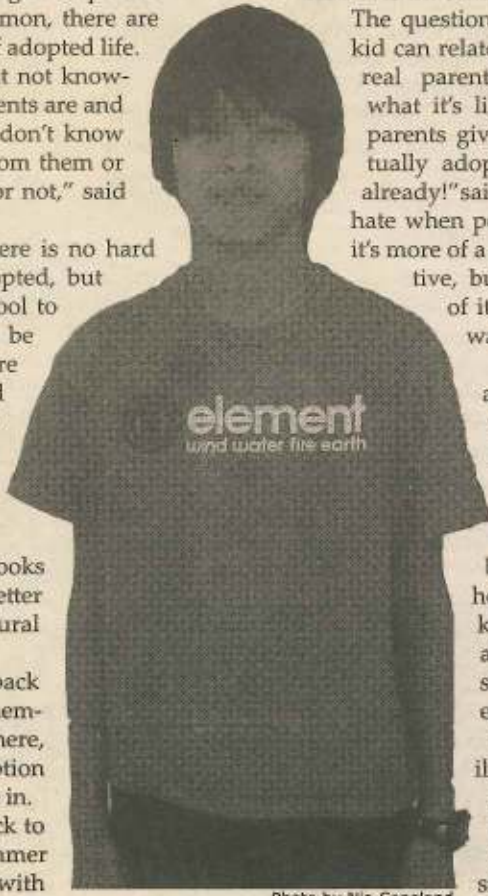


Photo by Nia Copeland

free tests
walk-ins welcome

www.simpregnancy.org

Alexandria
pregnancy help center
703-780-4700

LifeChoices
resource center
703-323-8060

Fairfax
pregnancy help center
703-278-5433

Half the Sky tells the whole story

LAURA REYNOLDS
ASSISTANT NEWS EDITOR

It only took thirty minutes for her to die. Stoned to death by over 1,000 men under the approving eyes of security forces after her family assumed that she had slept with a man before marriage, Du'a Aswad is just one of the many women described in the book *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*. From overcrowded, disease-rampant brothels to hospitals that attempt to save women in childbirth, authors Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl Wudunn take the reader on a journey of the heart and senses. Imagine the plight of Long Pross; kidnapped and forced to work at a brothel in Cambodia at age thirteen.

She rebelled. The female brothel owner responded by taking a metal rod to one of her eyes, gauging it out and leaving her disfigured for life. Although hard to stomach at times, this is a necessary read to learn of the reality of women in developing countries.

Covering sex trafficking and forced prostitution, gender-based violence, and maternal mortality, this book demonstrates that the fight for women's rights has only just begun and should be the issue of this century. When \$203 buys a woman but cannot save her from returning to the brothel for drugs that she is addicted to, change is needed. When mass rape is a submission tool and reporting rape is punishable by some governments, change is needed. When women go through obstructed labor and are not viewed as important enough to be treated, change is needed.

Surprising facts arise, such as that giving birth is a primary reason for the loss of so many women's lives. Even if they survive it, though, life can be a living hell; Simeesh Segaye is an example of this. After contracting a fistula from obstructed labor, which left her leaking urine and feces through her vagina, Simeesh was shunned and literally curled up into a

ball of her own depression and despair. Although her parents showed remarkable care for their daughter by feeding her while she remained motionless and eventually lost the use of her legs, they waited two years to take her to a hospital. Two years. Once treated, she began the long process of healing her fistula, legs, and her self-confidence. In our world, almost no one knows what a fistula is. Seemingly centuries away, they regularly disgrace and kill.

In short, this book is not just about the scary stories or statistics that demonstrate the severity of what happens. The desired effect of this expose is to motivate and educate both the reader and, eventually, the women who are currently suffering and who will suffer if nothing is done.

There are tales of hope, but there will only be many, many more if those who are privileged reach out and if women in developing countries are educated. The least one can do is recognize the problem; after reading this book, the least does not seem like near enough.

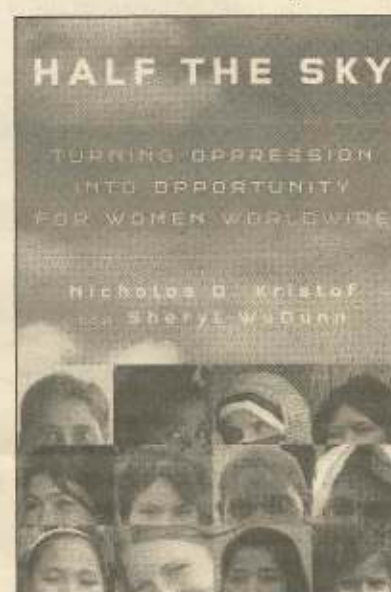


Photo Courtesy of static.85broads.com
Half the Sky intensely describes the suffering of women.

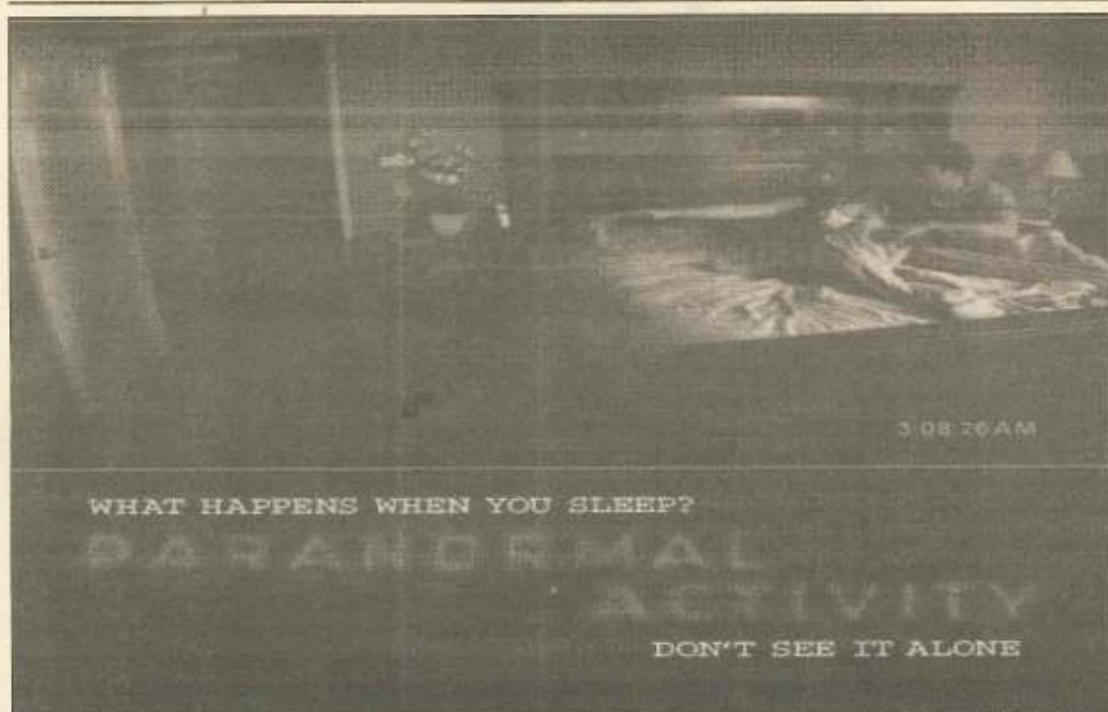


Photo Courtesy of filmshaft.com

Paranormal Activity shocked audiences with its chilling camera angles, scaring most movie-goers.

Paranormal Activity chills audiences

SARAH HOLLOWAY
REPORTER

Supernatural thriller *Paranormal Activity* shocked the nation during the premier and first viewing in California.

Out of almost two hundred people viewing the movie approximately half walked out because of the intensity of the film; a few even got sick. The reaction to this \$11,000 budgeted film was unimaginable and caused an instant commotion across America. Although producers had not intended for the movie to make it to the big screen (aside from Independent festivals, Screampfest Film Festival 2007 and Slamdance Film Festival 2008), the response for a Halloween ready movie was great.

The ultra low-budget movie starred two unknown actors, Katie Featherston and Micah Sloat, and was filmed by director Oren Peli. *Paranormal Activity* is filmed as a "mockumentary" with shaky camera work. Astonishingly, it only took seven days to tape and edit.

"*Paranormal Activity*" follows a couple who move in together and begin to experience some paranormal things.

Micah and Katie are such a standard, commonplace couple that it is difficult to consider any type of the paranormal plaguing them. Right away, the

story line introduces a few petty, but strange occurrences within their home, from faucets turning on randomly to lights flickering.

A demon begins to tantalize the ordinary couple and they quickly realize that they may not escape its grips through solely documenting this "paranormal activity."

Micah and Katie are not only forced to endure a tremendously fear-provoking demon, but are also forced to face relationship plights that go hand and hand with moving in together.

Upon entering the AMC theatre at Tyson's Corner Mall, just about every seat was taken. The shaky cinematography itself was enough to leave some feeling sick. With virtually no gore or blood, "*Paranormal Activity*" provokes an inherent fear of plausible occurrences in all viewers.

It can make them uneasy about hearing thuds and bumps heard at night in their homes.

Sickness could be caused, not only by the unsteady motion of the camera bouncing around, but from the edginess and tenseness that encompass ones body during the film. "*Paranormal Activity*" may not be the "scariest movie of all time," but it was certainly one that struck viewers the most as they lie in bed listening to branches hitting their windows.

Sideways Stories from Wayside School is far from sideways

CAMILLE DiFOLCO
PHOTOGRAPHER

"There is something you ought to know about Wayside School. It was accidentally built sideways. It was supposed to be only one story high, with thirty classrooms all in a row. Instead, it's thirty stories high, with one classroom in each story," proclaimed Bebe, played by sophomore Emily Woods, at the start of the fall play, *Sideways Stories from Wayside School*, which opened Friday, November 13.

Based on the book by Louis Sachar, author of the well-known *Holes*, the story was adapted to the stage by John Olive and centers around a class of second graders whose classroom sits on the thirtieth story of an inverted school. The zany setting, however, is perfectly suited to the outlandish characters, including an eccentric tango instructor, a teacher who turns students into apples, and a cow that wanders the school hallways.

When Mrs. Gorf, played by senior Christian Huley, attempts to transform Bebe and Myron (sophomore Ryan Walker) into apples after they fail to count to 100 alphabetically, some quick thinking and a mirror reverse the curse and turn Mrs. Gorf into a vivid Granny Smith apple... which Louis the Yard Teacher (junior Graham Dickerson) promptly eats!

The new teacher, Ms. Jewls (junior Callan Memmo), is everything Mrs. Gorf was not - kind, patient, and relatively normal. Plenty of wacky adventures befall the kids of Wayside School, as they learn to count, read upside-down, and observe gravity in action by flinging a computer out of their classroom window.

In a cast so small, everyone must step up their game and deliver. Huley and Memmo's characters went through significant transitions, the former playing both Mrs. Gorf and her son, Mr. Gorf, while the latter pivoted from kindly to disciplinary and back again as Mrs. Jewls.

Both actors portrayed the contradictory sides of their characters with believability and ease. Junior Burke Solo's character Sammy was sassy and frank, and captured plenty of laughs. Sophomore Alex Wong depicted the principal, Mr. Kidswatter, with an unsettling grin and impressive

mustache.

Finally, senior Madeline Dahl, cast as the vibrant and commanding tango instructor, Miss Valoosh, stole the show with a thick accent, spot-on delivery, and, of course, an unforgettable dance set to the Bee Gees' "Stayin' Alive."

Because the entire play was set in the same classroom, the set was remarkably polished and bright. Touches of detail and elaborate props, including both a meticulously painted set of desks and chairs as well as a full-sized chalkboard, brought the set to life and made it interesting, while purposeful blocking allowed for all kinds of movement, including a feverish "bird-dance" by Myron, to take place.

Lighting and effects, too, did a good job of sustaining the illusion, although Miss Zarves, (junior Ariel Villa), whose face was never shown, but was depicted with lighting and sound effects, deserved a little face time, or at least a more menacing façade. Miss Valoosh, too, had a disappointingly short performance, appearing in just one scene.

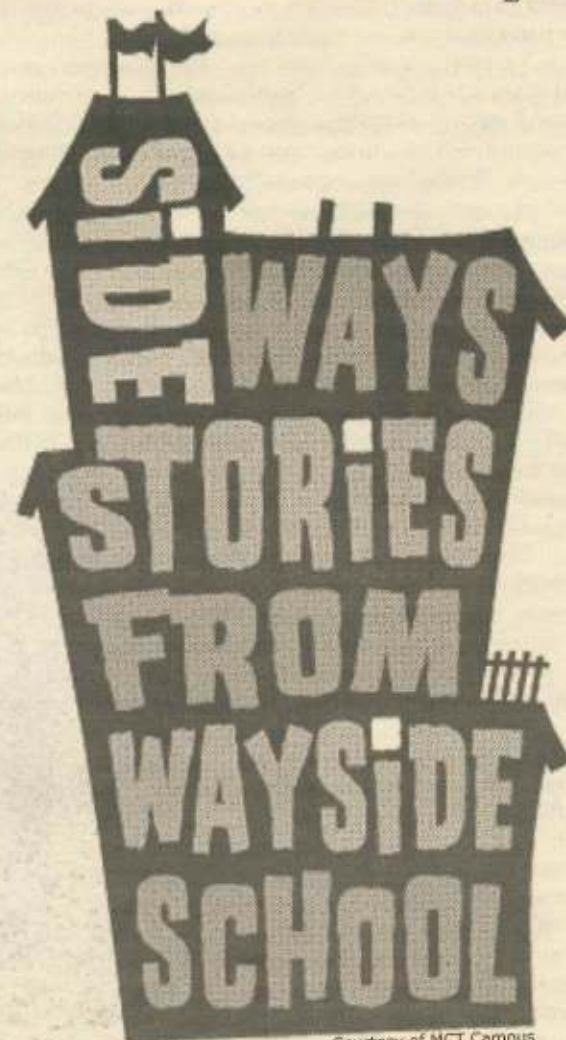
Presumably to further the illusion and disguise the sounds of shuffling actors in between scenes, a short, looped jingle would blast through the speakers for a few seconds. While it was understandably necessary to include transition music, this particular selection grated on the audience's nerves after a few renditions.

Sideways Stories from Wayside School is the Theater Department's "Cappie" show this year, which means that Cappie critics from various schools will review it, and nominate various aspects of the play for the Cappie Awards, a very high honor among high school theater programs.

When asked what goes into a Cappie-winning show, Dahl answered, "The cast really has to be on the same page.

Everyone has to give their full effort. [And] everyone involved: tech, set, costume, has to be in the same mindset."

Clearly, this was the case as this show did a fine job of incorporating the elements necessary to be a success. Its nutty humor, wacky characters, and tangible energy drew the audience in without seeming too farfetched. The building may be sideways, but the play was "straight-up" charming.



Courtesy of MCT Campus

Offering a wide variety of characters, *Sideways Stories from Wayside School* was a school hit.

Medrano Looks Forward to a Future of Organic Farming

LAURA REYNOLDS
ASSISTANT NEWS EDITOR

Although high school is a stressful time for many, Molly Medrano knows how to stay above it all. She keeps busy with activities such as the school musical and choir. A big chunk of her time is devoted to being in one of the top singing groups at our school, the Colonial Singers. "...Colonial Singers takes up a lot of my time. At first I didn't think it would be cool, but I have ended up really enjoying it," said Medrano. Fitting in other activities is a stretch with her busy

schedule, but Molly finds time for cooking, community service, and family.

With the end of November in sight, Medrano is excited for one of her favorite holidays: Thanksgiving. Her family celebrates not just with a lot of food but dancing as well. "We eat lots and dance lots of salsa," said Medrano about the Thanksgiving traditions she enjoys. Combining cultures on this holiday is an important part of its appeal; normal Thanksgiving foods are not forgotten, though, as Medrano's favorite dish is "Mama's stuffing." Looking to the future, though, has become important during her senior year.

An aspiring college student and organic farmer,

Medrano is looking forward to the life ahead of her. Moving up means moving on, though, and she would like to be remembered here at our school as "...that girl, barefootin' along, whistlin' and singin', she's a carryin' on. There's laughing in her eyes, dancing in her feet, she's a neon-light diamond and she can live on the street." Not only would she like to be remembered, but Molly will remember this school for the rest of her life. Her favorite things to remember will be, as she said, "Observing the diversity, awkward couples, awkward morning news, fights, people falling down the stairs, freshmen running to class, the football games, the copious choir concerts, and kids being kids."

Insightful Answers from Molly Medrano...

Describe yourself in six words.

"Real gangstas don't dance, we boogie."

What are your plans for next year?

"I am going to college, hopefully far away from VA, particularly New England."

Does your family have any interesting or unique Thanksgiving traditions?

"Eat lots and dance lots of salsa."

If you could live in any of other time period, which time period would you choose?

"The time when money didn't exist and people didn't consume like fiends."

How do you want people to remember you last year?

"See that girl, barefootin' along, whistlin' and singin', she's carryin' on. There's laughing in her eyes, dancing in her feet, she's a neon-light diamond and she can live on the street."

If you could create a senior superlative for yourself, what would it be?

"Most likely to be dipplin' through hoods with her man's Bobby."



Bowdring Remains Senioritis-Free Throughout High School

EMILY GRIFFIN
NEWS EDITOR

Senior Molly Bowdring participates in many activities, but she definitely does not have senioritis.

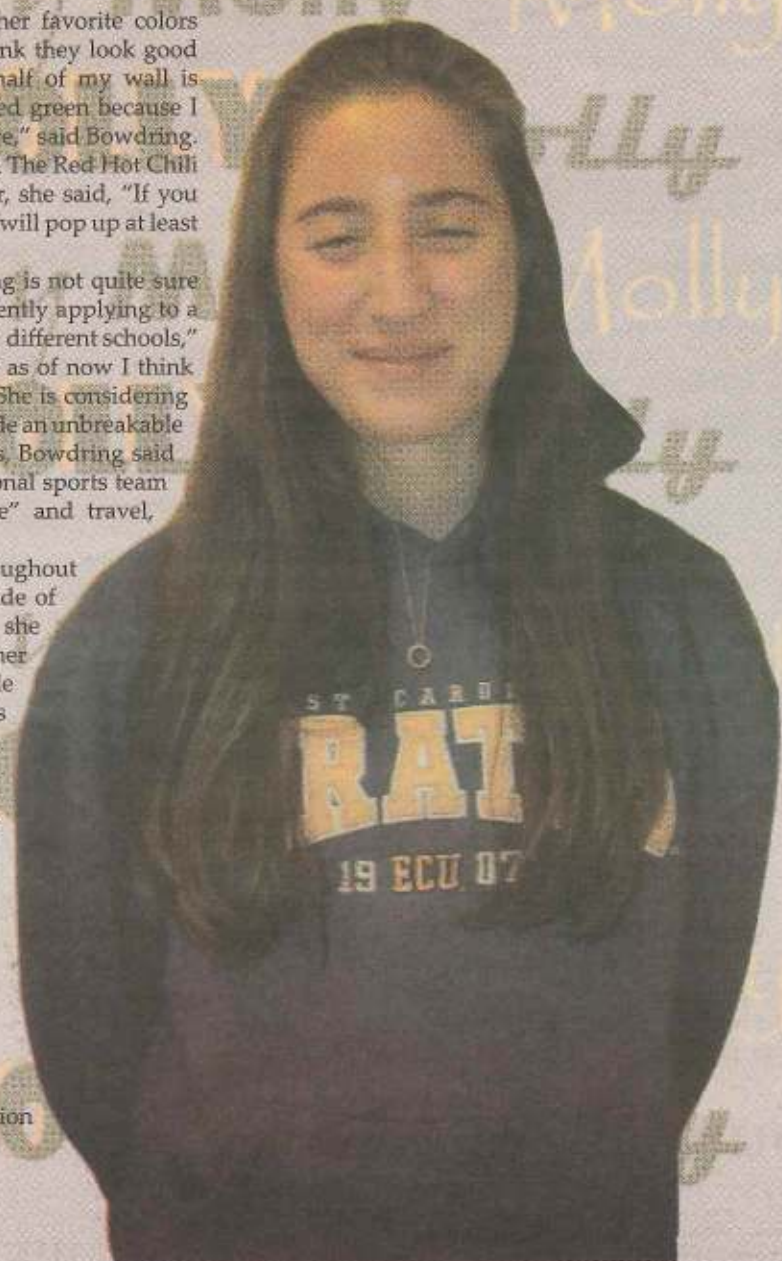
Lacrosse, volleyball, swim team, National Honor Society (NHS) and H-Project are some of the after school activities that Bowdring participates in, making her schedule not only busy, but diverse. Her long list of extracurricular activities is not where her hectic schedule ends. She also spends her time on homework for the five Advanced Placement (AP) classes she is taking, including AP Physics. However, even with all of her AP classes, her favorite class is actually one of her electives. The class that she is most taken by this year is her World Religions class, taught by history teacher George Coe. When asked what she thought of the class, Bowdring said, "The course material [is] unlike what I [have] learned in any other class that I [have] taken [before]." World Religions focuses on the study of different religions and their role in history. However, science teacher Garret Hubbard plays an influential role in Bowdring's life. She said, "This is my second year of having him as a teacher and he's also one of the NHS sponsors, so I see him a lot." Molly is the president of NHS and works hand-in-hand with Hubbard and math teacher Allison Satterwhite. As NHS President, Bowdring holds herself to a higher standard as a figure seen by the entire student body.

When she is not doing homework, studying for tests, or playing sports, one of Bowdring's favorite things to do is "to sleep...a lot. [I] also [like] hanging out with my

friends." She also pointed out that her favorite colors include blue and green, "because I think they look good together." "In my room the lower half of my wall is painted blue and the top half is painted green because I couldn't choose which color I liked more," said Bowdring. Bowdring is also a huge fan of the band The Red Hot Chili Peppers. Sporting a sticker on her car, she said, "If you put my iPod on shuffle, a song by them will pop up at least once every five songs."

As for plans for the future, Bowdring is not quite sure where she will be in a year but is currently applying to a variety of colleges. "I am applying to 11 different schools," and said, "I want to go to college and as of now I think that I want to become a psychiatrist." She is considering majoring in psychology, but has not made an unbreakable decision. In regards to her future goals, Bowdring said she wants to be "a coach of a professional sports team so I [can] watch the games up close" and travel, especially to Europe.

All in all Bowdring has done a lot throughout her high school, both inside and outside of school. Through her busy schedule, she remains an organized student with her priorities straight. Bowdring is a role model to all the students she represents as a member of several sports teams, organizations and clubs. Keep an eye out in the school community for Bowdring and her many respectable acts.



A Final Quote from Molly Bowdring...

What three items would you take with you if you were stranded on an island?

"A cell phone, a boat, and a compass. I would use the compass to sail the boat in the same direction until I get to a place where there's service; then I would use the cell phone to call someone."