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6500 Quander Road, Alexandria, VA 22307

Student selected for The U.S. Army Bowl Marching Band

Senior Allie Woodbury was chosen to represent West Potomac at The U.S. Army All-American Bowl for marching band

John Shoup
Reporter

The U.S. Army All-American Bowl, hosted in San Antonio, Tex., is a national football competition where players from high schools across the nation are selected to be on the opposing teams. Along with the players, high school marching band performers are also selected for the bands that will perform at the Bowl. This year, senior Allie Woodbury was chosen by the U.S. Army to represent West Potomac, the first time in the school's history to have one of its students attend.

The selection process is put together by the National Association for Music Education. To audition, each band student must be nominated by their school's band director and submit an online form of their resumé with multiple videos that showcase the nominee's performing abilities.

Woodbury has been playing the trumpet for eight years. She says hard work and dedication has brought her to this moment in her life. When asked about her achievement, Woodbury said

she was "inspired by anyone who has pushed themselves to get where they want. I've had so much doubt in my life and seeing others do well pushes me to do well. My private teachers, music teachers and family have all helped me and provided amazing support for all of this as well. I am beyond grateful."

Woodbury was honored to be given the opportunity, yet alone the chance to audition. After finding out that she was selected over musicians across the entire country, Woodbury was overwhelmed with joy.

"I was doubted by so many people and so when I found out that I had been selected out of other musicians across the entire country I was consumed with happiness," added Woodbury.

Of course, participating in an event such as this can be a nerve-wracking experience. "All 125 of [the band members] communicate on a Facebook group," noted Woodbury, "and my section has its own group as well, so we've all started getting to know each other. As well as the people in charge know what to do for preparation so it helps very much with the nerves."



Allie Woodbury received the honor of being chosen as West Potomac's representative at The U.S. Army All-American Bowl.
Photo: usarmyallamericanbowl.com

Music has always had a significant role in Woodbury's life, and she hopes to continue with it. "I want to be a Music Therapist and help others in their lives through music. If I can't do that then I'd want to go into music education."

Woodbury hopes to attend James

Madison University for their music program. Music has and will always affect Woodbury, and her dedication and talent has definitely paid off.

The annual U.S. Army All American Bowl will be held at the Alamodome in San Antonio, Texas on Jan. 4, 2014.

Extracurriculars: What colleges really want to see

Having a full resume of clubs and activities may look good on paper, but is it really what colleges are looking for in applicants?

Taylor Haas
Reporter

Like many West Potomac seniors, Charlotte Hayes worries about getting into college. Not just any college, but the college. Upon visiting Virginia Tech last March she fell in love immediately, enjoying little details like the friendly atmosphere and the "Hokie Stone" which covers the entire campus and distinguishes it from the rest of Blacksburg.

Charlotte loved Virginia Tech so much that when the deadline for Early Decision applications came, she applied solely to Virginia Tech. With only three weeks between when Early Decision acceptances are mailed out and the deadline for General Admission applications, Charlotte admitted, "Right now all of my eggs are kind of in one basket."

Many students begin to feel the pressure of college applications when they enter high school. What college you attend can be made out to be the most important decision of your life, and so as early as freshman year students begin touring colleges, preparing for entrance exams, and thinking about what

they can put on their college applications to make themselves stand out aside from their GPA.

The majority of colleges and universities look beyond grades and test scores and take extracurricular activities into account when admitting students. So in addition to taking on AP and Honors classes, many students join a large number of clubs and organizations to better their applications. "I have seen some incredible GPAs, incredible!" remarked West Potomac counselor Dr. Gail Allison, "and those students usually have a matching incredible school life, activity life, and so on."

West Potomac has 10 Honor Societies, eight performing groups, and more than 20 other clubs students can participate in, from Mock Trial and French Club to Teenage Republicans and Ecology. Hayes was drum major of the marching band for two years, attended Governors' School for agriculture, and

is President of the French Club and the Tri-M Music Honor Society. She is also a Girl Scout, the community service representative for National Honor Society, as well as member of French Honor Society, Key Club, and Social Studies Honor Society. While it was not a huge factor, Hayes says that the thought of college applications did affect her decision in joining several clubs and activities.

A junior who wished to be unnamed described her decision to join many different clubs, explaining that while she's confident in her ability to get into college, the question is what college she will go to. She admitted that, "Thinking about what I can put on college applications definitely affects my decisions... the clubs I participate in could be the difference between myself and someone with the same grades as me but who only participated in two clubs, for example."

This student participates in SGA, Spanish Club, French Club, Spanish Honor Society, National Honor Society, Odyssey of the Mind, Writing Center, and Young Democrats.

With so many activities, it's hard to imagine how either of them have time for academics or personal lives. But is it really an asset for your academic resumé?

While it's true that colleges look for well-rounded and active students, it's not always enough to simply participate in a lot of clubs. Douglas Christiansen, Dean of Admission for Vanderbilt University stated in The Inside Guide to Admissions that, "What we like to see is how a student has changed his or her corner of the world through their actions, and how a student has grown personally through his or her participation."

Even if you did not participate in clubs throughout your high school career or not as many as you wish you would have, it's not the end of the world as far as your future goes. Or as Dr. Allison says, "there's a college for everybody and most students find a path of some sort to get where they want to go."

FCPS budget cuts impact not only the school, but also the students

Erin Conway
Reporter

The big question that everyone in Fairfax County schools has on their mind right now is "What cuts will be made to next year's budget?" No one wants to have to pay more for anything and no one wants to see public schools suffer. Unfortunately, it may come to an ultimatum: one or more programs have to be cut.

Right now, FCPS is facing a \$140 million budget shortfall. This is caused by an array of different things including growing student enrollment numbers and a large increase in health insurance rates for FCPS employees. This shortfall will hit the 2014-2015 school year hard and affect the years to come.

Many different options are being tossed around right now to resolve the shortfall, such as county-wide staff reductions, including cutting school counselor positions, and increasing class sizes. These two ideas are quite contradictory and together chaos will surely arise.

Counselors are there for students who need help. They are there to get them through high school and into college, as well as offer support and advice. They are also a crucial part in getting all the seniors through the college application process. If the rumors are true, and counselors will be cut from the budget, student success rates is sure to decrease throughout the county.

Having class sizes increase, when many are already packed to capacity, will put more stress on teachers, many who already feel overburdened, and decrease the amount of attention that can be given to individual students' needs. This could cause massive disruptions which would negatively impact everyone's learning environment.

One extremely controversial cost-cutting measure is the suggested elimination of foreign language immersion programs in elementary schools. Decreasing students' opportunities to learn different languages will decrease the academic rigor that the Fairfax County Public School system is known for. Students that learn other languages

early, whether it be through the immersion program or in the elementary schools, have the least trouble getting used to taking a language in high school. They go farther with that language than those who aren't presented with opportunity before eighth grade.

"Immersion is quite possibly the best thing that has ever happened to me," commented senior Kelly Slatery. "I never had to learn another language because I was exposed to Spanish at such a young age I didn't even notice. Language in general is so beneficial to any profession in the future there is no reason to take the opportunity away from children."

It is also rumored that there could be a "user payment" for all students who want to try out for a school sport. That is, if a student wants to try out for field hockey in the fall, basketball in the winter, and lacrosse in the spring that student would have to pay three different fees. In other words, before knowing if a student has made the team or not, he or she would have to pay. Students could end up paying money just

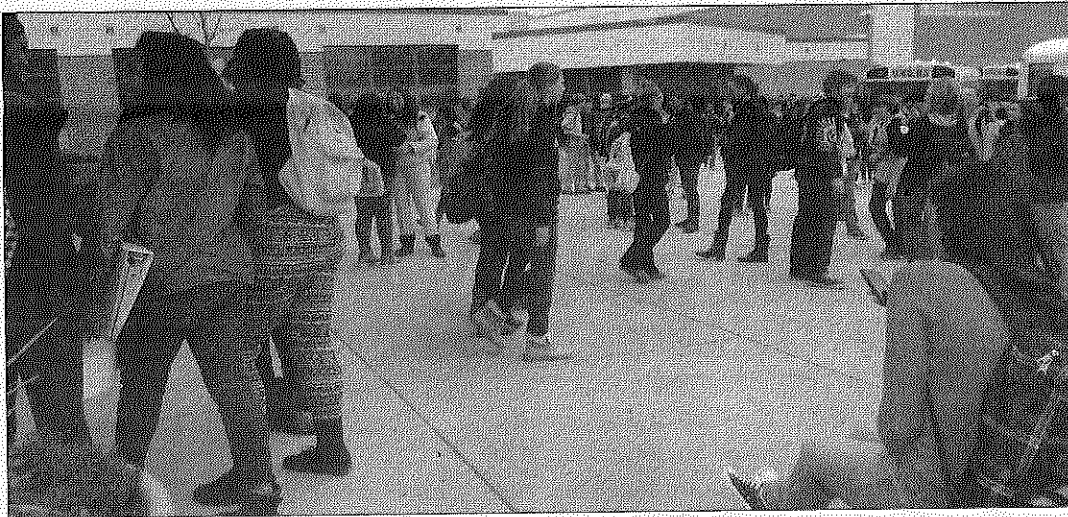
to be cut from a team.

Despite all the controversy surrounding the various proposals, no one is questioning that these changes could save a lot of money in the school system, and there are going to have to be reductions no matter what. Unfortunately no one seems to be happy with these different options.

In a recent school board meeting FCPS superintendent Dr. Karen Garza told school board members, "People have been asking, 'Will there be cuts?' And I think that question was already answered for us, there will be reductions. But what those reductions will be is the question before us."

The future financial stability of the Fairfax County Public School system is uncertain, and what can be done about it is unclear at this point. Educators, who are vital to children's futures, are at risk. Many families will be harshly affected by the changes that are brought about by the budget shortfall. Everyone is waiting to see what future school years have in store for the students and faculty.

WestPo: A can of sardines?



Staff Photo

Laraib Ilyas and Arnold Siaw-Sappore
Editor-in-Chief and Reporter

Currently at 2,368 students for the 2013-14 academic year, West Potomac High School's population has nearly reached an all-time high.

The freshman class of 2017 came roaring into the halls of the school with nearly 700 students, the largest class thus far according to school enrollment records. For many students, the hallway crowds make it difficult to get to class on time in the seven-minute class transition time allowed between periods.

"It literally takes me five minutes to get out of the math hallway traffic when I'm trying to go from Gunston to Quander. When I finally get through the massive traffic, I have to run to class with two minutes remaining," says junior Kate Roddy.

When asked about the measures taken this year to accommodate new students this year, Assistant Principal Alex Case said "two new trailers have been added to make sure there are enough classes for all students, and that new members have been added to the staff, mostly teachers." But, he added, West Po-

tomac is not likely to receive any more trailers next year nor will it see any new construction any time soon to alleviate the overpopulation problem.

A handful of classes have exceeded more than 30 students -- the county's preferred class size is 25-28, depending upon the subject area. Some subject areas had additional sections created to handle the overcrowding: English teacher Colin O'Grady teaches an extra AP English Literature class in addition to his normal five-period class schedule.

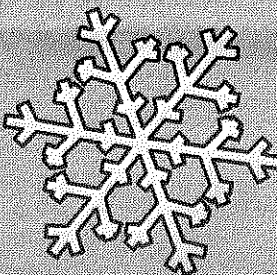
At an FCPS town hall meeting last October, both school superintendent Dr. Karen Garza and Mount Vernon school board representative Dan Storck acknowledged that West Potomac's ability to handle its current student population faces many challenges.

With even more significant growth expected over the next five years, Garza and Storck indicated that school boundary studies in the South County would likely be undertaken to improve better utilization of student capacity available at other high schools not faced with overcrowding, like Mount Vernon and Hayfield.

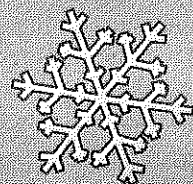
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Holidays, Spirit Days, No School, and More..

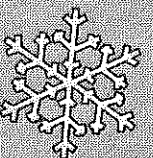
**December 13th:
Ugly Sweater Day**



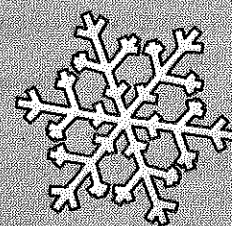
**December 20th:
Winter Wonderland Day**



**December 21st- January 5th:
Winter Break**

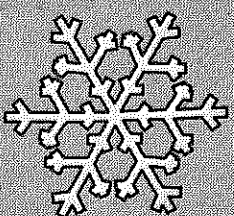


**January 20th:
Martin Luther King Jr. Day**



**January 29th:
End of 2nd Quarter**

**January 30th-31st:
Teacher Workdays**



'Catching Fire' book suffers sophomore slump

Madison Harden

Reporter

While nothing can beat the very first book of Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games* trilogy, *Catching Fire* does a pretty good job of continuing the exciting adventures of Katniss Everdeen in the dystopic future of post-apocalyptic America. With the *Catching Fire* movie coming out as well, *The Hunger Games* book and movie franchise has reached another high. But, like so many sequels and prequels and movie series, will the movie version of *Catching Fire* live up to the book?

Catching Fire continues the story of Katniss Everdeen and her life in the futuristic nation of Panem. The book begins with Katniss sitting in the woods, reflecting on her life after her victory in the 74th Annual Hunger Games. The opening catches the reader up on Katniss's current life as well as her conflicting love life between Gale and Peeta since her return from the Games. She soon returns home, only to find President Snow, the supreme leader of Panem, waiting in the library of her house. Seeing her as a threat to his rule, Snow makes it clear to Katniss that he will harm all of her loved ones if she does not prove to the Districts and to the Capitol that she is madly in love with Peeta on the Victory Tour, a promotional event that takes place between the end of one Hunger Games and the beginning of the next.

Katniss does her best to cooperate with Snow's demands, but discovers that the damage has already been done as she makes her way through the different districts. Katniss believes the Capitol will leave her alone after the Victory Tour, but little does she know that so much more awaits her when they announce what will occur at this year's Quarter Quell, a special Hunger Games that occurs every 25 years that contains a terrible twist for the tributes.

I would say the book is both a great and a not-too-great sequel to *The Hunger Games*. Collins develops many new ideas and plotlines, but there are also lots of repetitions from the first book. While it is a little repetitive, I will say that it is a memorable and exciting book and will satisfy those Hunger Games fans wanting to know what will happen to their beloved favorite characters. One fair warning: the beginning of the book is

slow and boring. While I can understand why the forest scene where Katniss reflects upon the past are necessary for the story's continuity, I feel like Suzanne Collins could have done something more exciting with it instead of writing it like an autobiography. Things, however, do pick up speed and will make it hard for you to put the book down, so just suck it up during the boring parts.

I absolutely loved the entire Victory Tour sequence. It begins with a stressed-out Katniss, a new side that we see of her character, getting prepared for the first stop of the Victory Tour, which is District 11, the home of Rue, a tribute who Katniss loved and lost in the previous Hunger Games. This was one of Collins's strongest and best written scenes in my opinion, because it adds more layers to the plot and gives you a taste of what is to come. This scene captures perfectly what these books are really going to be about. It also shows the reader the effects of Katniss's actions on Rue and Thresh's families as well as the rest of District 11, which helps set up the rest of the book.

The Quarter Quell section, however, was a little "iffy" for me. While I loved the Peeta and Katniss scenes and the uniqueness of the arena, it didn't feel as action-packed as I felt it should have been. They seemed to never run into other tributes, instead just being plagued with the different obstacles that were in the arena. Though the obstacles in the arena were terrifying and kept you wanting to read the story, it wasn't the same as having confrontations with other tributes like in *The Hunger Games*. It wasn't as exciting as I wanted it to be, but the Katniss and Peeta scenes were so sweet. Although sometimes they were a little overdone, which is extremely easy to do when you are writing a love scene, it was satisfactory for any fan to finally see Katniss fall for Peeta. The book overall was pretty good, but I have to say the ending was terrible. It did keep you hanging, as a good ending of a book in a series is supposed to, but it ended too abruptly. It is as if Collins got a little tired of writing the second book and was ready to start on the third book, which is not a good setup for a great ending. I won't give anything away, but there wasn't enough build-up to really make the ending a powerful one.

Hugh vs. The World

Taco Bell is better than Chipotle

Hugh Moffitt

Reporter

Over the past few decades, Taco Bell and Chipotle have dominated the Mexican fast food market, even becoming a large part in the subculture of modern suburban teenagers. However, because of anti-obesity campaigns by the government and the media alike, there seems to be a completely unfair bias towards Taco Bell, while Chipotle has somehow gained an undeserved cult-like following.

Let's start with the menu. Chipotle boasts simplistic offerings, including staple meals such as burritos, burrito bowls, and tacos. Not much more. Taco Bell, however, is well known for numerous fast-food innovations like the Doritos Locos Tacos, tacos with a shell made of Dorito chips, and their unique twist on chalupas, a traditional Mexican cuisine. Where Chipotle's menu is boring, Taco Bell's is diverse, presenting the customer with a wide array of Mexican foods to explore.

Delicious foods, however, come at a price, or rather, a huge calorie count. Nobody has ever argued that Taco Bell is healthy fare, but one common misconception is that Chipotle is. A burrito from Chipotle with vegetables, carnitas, cheese, guacamole, and salsa is actually heavier in fat, cholesterol, sodium, and carbohydrates than McDonald's Big Mac, a fast-food staple infamous for being unhealthy.

Then, there's the restaurant atmosphere. Modern Taco Bell restaurants are fashioned to look like an old-style Mexican cantina, completed with whitewashed walls and tiled floors. In addition to the appropriate decor, there is always a smoky aroma drifting around the restaurant making customers feel like they are enjoying their golden burrito right in the middle of Mexico City. Chipotle, though, imitates the architectural style of many modern restaurants and stores by using a drab, desperate scheme of industrial metal and wood. I, personally, don't want to eat in a warehouse.

Taco Bell stays true to its roots, but Chipotle has become symbolic of its customers: fake food and culture masquerading under the marketing points of "fresh" ingredients and upbeat soundtracks in their commercials. My dollar is not only better spent at Taco Bell, but it goes farther as well.

WIRE

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SPORTS

Dance dance revolution

Dance has been disregarded as a sport by many, but requires the same intensity as a physical sport.

Fiona Penn

Focus Reporter

I've spent the last two years of my high school career dedicated, primarily, to one thing: dance team. And I have loved every moment of it. Despite what some of my less informed peers believe, dance team is hard work. We practice for four weeks from nine to twelve in the morning over the summer. We do ab workouts, cardio, and stretches, all to build endurance for our dances. We work with demanding guest choreographers and learn dances at a fast pace, sometimes in only a week. After all our hard work on a dance, we have one chance to get it right, in front of our entire school. You can find me and my teammates here after school for practice three out of the five days of the week. If we aren't at the dance studio, we are at home, getting ready for a game or finishing our homework before a Monday night evening class. We are always working to be the best that we can be.

I'm so proud to be a member of the dance team and am so excited to be able to tell prospective colleges that I'm a part of this incredible group. I think that being a member of a team signifies so much more to schools than just a varsity letter. It shows that you

work as a teammate, know how to manage your time, you are able to achieve goals, and that you have a drive and a purpose. Unfortunately, my teammates and I are not always given the chance to show how much we have worked. For example, when I went to sign up for the SAT, I was faced with a dilemma. As anyone who has signed up knows, it's a long process and you have to fill out many online forms about your achievements in high school. There comes a point when it asks you what sport you have played. It lists thirty sports, none of which are dance team. Ping pong (excuse me, table tennis) and cheerleading were both counted as a sports. Dance team, the sport which I work towards everyday of the week, doesn't count.

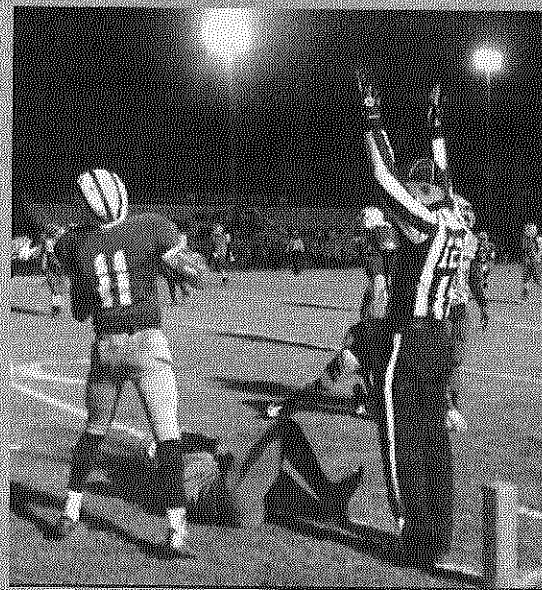
Why was I surprised? I've been told since I started dance team in middle school that it wasn't a "real sport". I've been told by classmates, friends, even administrators that dance team doesn't "count". There are several arguments that I hear over and over: you aren't playing against anyone, there is no numerical score system to what you're doing, and there's no physical aspect to dance team. Saying that is just ignorant. Yes, we dance at the football games for entertainment purposes, but we do that because

we love to show our peers our accomplishments. The sport aspect of dance team comes at competitions. We travel hundreds of miles to compete against teams from all over the country. We aren't playing against anyone? You've never seen a rivalry until you've seen two dance teams go head to head. We don't use a point system? Tell that to the ten to twelve judges that score our every missed turn, our every flexed foot, from every single angle imaginable. There's no physical aspect to dance team? Tell that to our sore muscles and our tired bodies. Tell that to the girl who has to flip her teammate over her head while holding her entire weight and fate on her shoulders. Tell that to me after I have done a two minute pom dance sixteen times. I probably wouldn't have enough energy left to tell you how physically tiring dance team is.

When a classmate asks me "Why do you guys get varsity letters" or a school administrator thanks us for "supporting the sports", insinuating that we are not a sport ourselves, I can't help but feel completely disrespected. That's disrespectful to me, my teammates, my coach, and the entire sport of dance team as a whole.

WOLVERINE WARRIOR

Jordan Alexander



Ray Rhatican

Ray Rhatican

Sports Editor

In the summer leading into the 2013 season, few expected sophomore Jordan Alexander to play a prominent role on the varsity football team -- especially Alexander himself. During the team's summer workouts, Alexander showcased strong footwork and athletic ability. Combined with his ability to track a football and utilize his elite field vision, the young receiver earned the role of starting slot receiver. He wasn't satisfied with just being a varsity starter. Alexander took advantage of his playing time by leading all West Potomac receivers.

After being held without a catch in the season opener vs Centerville, a game in which West Potomac played three different quarterbacks due to injury, the sophomore exploded for 74 yards on 6 catches, and quickly became the favorite target of freshly crowned quarterback Demornay Pierson-El. Despite boasting a relatively short stature, Alexander built a reputation as a physical force, delivering the hits of a linebacker on any defender unfortunate enough to get in his way.

Alexander finished the season as a bright spot on the team, leading the Wolverines in receptions (24), receiving yards (279), and receiving touchdowns (2). He also managed to add 327 yards and 2 touchdowns on the ground while splitting time in the backfield with senior Darien Pickett.

"Yes I am one of the smallest people on the field, but I have heart," said the second team All-Conference receiver. "A lot of people will say 'yeah he's small, yeah he's small'. I don't think about that, I just think like hitting them harder and going at it."

Along with fellow underclassmen contributors Carlston Burch and Marquis Saldona, Alexander is the face of a promising young receiving corps who should generate a strong Wolverine passing attack in the years to come.

On the future of the program, Alexander noted "This season, it was decent, but then again our team was young, so we didn't have that much experience. We just need to stick together, challenge each other, and try to make our way up to like playoffs." Alexander's goals for his upcoming junior season are making first team All-Patriot Conference en route to a conference championship and a state championship berth.

See the video accompanying this article and more at thewpwire.com

BY THE NUMBERS

Leaders in the Fall Sports Season

FOOTBALL

Rushing Yards: Demornay Pierson-el (1007)

Rushing Touchdowns: Demornay Pierson-el (16)

Receptions: Jordan Alexander (24)

FIELD HOCKEY

Goals: Amy Holm (6)

Assists: Lizzie Wood (3)

Saves: Eve Hauptle (128)

GOLF (BEST PERFORMANCES)

Ben Levy score of 80 to advance to Regionals

Michael Barnes score of 83 to advance to Regionals

Wolverines' basketball season opens

Team loses first scrimmage to Hayfield, but shows great promise for the season to come

Ray Rhatican
Sports Editor

On Nov. 22nd, the West Potomac basketball team made their first return to the court since their disappointing first-round 69-53 playoff loss to South County last February. None of the five starters on that 2012-2013 squad returned this year, and the composition of the team is now dramatically different. The new guard scrimmaged Hayfield, a team they will not meet in the regular season, displaying some rust in an overall loss.

Asked about what he saw in his team during the scrimmage, Coach David Houston III noted, "A lot of hustle, I thought we hustled. It's early in the year, we've been playing about a week and a half, so we knew we had a lot to work on, and it's a good thing to see us out there playing against an aggressive team, so we can figure out what we need to work on."

Wolverine stalwart Brandon Pressley has graduated, but has left behind his experienced understudy in point guard Austin Treakle. Like Pressley, Treakle is a short, quick player. After years of playing and learning under Pressley, Treakle demonstrated veteran poise, along with his ability to use his quickness and court vision to create his own shot and find his teammates for uncontested buckets. Playing on a team of scorers, he fits in nicely as point guard with his skills as a facilitator.

Alongside the senior point guard is his younger brother, freshman Alan Treakle, who is starting at shooting guard. The younger Treakle also showed off his speed, and had a productive night slashing to the basket, making the physical plays of a veteran forward driving to the hole. The combination of the two Treakle brothers in the backcourt proved to be a

lethal offensive asset. Both players not only possess the unique ability to make defenders look silly with quick, explosive moves, but also the ball movement skills necessary to find the open man. "I haven't had brothers in the backcourt ever at the same time since I've been at West Potomac," said Coach Houston. "They play well together, they both know each other's strengths. I can tell Austin was looking for his brother a lot. Alan is more of a scorer and a penetrator. I thought they both played real well. Alan, being a freshman, in his first action against a solid team in Hayfield that was really physical and fast, I thought he did real well."

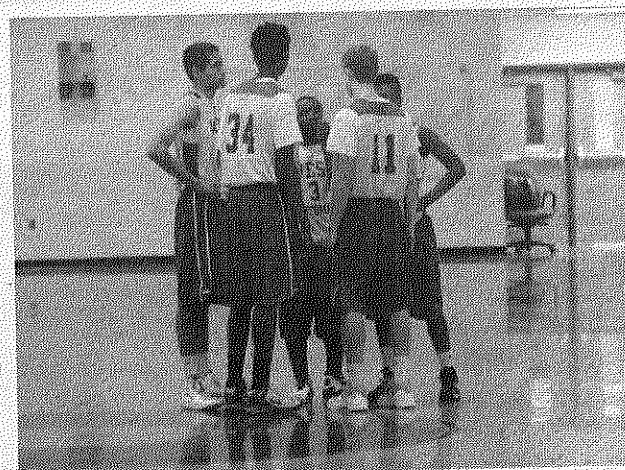
The open man Houston wants his two guards to find is senior sharpshooter Joseph Richards. Playing a three-guard position that is a hybrid between shooting guard and small forward in the West Potomac offense, Richards is regularly wide open in the corner to knock down longballs. On Richards, Houston said "We really like it when he's in his corner, hitting threes. He's been working on creating his shot, but we have some other guys that can create some shots." It was abundantly clear that Richards three-point shooting will be heavily leaned on, and will be a staple in the team's offense.

Perhaps the most intriguing member of the presumed starting five is senior power forward Conrad Jenne. Jenne has played the majority of his basketball career at a guard position, but this season finds himself in the front court. Given his height and power, combined with his athleticism and scoring ability, this appears to be a brilliant move, and should make Jenne a matchup nightmare. "Because he's a guard playing a forward position, at least tonight he was, so we figure [in] our matchups with other teams, a big's probably going to be guarding him, we want to take

advantage offensively of that. Plus he's a good athlete, I mean he runs real well, and he jumps real well, so we think he can probably handle himself there."

Rounding out the five is senior Lennon Young at center. Young, at 6'5", is lankier than the standard center. However, his athleticism and long wingspan make him a force on the boards, and he has noticeable talent in tracking rebounds. He also excelled with short range shots and putbacks versus Hayfield. If Lennon can provide a big-man presence on defense, and give his high-powered offense second chance shots, the Wolverines should be a force to be reckoned with in the Northern Region.

Next up for the team is a scrimmage at Langley on Nov. 30th. This will be their final tune-up heading into the regular season, which will start at home on Dec. 3rd, when the Wolverines will host the Westfield Bulldogs. This will be the first time since 2008 that West Potomac will not open its season against Mount Vernon.



Ray Rhatican

Varsity basketball players gather to concoct a plan against their game with Hayfield.

Mount Vernon DRIVING SCHOOL

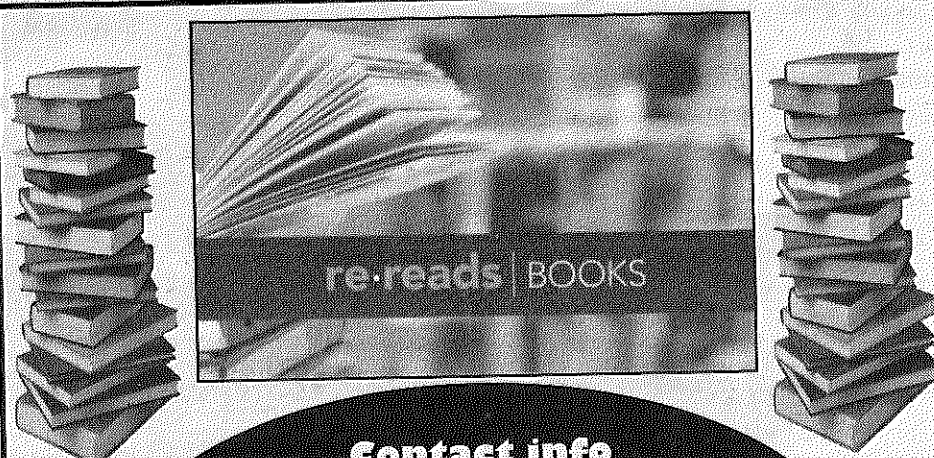
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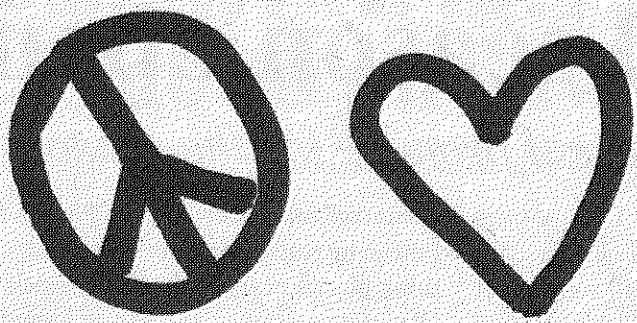
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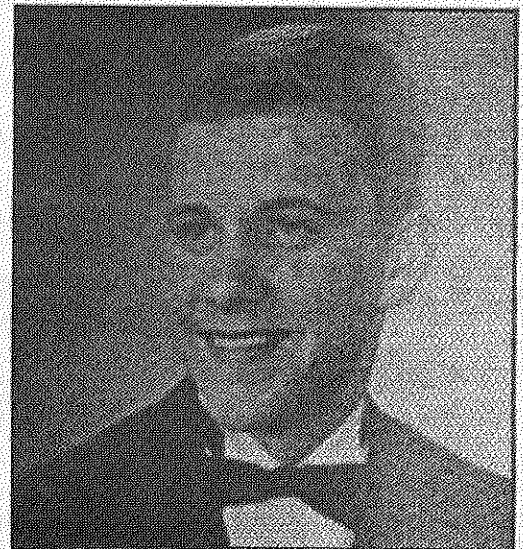
BLAST FROM THE PAST

COMMEMORATING GROVETON, F

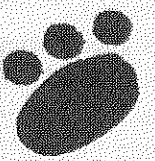
field hockey!!



JANA DE COSTER



BRET DUNLAP



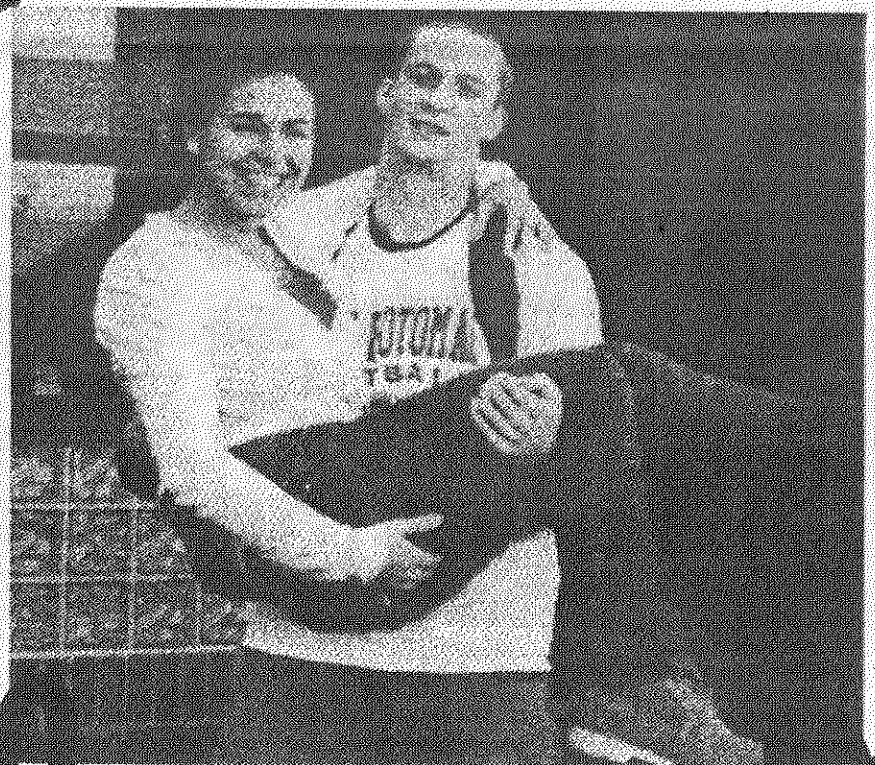
forever young



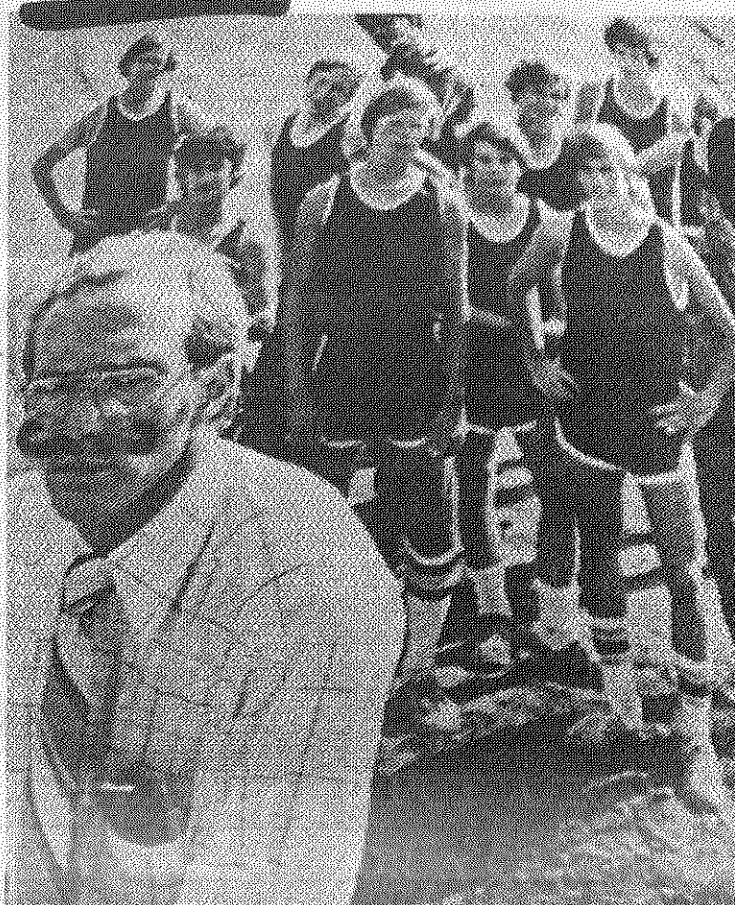
MRS. BOYD ON HOMECOMING COURT

Yeah Bret!!! Best senior prize

MS. DECOSTER WON THE "FLIRTIEST" SENIOR SUPERLATIVE, ALONG WITH MOST ATHLETIC, BEING CAPTAIN OF THE FIELD HOCKEY TEAM.



Go Jana! Haha
Loved playing
fockey with you, best
"THERE USED TO



WHEN MR. DUNLAP WENT TO WEST
VERNON HIGHS'S ROCK. DUNLAP DROVE
SCHOOL DIGGING A HUGE HOLE. ON
THE ROCK INTO THE HOLE, BURIED
THE STUDENTS RESPONSIBLE HAD T

FROM THE PAST

MOUNT AND WEST POTOMAC ALUMNI

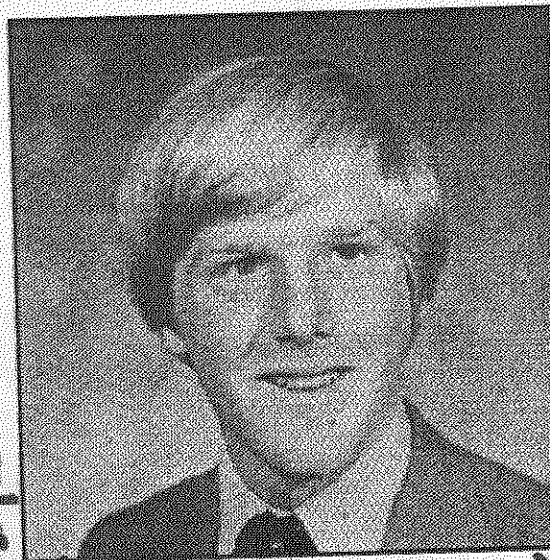
WAG



Varsity
cheer



Forever



Don,
you're the
friendliest
guy ever!
It's been
an awesome
year!!

NA LOZA
EVER!

MIMI WALTERS
(Mrs. BOYD)

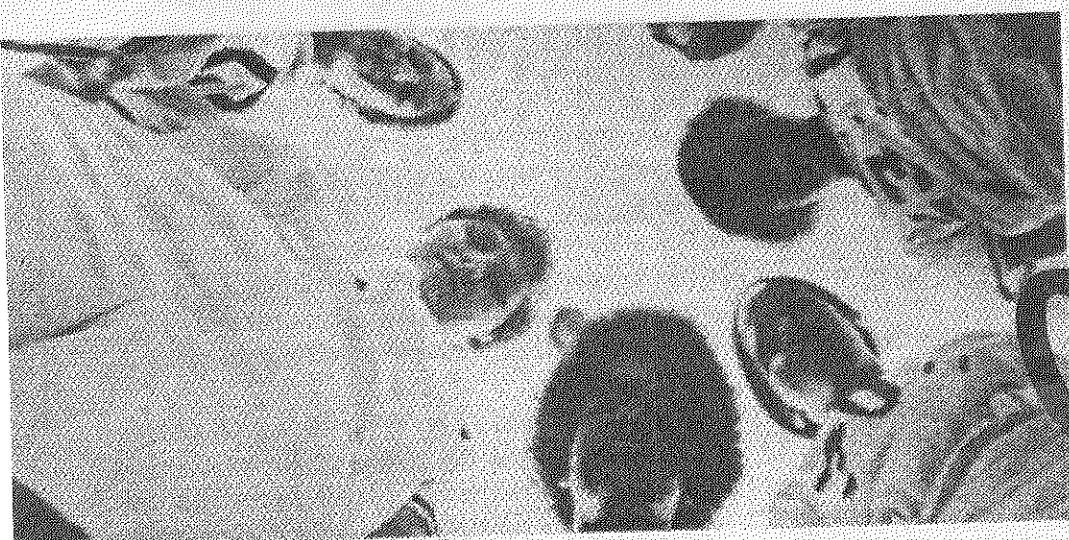
DONALD BEEBY



😊

😊

GO WOLVERINES



tain ever!

E A LOT MORE SENIOR PRANKS...

TOMAC, HE CARRIED OUT THE SENIOR PRANK OF A LIFETIME: BURY MT.
D UP AS A CONSTRUCTION WORKER AND WORKED FOR THREE DAYS AFTER
THREE, ABOUT FIFTY PEOPLE GATHERED AT NIGHT AND THEY PUSHED
AND PUT A TOMBSTONE ON TOP. THE ROCK, STAYED UNDERGROUND UNTIL
Y FOR A CRANE TO GET IT OUT.

ENTERTAINMENT

Life is good on "Avenue Q"

Beyond the Page Theatre Co. brings Broadway to Quander Road

Margaret O'Meara

News Editor

Avenue Q School Edition, written by Robert Lopez and Jeff Marx, was brought to life on stage by West Potomac's Beyond the Page Theatre Company. They executed Lopez's and Marx's edgy, witty, and clever music with effortless puppet movements and excellent production of the songs from the popular Broadway musical. Directed and choreographed by Phillip Lee Clark, with musical direction by Cathy Manley, *Avenue Q School Edition* left me laughing along with the rest of the audience to the comical script and humming along to the musical's infectiously catchy songs.

Princeton (David Jarzen), a recent college graduate with a B.A. in English, finds himself on Avenue Q looking for an apartment. Princeton meets his new neighbors, one of whom is child star Gary Coleman. A neighboring married couple, Brian (Peter Serle) and Christmas Eve (Nikki Amico), introduce Princeton to Kate Monster (Lizzy Rader). Princeton explains he is on a mission to find his purpose in life and Kate shares with him that she wants to open a special school just for monsters and their friendship develops.

Avenue Q School Edition highlights the harsh realities of the adult world and how things won't always turn out the way they are planned.

The cast of *Avenue Q School Edition* consists of both people and puppets. The puppeted actors performed without missing a beat with their puppets. The actors' voices and their puppets' mouths were in perfect sync, and whenever a non-puppet character was talking to a puppet, the actor never failed to maintain eye contact with the puppet and not the puppeteer.

Musical director, Cathy Manley, and Kendell Haywood performed the show's musical score flawlessly

on keyboard and drums. With the exception of a few minor characters using character voices, all the characters could be clearly heard and understood. The character voices of Christmas Eve (Amico) and Trekkie Monster (Sam Rainey) were especially well done and were very appropriate for their characters. Amico's Christmas Eve Japanese accent could be heard clearly in her speaking lines and in her songs, as well as songs she sang with the company.

Designed by director Philip Lee Clark and building lead by master builders Ella Moore, Natalie Jurkow-

deal of comic relief, moving the show along as the push characters to do things out of their comfort zone, much like that of the real world. Lucy (Emilia Carbone), equipped with red boas and hair flips, was unforgettable, and her haughty and attitudinal performance of the song "Special" was one of the show's highlights, finished as it was by Carbone's performance of a split.

The numbers "It Sucks To Be Me," "If You Were Gay," and "Everyone's A Little Bit Racist" were crowd favorites, with their simple dance steps combined with

puppet movements. "It Sucks To Be Me" sung by the company opened the first act and set the bar high for the rest of the production. "If You Were Gay" sung delightfully by Ben Roberts and Eddie Perez and "My Tape" sung by David Jarzen and Lizzy Rader set the bar even higher as the most touching performances of the show with each song featuring two puppeted cast members singing about their relationships with each other.

During the second act, the show's company walked through the audience while singing "The Money Song,"

holding out hats to collect money for Smile Train, a charity seeking to raise awareness and money for cleft palate surgeries. Money collected from "The Money Song" during all performances of West Potomac's *Avenue Q School Edition* will be going to Smile Train.

West Potomac High School's superb production of *Avenue Q School Edition* (rated PG-13) has brought the popular Broadway musical to the local stage for both humans and monsters alike, regardless of race, color, creed, or sexual orientation, to enjoy.



Actors, from left to right, are Peter Serle as Brian, David Jarzen as Princeton, Nikki Amico as Christmas Eve, Lizzy Rader as Kate Monster and Kaila Anderson as Gary Coleman.

ski, and Brittany Dale, the stage lighting and the set's backlighting enhanced the mood of each scene. The addition of video anecdotes created by Dan Evans, Alex Toone, and Austin Loan, throughout the show explained word definitions that were a part of the story. The anecdotes also served as the show's omnipotent narrator, much like the one heard on a popular children's television show.

Some of the show's characters stood out more than most. Brian's performance of "I'm Not Wearing Any Underwear Today" was a brief moment of physical comedy fun. The Bad Idea Bears (Emma Norville, Dan Evans, Frankie Mananzan) also provided a great

"Battlefield 4" graphics make destruction worth the price

Hugh Moffitt

Reporter

In a world of video games with bland storylines, online modes overpopulated with pubescent boys, and sequels with little to no change from their prequels, Electronic Art's *Battlefield* series has been the breath of fresh air desperately needed in the first-person shooter genre. The latest release in the series, *Battlefield 4*, does not disappoint.

An ever-increasing problem in the world of video games is the fact that as games start becoming more realistic, they are still confined to the outdated hardware on the PS3 and Xbox 360. Because of this, *Battlefield 4*'s intense realism can be experienced best on a PC with, at the very least, a decent graphics card. Playing *Battlefield 4* on a PC at maximum settings will make players feel like they are actually a part of the battle -- a feature that many games promise, but few actually deliver on. The intense cinematics and particle effects on the PC will have players' jaws dropping in awe, agape at the raging battle on their computer screen.

The next-gen graphics in *Battlefield 4* improved upon an already top-of-the-line system, making the *Battlefield 4* experience even more of an intense and realistic simulation of modern combat than its predecessor, *Battlefield 3*.

The new multiplayer mode is jam-packed with maps, like the numbing urban combat of "The Siege

of Shanghai", where players can watch a skyscraper tumble to the ground, and either get crushed under the rubble, or make a hasty escape out of the debris radius in time to see their comrades die an agonizing death. Another breathtaking map in *Battlefield 4* is "Paracel Storm," an epic warscape that showcases new mechanics of naval warfare in the game, as well as being versatile enough to incorporate dogfights in the skies and land combat on the shore.

Another new feature in *Battlefield 4* is the new destructibility in multiplayer games. Everything can be destroyed. For the first time in a first-person shooter, bullets actually have an impact on walls and buildings, not just a cheesy bullet hole that disappears after five seconds. Players won't have to play long to see this: they might be running along the war-torn, devastated streets of "Zavod 311," an abandoned Russian tank factory, and suddenly have to dodge blocks of rubble rolling off different buildings. This adds a new dynamic to multiplayer modes, where players can intentionally create rubble to kill their opponents or block their vehicles.

Probably the most prominent and awesome new feature of *Battlefield 4* is "levolution," the new part of *Battlefield* combat that lets players, their teammates, and their opponents personalize each multiplayer match by their own decisions. For example, in the map "Flood Zone," a map set in a Chinese town near a flooding river, players can choose whether or

not to destroy the town levee. If they do, players will be carried to the rooftops of buildings by flood water and forced to continue the battle there, as naval combat suddenly has a pivotal role in the outcome of the match. This makes each and every match a new experience, keeping you playing the game for hours on end, unlike most other first-person shooters, where matches become unremarkable and monotonous after extended play.

Overall, *Battlefield 4* lives up to the hype surrounding its release, down to every over-the-top cinematic in the trailers shown on TV. Maybe for the first time in modern video game history, a game is finally worth the \$60 price tag that comes with it. *Battlefield 4* is worth every cent, and will keep players hooked on its fluid gameplay for longer than any game that has come out for quite a while.



M.I.A., Goddess of the word

Jensen Wainwright

Focus Editor

"Ain't Dalai Lama / Ain't Sai Baba / My words are my armor / And you're 'bout to meet your karma" fills my ears as I listen to *Matangi*, M.I.A.'s fourth studio album. My initial response to the album? Genius. Absolute genius in every aspect. The lyrics are incredible, the beats are solid, and the messages it conveys are as strong and unwavering as the rest of the album.

Following her usual route of groundbreaking hip-hop, M.I.A. came out with a single for this album, *Bring the Noize*, a fast-paced, high-energy anthem of freedom and society. Starting off with "I'm so tanga people call me Matangi, goddess of the word..." sets the bar very high for the rest of the album. She compares herself to Matangi, an actual Hindu goddess of the untouchable class of India as well as art, music, and words.

Matangi is clearly a huge inspiration for every aspect of this album. Matangi is depicted having green skin in religious art through the Hindu faith, a parallel is drawn between Matangi and Blanka, a character in the video game *Street Fighter*, in her song *Double Bubble Trouble*. In an interview with *Complex Magazine*, M.I.A. talked about Matangi, and how symbolism is used throughout the entire album.

"So Matangi itself it's interesting to talk about it. She is green, because it's the color of intellect," M.I.A., a.k.a. Maya Arupragsam, explains. "But green in the West is the color of money. And so you're already fighting with like a negative image to do with color, and it's not even like, 'I'm brown and I come from Sri Lanka.' But to put forward a cover where you're green in the West is hard because the only thing you

can associate green to is zombies, witches, and money. And they're like the three most negative existence of that color. And you know in the East it's life, knowledge, and intellect. So even putting things on the palette in the pamphlet where you have to debate these things, to me it's not just about the songs. It's again, the whole concept: why do things turn negative when they get here?"

Her criticisms of Western culture and its fascination with money and material pleasures appear, not just in *Matangi*, but in her other albums, notably in her smash hit 'Paper Planes.' When listening to M.I.A., I feel a strong sense of empowerment and independence in what she's singing -- this is only natural, given her background and where she came from. Growing up, her father was a key player in one of the political movements that caused the Sri Lankan civil war and helped in the founding of the rebel group Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, whom Maya has been rumored to be associated with in recent years. During the war in Sri Lanka, her family was forced into hiding, living in slums, where her school was shot at, before Maya and her mother moved back to her birthplace in London.

Since her last album, *Maya*, her musicality has seen a huge transformation, becoming more clean and professional. While some may argue that's an omen of an artist's decline, if she continues as she has with *Matangi*, M.I.A. has many more heights to hit.

All of M.I.A.'s albums use the history of her rough experiences in the ghettos and rebel groups as inspiration, and this latest release takes this to a whole other level: *Matangi* is a musical narrative of her life, hitting hard as a social and political commentary delivered as an incredibly well-crafted and catchy album.

Review: Catching Fire, 4/5 stars

Lilly Lane

Reporter

On November 21st, I joined the masses sitting outside the theater hours before *Catching Fire*, the newest "Hunger Games" movie. As we lined up to get into the theater, everyone was talking about their hopes for the film. "I hope it's better than the first one" and "I want it to live up to the book" were heard murmuring throughout the crowd. Both are challenges faced by series sequels, like *The Twilight Saga: Eclipse* and *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*.

Catching Fire is the second installment of Suzanne Collins' #1 USA Bestseller dystopic series *The Hunger Games*, featuring the characters of Katniss Everdeen (Jennifer Lawrence) and Peeta Mellark (Josh Hutcherson). In this part of the series Katniss and Peeta are thrown back into the dangerous arena, only this time the stakes are higher.

Prior to seeing the movie, I was not really looking forward to it because I thought the first installment was a disappointment. It did not really follow the book, and if you hadn't read the book then the movie was confusing and hard to follow. Yet during *Catching Fire* I found myself more and more engaged, I laughed, cried, and even let out an angry yell at the end of the movie. For such a reaction, one that was audibly shared with the rest of the audience, I give it 4 out of 5 stars.

Unfortunately, it takes a long time to build up to the actual Games. Through the whole first half I thought to myself, "When is this going to end? This is the longest half-hour of my life, when are they going to get to the good parts?" and once the movie made it there, the director kept the action short. When the last scene rolled off the screen I had to check my watch to make sure that the movie was actually over.

When the movie was finished everyone was talking. I heard "Wow, that was so good!" and "That was so much better than the first one." The only negative comment I heard was "I wish that they had added this part from the book in the movie."

The movie captured enough of the book that it wasn't a complete failure, and in parts it was truly very good, but they still cut out parts from the book I thought were vital to the story, as well as skipped other interesting scenes. The book was undoubtedly better than the movie, as it always seems to be with such good books. But I think fans everywhere will be pleased with how it turned out.

So I say that the ticket is worth your money and the 2-1/2 hours of film is worth your time. It could have been better, but I found it much less disappointing than the first.

Students get "Carried Away" at Passion Pit

Fiona Penn

Focus Editor

On Halloween, while most students dressed up and handed out candy, a lucky few West Potomac students ventured into D.C. for the Passion Pit concert. After a last-minute venue change from the Patriot Center to Echostage, students scrambled to find rides and figure out where this location was. "I was concerned because it was next to a strip club, but it ended up being only mildly terrifying," said junior Marge Lingenfelter. Despite the seedy location, the concert turned out to be a blast.

Echostage was buzzing with excitement when fans arrived, as elaborately costumed concert-goers couldn't wait to see the indie electronica band perform. "We got there early, before the crowd, so we were really close to the stage, which made it a lot more fun," said junior Gabe Perkins, junior. Passion Pit, best known for their hits "Take A Walk" and "Sleepyhead", garnered many fans with a great set at Sweetlife Music Festival last year at Merriweather Post Pavillion. The band is known for great dance beats partnered with incredible vocals, as sung by frontman Michael Angelakos.

The opening act was The Joy Formidable. Despite being unknown to most

of the crowd, they got the whole place to their feet with their great guitar work, haunting vocals, and an amazing drummer. The singer and guitarist, Rhiannon "Ritzy" Brian, had a very similar look and sound to Ellie Goulding, but with much more depth to her voice. The crowd fed off the electric en-

Despite how awesome The Joy Formidable was, Passion Pit clearly was the event of the night. When they took the stage the crowd burst into ear-drum-shattering screams. They played most of their songs from their newest album *Gossamer*, along with some hits from their older album *Manners*.



Fiona Penn

ergy of the band, almost forgetting that they were waiting for Passion Pit to go on. Some West Potomac students still had Halloween on their mind, such as Perkins, who said "it was fun because the band threw candy into the audience."

The crowd jumped at the bass drops, sang along to every word, and danced the night away. The vibe in the club was one of complete awe. Angelakos' soaring vocals were just as good, if not better, than on the album and his stage presence was perfect. He was calm, yet

excited, and sang with emotion that made you feel more of the lyrics. These already incredible songs were backed up with a fantastic light show that transformed the audience from a sea of people to a mass of red and blue lights. Although all the songs were excellently performed, Passion Pit's biggest hits really brought the house down. During "Sleepyhead" the entire crowd sang along and a daring teenager even crowd-surfed, before he was promptly pulled down by security guards.

The big hits weren't the only songs that got the crowd pumped. One stand-out, "Mirrored Sea", combined an incredibly strong bass with nausea-inducing lights projected from an LCD screen behind the band, all forming a truly a great piece, one that can't be felt simply by listening to it with headphones.

Along with all the good things at the concert, one song was clearly missing: "On My Way", Passion Pit's answer to the ballad which is highlighted by Angelakos' especially personal lyrics. Despite this missing piece, the Passion Pit concert was clearly a night well spent. Lingenfelter summed up the concert perfectly: "Sweat, glitter, and loud music. The perfect factors of an unforgettable night."

FEATURES

From France and Bangladesh to the halls of West Potomac *International students from around the world share their experiences*

Claudia Santa Anna

Reporter

When a new student joins your class in the middle of the year, do you ever wonder where they moved from? California? Florida? New York? What about out of the country?

Meet freshman Aurora Laborie, who is on the winter track team and plays piano. She might seem like the typical American girl, but she's not. This year, Aurora moved to our area from France. How different is it there?

What would it be like to live in another country? "Everything in France is different than in Virginia," she says. "The food here is really different, and I think French food is better. School is different, too." What is the biggest difference between the two countries? "Here, everybody is so nice!" Aurora says. "French people are so judgmental, and I'm the first one to say so because I know I'm judgmental. I'm not saying that the French people are mean, because that is not true at all. I'm just saying that here, I don't feel like people are judging you based on your clothes or your attitude! That's just my opinion."

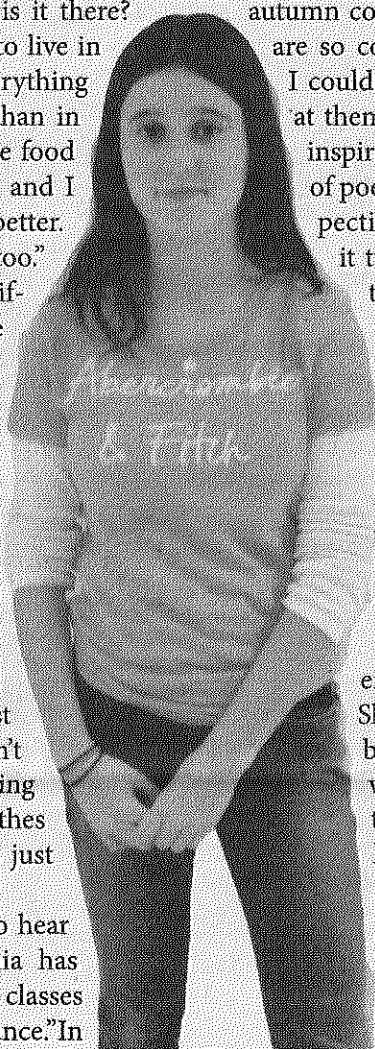
You might be glad to hear that school in Virginia has shorter days and less classes than school in France. "In France, I took 14 courses, and here I only have four! I started school at 7:55 and finished at 5:30," she replies. "I had around five to seven classes every day. The French system wasn't based on odd and even days like here, I had different classes, but I had math or French classes almost everyday. Plus, I had a lot more homework in France than here. Even lunch is different! I ate at 12:30, and lunch boxes weren't allowed. So, yeah, school here is totally different

than in France!"

It can be fun living in a new place after spending most of your life somewhere else. "I was so excited when I found out I was moving!" Aurora says. "I lived in France almost all my life! I only spent two years out of France, when I lived in Alabama during third and fourth grade. So I lived around 12 years in France, and I was born there, just like all my family!" What does Aurora like the most about Virginia so far? "I love the autumn colors in Virginia. The trees are so colorful and beautiful, and I could spend hours just looking at them." She says. "These colors inspire me. I could write dozens of poems about them! I was expecting a lot from Virginia, and it turned out to be even better than I thought it would be!"

After moving back and forth between two very different countries, you start to learn how to appreciate and love both. "When I finally got here, I was so happy, and so flabbergasted, that I kept smiling all the time at everything and everyone!" She says. "Ever since I came back from America when I was younger, I have been torn apart between my love for my home country and America. When I'm in France I feel homesick for America and when I'm in America I'm homesick for France! I don't have one home anymore, I have two homes. I may not have any relatives here in America, but my past years spend here taught me how to love this place like my home."

Even though someone does not live in the same country as you doesn't mean that that person has never been through friendship troubles or have been bullied before, like you might have. People are more alike than different, whether you live in France, or Virginia.



Carly Mulvihill

Business Manager

Imagine spending a year abroad in a country filled with new languages, people, and experiences. For some it might seem scary, but for junior Symon Islam, it has been exhilarating. Islam is an exchange student from Bangladesh, and for him the exchange program to the United States means not only educational opportunities, but also more of an opportunity to choose to take new classes, eat new foods, and join new clubs.

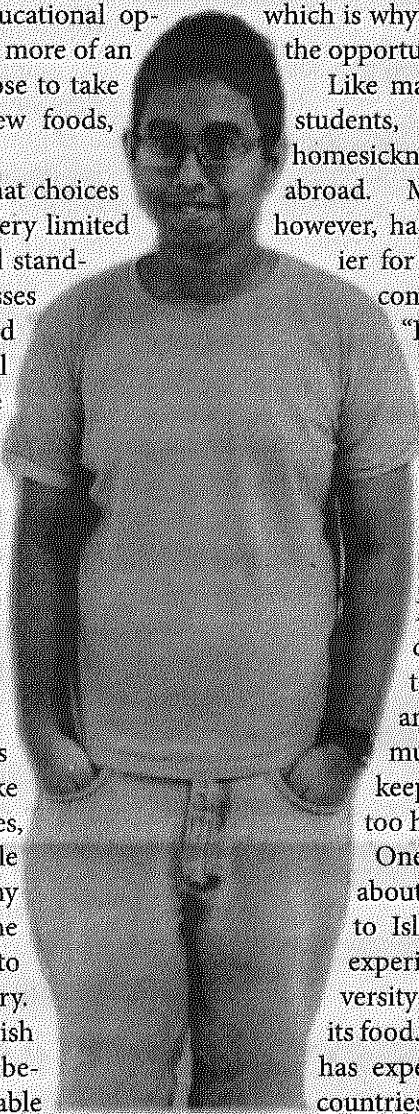
Islam explained that choices in Bangladesh are very limited from an educational standpoint. Specific classes are required and must be taken by all students. Also, there are few choices of electives or alternatives to typical core classes such as calculus or physics. Fortunately for Islam, he has been able to take advantage of the interesting course offerings at West Potomac, like Shakespeare Studies, and has been able to experience many other classes that he would not be able to in his home country. He loves the English program at WPHS because of its noticeable differences from the English programs in his native country. English classes in Bangladesh "are all grammar," Islam observed. His favorite part of English classes in the United States is that they are centered around "fun analysis," rather than strict grammar.

Another one of Islam's favorite things about his West Potomac experience is being a part of the Mock Tri-

al Club. The experience is particularly unique for him because Mock Trial is an activity typically reserved for only college students in Bangladesh. Since hiring judges for the trials there is expensive, only those who have moved on to higher education get the chance to do it. The ability to join the club before going to college is an experience that Islam would not get at home, which is why he took advantage of the opportunity here.

Like many foreign exchange students, Islam has battled homesickness while studying abroad. Modern technology, however, has made it much easier for him to stay in contact with his family. "I Skype with my parents every day," Islam explained, in addition to using social networks like Facebook to stay in contact with his friends at home. Using the Internet to communicate has made the distance between the U.S. and Bangladesh seem much smaller to Islam, keeping him from getting too homesick.

One of the greatest things about America, according to Islam, is the ability to experience the cultural diversity of the U.S. through its food. He feels as though he has experienced many other countries through the unique diversity of our country. Islam explained that Bangladesh does not have as great a convergence of nationalities as does the U.S, so the diversity here has been an eye-opening and exciting experience for him. Foreign exchange is all about experiencing new things, and for Islam, trying new foods has been a huge part of his experience.



Don't mock it till you try it: West Potomac's Mock Trial Club

Katie Dickinson

Staff Reporter

If you're a "Law and Order" fanatic, an actor, or an "analytical pick-things-apart" kind of person, then the Mock Trial Club may be for you.

"It's basically fake court," says activity sponsor Shanna Daniel. "It appeals to a diverse group of students."

West Potomac's team is comprised of about 15 members. They compete with other teams across the region and state, all who receive the same court case to argue. Each school's team builds the case for both the defense and the prosecution. At competitions, while one school's defense matches up against another's prosecution, their prosecution also matches up against the other's defense. This allows judges, team members, and the audience watching to see both sides of the case.

"It's an intensely exciting exercise," says Daniel.

To win and move on to the next round, the team doesn't necessarily have to "win" the case. The judges look at how well the teams did, advancing them based on their overall performance and appropriate use of evidence.

It teaches its members how to improve on their public speaking and persuasion ability. Mock Trial participants take on the persona of a lawyer or witness and have to stay in character throughout an unpredictable trial.

"I joined Mock Trial because I was eager to test both my public speaking skills and my ability to reason," says senior Matt Rychlik.

This is the third year for the club at West Potomac. Daniel got the club started after helping out with her previous school's club.

"I learned so much and I found such an enjoyment working one on one with students," says Daniel.

This year, the team will be participating in two competitions. The first one will be held in January at the Fairfax County Judicial Center, with 11 members from West Potomac's team competing.

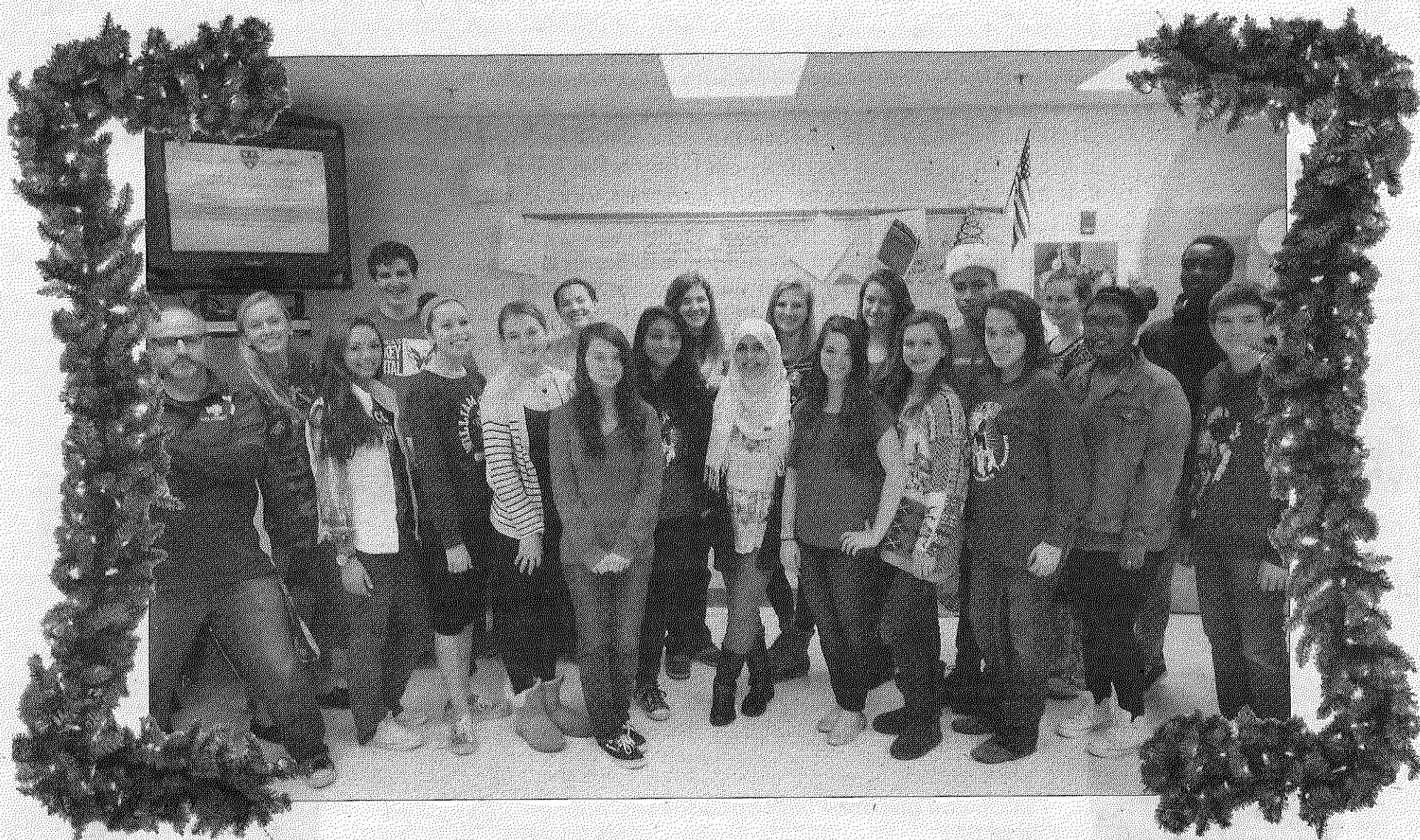
The second is the state competition held in March 2014 in Williamsburg, VA, and only six members of the team will be allowed to compete. These students will be carefully selected based on experience and ability. The winning school at the state competition will advance to Nationals, Virginia.

"I hope we win the state round and get to compete at Nationals," says Daniel. "That would be awesome."

The Mock Trial Club meets after school on Monday and Thursdays in Trailer 10.

EXTRAS

HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM THE WIRE FAMILY!



DID YOU KNOW...

Winter Wonderland Crossword

There are 293 ways to make change for a dollar.

Almonds are a member of the peach family.

A dime has 118 ridges around the edge.

Most people fall asleep in seven minutes.

"Stewardesses" is the longest word that is typed with only the left hand.

Maine is the only state that has a one-syllable name.

There are only four words in the English language which end in "dous": tremendous, horrendous, stupendous, and hazardous.

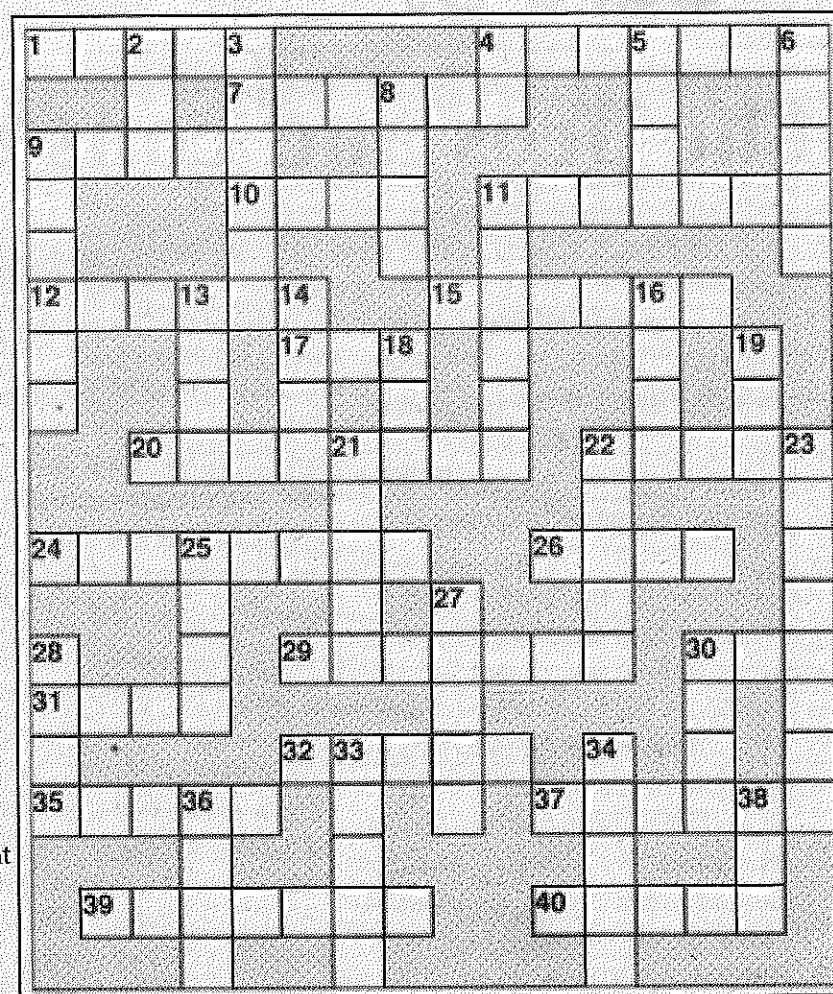
Like fingerprints, everyone's tongue print is different.

Down

2. Frozen water
2. Small
4. Myself
5. Small pie
6. Neck warmer
8. Chilly
9. Used to move snow
11. A season
13. Strong emotion
14. Ripped
16. Nil
18. Bath _____
19. Cloud of water vapor
21. Last month of winter
22. Wooden snow vehicles
23. Winter road condition
25. Be carried on
27. Locomotive
28. Carried along by wind
30. Piece of hockey equipment
33. Make this in the snow
34. Winter footwear
36. Faucets can do this
38. You hear with this

Across

1. Sudden cold breeze
4. Handwarmers
7. Hanging spike of ice
9. Freezing rain
10. Show and _____
11. Conditions outside
12. Flowering pant, color
15. Achoo
17. Not in
20. Month of winter
22. Carols, etc.
24. Valentine month
26. Thaw
29. Keeps drinks warm
30. Small dog
31. Winter olympic sport
32. Silky material
35. Breezy
37. Ice sport
39. Footwarmer
40. Direct a vehicle's course



**FIND THE ANSWERS
ONLINE AT
THEWPWIRE.ORG**

STUDENT LIFE

Senior Spotlight

While most of us seniors are still searching for the perfect school, some are lucky enough to be done with their college search. In particular, Sara Bertram has committed to swim for Indiana University of Pennsylvania while Billy Lescher will be playing baseball for the University of Pennsylvania.

Carly Mulvihill
Business Manager



Sara B.

What motivated you to choose the school that you chose?

S: The swim team, the location, and they have my major.

B: It has great academics, great coaches, and it is in a great

If you could describe what it feels like to be done with the college search in one word, what would it be?

S: Relieved.

B: Relief.

What are you interested in majoring in?

S: Accounting/Business

B: Political science

What part of senior year are you most excited for?

S: Senior Prom

B: Baseball season

What part of your new school are you most looking forward to?

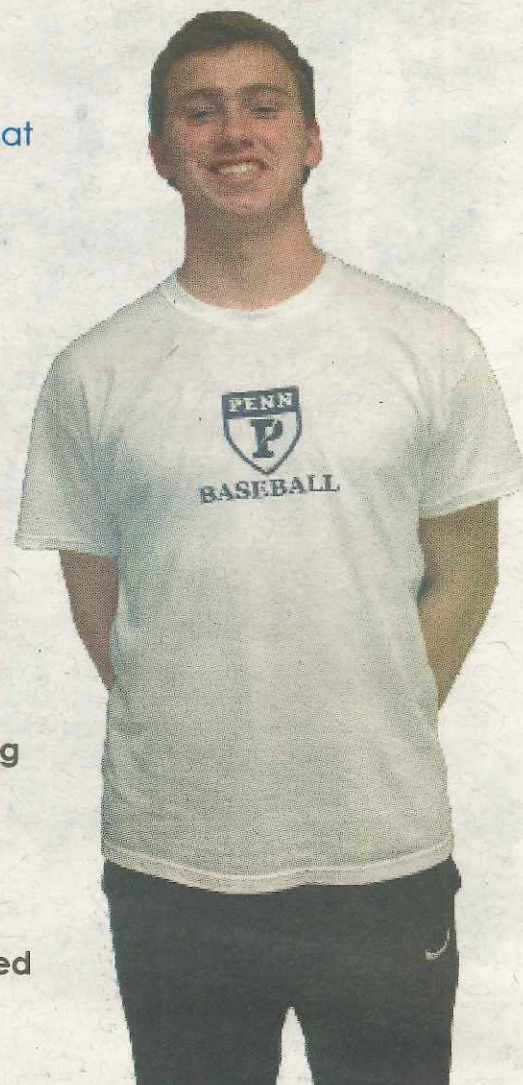
S: I'm really excited about the swim team.

B: The city of Philadelphia.

Since you are done with applications, has senioritis kicked in at all?

S: Yes, but I'm trying to stay focused.

B: Yes, unfortunately.



Billy L.

The pros and cons of being a military brat

Rebecca Tamblyn

Staff Reporter

When people hear the phrase "military personnel" their thoughts never go to the kids of the men and women who defend our country. Though the ultimate sacrifice is made by those who are enlisted, the kids also play a big part, give up many things in order to help keep our country free. Though they aren't on the front lines or in any physical danger, kids who have connections to branches of the military do a part in the freedom that anyone rarely recognizes. By adjusting to their parents' long hours, developing resilience and self-reliance after every move to new location, or dealing with a parent overseas for a long time, they also play a role in helping to achieve our freedom.

Military life for most kids is exciting. It isn't all bad, and many people can't imagine their lives without the frequent moves and unique experiences that being in

the military provides them with. Being a military kid is an adventure! Because of the many bases in Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy, Turkey, and other countries, military families have the opportunity to experience life in a variety of different places. This is a great way to experience other cultures and meet interesting people. After a life of moving around all the time, military kids have a huge list of friends in the U.S. and other countries that they will keep forever. 'Military brats' are able to brag about having a long list of places they have lived, and about having friends all over the globe. Not many people from civilian families can say that they have lived in five or more places and have friends in Germany or Japan.

There are a few big downfalls of this way of life that could either make or break the way that people view life being employed in a branch of the military. Moving is

one of those disadvantages. Some people enjoy that part of the deal, as they can restart completely in a new location every few years and see a lot of new places, but for the most part moving goes on the cons list. An upside to all the moving is that the kids often develop the ability to quickly adapt to new situations. They adapt well to new environments, new schools, and new people.

Deployments, or long trips when military personnel are sent out to other bases, which are often overseas, to do work related to a war, or military conflict are particularly tough on families, and especially hard on kids. Imagine having a parent away from home, risking their life on a daily basis for an extensive amount of time. Depending on which branch someone is involved with deployments can last up to 12 to 18 months. Skype, Facetime, and other online resources make it easier for families to stay in con-

tact during the course of the trip. Writing letters, e-mailing, and sending care packages are other ways of encouraging our troops and civilian personnel stationed overseas. Though these long trips have a big impact on the lives of the families at home, they often are most challenging for the men and women deployed. We always need to remember what they do to give us freedom.

The lives of kids in military families are exciting, adventurous, and heartbreaking. Everyone has a different way of looking at it, but most people enjoy growing up in a military family, and can't imagine their lives any other way. So, that kid who you sit next to in History class who has a parent in the military? You should ask them about some of their experiences, where they have lived, what cool things have they gone through. There is a good chance they have some interesting stories to tell.