



West Potomac High School  
6500 Quander Road  
Alexandria, VA 22307  
Volume 20 #4

# THE WIRE

WEST POTOMAC HIGH SCHOOL

Friday, December 17, 2004

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## Religion Ruptures ROTC

*Muslim students are asked to choose between their religion and their class*

Laura Lofgren

Wire Reporter

The JROTC in our school displays the dark green uniform that all members must wear. The point is to create a consistent

scarves while marching in their JROTC uniforms.

Two Muslim girls, sophomores Muna and Yasmeen Telsem, were part of the JROTC class, but have left the class as a result of this

they told me I couldn't," said Yasmeen.

This action by the JROTC program has caused quite a stir among the other cadets. Senior Reza Eftekhar said, "Two girls that were asked to choose to stay and not to wear the hijab or to change their class, chose to change their class because the religion was more important to them than the JROTC class. That is understandable even though they liked the class very much."

Sergeant Dennis Tucker, an instructor in the program, said, "Based on army regulation 670-1, you cannot wear a scarf with the uniform. It wasn't the instructors' rules, it was the army standards." While the leadership in the JROTC program may have been simply following regulations, many students still believe that the decision was unfair. "I believe that this rule must change in the military, because this is a free country and people must be allowed to do what they want," said Eftekhar.

Muna and Yasmeen are fighting to change the rule. "After we had a meeting with the teachers and counselors, they still wouldn't let us join under the circumstances, even when my mom came in for a conference. Now, we are taking it to

the top military officials that work with the JROTC to see what they are going to do," said Yasmeen.



Photo by Evan Dobbs

Yasmeen Telsem, discusses classwork with Sanaana Kuffom, wears her hijab all day during school where the "no headwear" rule is bent for religious purposes. This leniency puzzled the Telsem sisters when it did not apply to their JROTC class.

appearance of uniformity. That means no hats, no ostentatious jewelry, or anything that could set you apart from everyone else.

Recently, two Muslim girls were told that they could not wear their religious head

ruling. The girls decided that religion was more important to them than their JROTC conformity. "I took it very personal because people at other schools wore a scarf when participating in the JROTC program, and

## Students Live to Give

Jeff Snyder

News Editor

In the spirit of the season, many clubs and people at this school have been trying to spread holiday service to those who are less fortunate.

National Honor Society members are volunteering for the "Little Lights Urban Ministries" program in Washington D.C. Organized by senior vice president, Joy Yoo, members are working with underprivileged, inner-city kids to provide the youths with fun and entertainment. They will attend their Christmas party on Saturday, December 18. Some members who are unable to attend to this party will be donating gifts to these children to provide a pleasant holiday experience.

The West Potomac Booster Club organized athletes from all sports as well as its own members to sell Christmas trees at Carl Sandburg Middle School. Each sport helped from 5 to 8 p.m. from November 26 to December 16. This was the Washington Athletic Booster Committee's (WABC) largest fundraiser and all proceeds are going directly to the Student Activities Budget to buy requested items and equipment for each sport, such as new gloves for the lacrosse team.

The Key Club is participating in "Kits for Kids" to assist the children living at the Carpenter's Shelter. "Kits for Kids" is a



Photo by Kelsey Jensen

West Potomac students hauled in 892 pounds of canned food for needy families in November for Thanksgiving.

donation event in which people in the community give toys, winter clothing, and toiletries to needy people.

See Holiday Service, p. 7



## A Bright Future for Democrats

Dear Editor,

You can put lipstick on a pig, but it's still a pig. Although Drew Macklin professes humility in his election post-mortem (*Giving Up What He's Earned?*), his opinion is actually only thinly disguised arrogant gloating.

The "majority of Americans" do not side with the Republican's views: only 40 percent of Americans actually voted. Yet much of the media picked up on the Republican mandate line where no mandate for an ambitious domestic agenda existed.

The Republican campaign was waged around two issues: fear and character assassination. Bush's re-election rested on the relentless drumbeat of the war on terror. The Republicans had a miserable domestic agenda giving them no choice but to lead with the terror card. Kerry slam-dunked Bush in all three debates because Bush is out of step with the public on all the domestic issues he is now espousing and promoting.

Wrapped in the flag of 9/11, the GOP strategy gave them a narrow win. Even so, this win does not equate with a mandate. We had no clear idea of the programs Republicans wanted to present because they had defined few specific proposals and plans. Instead Bush built his campaign around negatives: anti-choice, anti-gay, and tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans.

It is beyond baffling that Americans voted rich as they live increasingly poor. As their safety net is shredded, healthcare needs ignored, environment degraded, and the deficit skyrockets, Americans have voted against their own interests and the realities of their lives. Corporations are protected while Joe Six-pack is left to decide between food and medicine for his family. In the face of these harsh realities, it is inconceivable that 60 million Americans fell for the issues of pseudo-morality at home and American hegemony in the world.

Nevertheless, we Democrats won a decisive victory in Fairfax County and we even managed to take West Potomac's Belle Haven precinct by a significant number of votes for the first time in decades. Our local Democratic candidate for Congress will return to the house next session. Twenty-two young Democrats volunteered at the polls on November 2, and many more participated in the largest literature drop in Virginia history. This awesome turnout represents the passion for progressive change that is building in the next generation of voters.

We are not whining, we are thinking and planning our ultimate win. We, and all Americans, have the future on our side. God Bless.

Alex Arnold; senior

## Where's the Honor in NHS?

I was recently inducted into NHS, and was listening to the speaker talk about what an honor it was, and how if *all* students were like these students the world would be a better place. She continued on about how members in NHS are a responsible, caring, respectful, group of kids who not only maintain a superb GPA, but also do many hours of community service.

I was feeling guilty that I wasn't meeting all these requirements, but as I looked around, I realized that quite a handful of the students in the room were just as unqualified if not less qualified than I was. As I continued to look at those being inducted, and those that were already members, I became discouraged.

Now don't get me wrong, I love many members of NHS and many have worked hard and deserve to be in it, but there are just as many who don't. A couple seats behind me students are talking about how this "piece of \*\*\*\*" needs to end so they can go smoke cancer sticks with Johnny Killmyself, while to my left I hear about how much fun it was last night when everyone got drunk and peed on the dog, all the while the speaker continues to praise this "glorious" group of students.

I realized that to many, including myself, NHS is just something to slap on your college application. Students in NHS aren't any better than those who are not, so why do we deserve some special award. Many of us cheat. I'm not asking everyone to become perfect, but we're in an "honor society," shouldn't we start acting like it. There are so many students that are more generous more caring, and may even have a higher GPA, but aren't in honor society. Why? I don't know.

Maybe, it's because they were honest on their application. Sure you're a member of the math club, how many meetings have you attended? "Sally Hapterson... yeah that's the name of the woman I worked...um...seven...hours for... <fakes signature>..."

For those that are in Honor Society we need to start acting like it, and for those that deserve to be but aren't, I'm sorry you were punished for being honest and I commend you for continuing to be a great person and not needing recognition for what you do, that's true community service.

Jessica Rexroat; senior

# Rants and Raves

**A Rave** for the TV Production crew for making the morning news polished and enjoyable. I just can't figure out where that fireplace came from.

**A Rant** for the people who feel compelled to throw food during lunch. Acting immature went out of style in eighth grade.

**A Rave** for the approach of the Holiday Season. How can you be anything but excited for the advent of good presents, good food, and a chance at good sleep!



**A Rant** for the new policy of Saturday School as a punishment for three tardies. We know we have to get to class; this seems like overkill.

**A Rave** for the return of Coach Bowerman and Coach Beeby to the Indoor Track Team. Their knowledge and coaching prowess will surely save the day.

**A Rant** for the tiny Holiday Break we have this year. Seriously folks, think of the children!

## Resolutions We Can Live With

With the holidays upon us, many people are focused on how to get through this joyous but extremely busy time. With so much to do, it's easy to get caught up in the moment and stress out over things like how much scotch tape is left or whether or not the ham is too salty. In the rush, our plans and goals for the upcoming year are placed on the back burner, at least until December 29<sup>th</sup> or so.

This year, the *Wire* is offering some general goals that all students should try to meet in every day. Here are some of the most important resolutions a teenager can make.

- 1. Get some sleep.** Marathon snooze sessions on Saturdays can only do so much. We can never totally make up for lost sleep, so it's important to make an effort to go to bed earlier every night.
  - 2. Get involved.** It's time we all got over that laundry list of extracurriculars that we participate in, and time to really devote some actual energy to making a difference and making constructive changes within those activities.
  - 3. Be nice to parents.** Our parents put an incredible amount of time and energy into bringing us up the right way. Although we may feel at times that our parents are a bit unreasonable, the bottom line is that they're just doing what they think is best for us. So we should all take the time to thank our parents for what they do.
  - 4. Take a risk.** Don't do anything stupid, like coming to school naked or attempting to infiltrate the school's administration. But a little healthy risk-taking every now and then can be very rewarding. Try talking to someone that you've never spoken to before, or try to get the phone number of that person you've had your eye on for awhile. There's no better way to boost self-esteem than trying something new.
  - 5. Stand up for what you believe in.** It may be a political opinion or something such as the right to leave campus during lunch, but whatever you feel passionate about, make sure others hear you and know your opinion and the reasons behind it.
  - 6. Last but not least, relax.** Life is meant to be taken seriously, but when we take things too seriously and don't give ourselves time to relax, we are setting ourselves up for breakdown. It would be wonderful to get into every college we apply to, but it would not be wonderful to be burned out on education and other activities before we even get there.
- Hopefully, this will be the year that we all actually get around to making those changes we've always wanted to see within ourselves.

### Corrections

- In the Focus section, Partha Gupta was incorrectly identified as Partha Gupta. The picture labeled with his name is of Daniel Dehaza, and Dehaza's picture is of Gupta.
- In the "Water, Water Everywhere" story, the last sentence should read "...fire alarm disrupt..."
- In "A Few Good Wolverines," the sentence should read "he did not wish to go to college at the time..."
- "American Athletes Getting Into Trouble" was incorrectly credited to Alex Keckeisen; it was written by Joy Yoo.

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**THE WEST POTOMAC WIRE**

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# Doing Something Different

Drew Macklin

Opinions Editor

School can be so boring. We wake up daily at an ungodly hour, travel to school in a daze, trudge from class to class with melancholy written on our faces, and reluctantly open our minds to knowledge that seems utterly useless. Truly, the monotony is strong enough to kill. And to what end? Why, the nature of our primary pursuits in and around school are nothing but self-serving. We desire only to succeed academically, get into a good college, and feel good about ourselves doing it. Certainly we live for those precious weekends when our inside selves are unearthed, but the five days in between usually feel like hell. If only there was something worth doing on the campus of West Potomac High School!

Ah, but there is. As the great Max Fischer said in the classic movie *Rushmore*, "All you have to do is find out what you love and do it for the rest of your life. For me, that's going to Rushmore." And so, Max proceeded to found or participate in school clubs ranging from the Rushmore Beekeepers to the Rushmore Amateur Flyers. His pursuits can be our inspiration.

After all, what glorious unknown possibilities can be explored inside those humble organizations! At last, we are given an outlet to release the creative energy that seems sometimes stifled in the constraints of the classroom. A passion for anything from community service to German can be fed and expanded – and this is not only allowed, it is encouraged.

Yet...this recourse is abused, becoming just another tool in the quest for a bright future. The fantastic, carefree extracurricular environment becomes tainted with a lackadaisical apathy, and students who are filled to the brim with creative and passionate energy become unenthusiastic and resigned. The club is destined to be just one more line on an application.

Who will stem the tide of stodginess? Who will fight the feeling of duty that pervades the halls of the Wolverines? Who will grapple with the grandiose, overbearing sentiment of hopelessness? I will. Yes, I will. The burden of this battle for the future of the extracurricular club will rest squarely on the shoulders of myself and those few who have banked their futures on its success.

In fact, the battle has already begun. Witness the West Potomac Jenga Club, the brainchild of seniors Paul Cambon, Kevin Ebberts, Stuart Trouton, and me. The concept is revolutionary: a school club, dedicated solely to the pursuit of an enjoyable activity. It is Jenga, and just Jenga. No apathy, no hopelessness, only a way to while away the time in.

Deep within this mind lie the next stages in the war – grand battle plans which will restore enthusiasm in the minds of students everywhere. After all, give yourself something to look forward to at the end of a long day, and the day flies by in a blur. Discover something to pour energy and time into, and rediscover a reason to roll out of bed on a cold, dark winter morning.

What are these magnificent strategies?

Here's one: the West Potomac Lawn Sports Society. This one is only awaiting the advent of warmer weather for it to gather its wings and take off. Picture it in your mind: a warm, sunny day in April, May or June. The freedom of summer seems close enough to taste, yet too far to touch. And out on a green, grassy field, countless students enjoying those ancient aristocratic delights – lawn sports. Croquet, Badminton, Horseshoes, Bocce Ball – these pleasantly docile games speak of warm summer



Photo by Houston Murphy

evenings and sunny days on the beach, picnics and late afternoon barbecues. They are something to devote time to.

The possibilities are endless – Backgammon, Cribbage, Risk, or Monopoly. A club devoted exclusively to protest, any protest, and one to tea-drinking intellectualism. Want to do something different? Join a club. Have a great idea? Saunter on into Student Activities in Gunston and find out how to make that a reality. Just be willing to passionately fight for that right to enjoy four years of high school.

## Bush, the Leader of the Blind?

Jason Yaworske

Wire Reporter

I, like many, was very disappointed, though not shocked, at the results of the election on November 2<sup>nd</sup>. Correct me if I'm wrong, but it seems to me that, once you get past all of the politics, the founding fathers imagined that a president would only get reelected if he did a good job in his first term. Throw out everything else, and this seems like a reasonable statement, right? Not according to over 60 million Americans, who went out and voted for George W. Bush on Election Day, awarding him four more years as our president. To me it seems like many Bush supporters have been drawn away from what matters, and have been caught up in the images and portrayals of the two candidates. Bush is the strong, resolute, moral leader; a "real American" who keeps us all safe from the dangerous terrors that surround us. Kerry is the stone-faced liberal who can't make up his mind, is unpatriotic, and would make our country vulnerable to countless foreign horrors. Where do these images come from, I ask, since they are obviously not rooted in facts?

The Republican political machine is an incredible thing. Bush is a former high school cheerleader, Yale and Harvard alum, and a suspect member

of the National Guard. But the images spit out by this powerful political machine have convinced Americans that Bush is a hardcore, gun-slinging cowboy. A working class, everyday American who loves NASCAR and country music, so vote for him!

Republicans successfully convinced our country that if Kerry was elected, we wouldn't be safe from terrorist attacks. This is nothing more than a scare tactic. What makes Bush so great in this category anyways? People seem to forget that the most devastating



Photo by Houston Murphy

terrorist attack in our country's history happened under Bush. Some say he was only in office for a short period of time and there was nothing he could have done about 9/11. Our Commander-in-Chief should ultimately be held responsible for everything that happens to our country, and it is ridiculous to give him a "grace period" after he comes into office. Bush was in office for nine months at the time of the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks,

and the 9/11 commission proved that Bush was given proper, specific briefings from the Clinton administration of Al Qaeda's seriousness in plans to use commercial airliners as bombs.

Bush hasn't even been able to capture Osama Bin Laden, and he diverts blame for this pathetic incompetence. A big reason for us not having found Osama is that we switched focus as soon as we started making progress. We switched focus from Afghanistan and Osama to Iraq and Saddam. Iraq is a diversion from the war on terror just as Vietnam was a diversion to the Cold War. We went after Saddam because he was a threat to attack our country with weapons of mass destruction, right? That was proven wrong, so Bush changed the reason to terrorism. Sorry, that doesn't work either. Nowhere has it been proven that Iraq holds any more terrorists than other countries, and surely it doesn't harbor more terrorists than Saudi Arabia or Pakistan. So why did we choose Iraq? I'm no conspiracy theorist; I have enough faith in my country to believe that even George W. Bush wouldn't send thousands of American men to die for the sake of oil, but why then?

Let me just say this: Saddam Hussein was a terrible, oppressive dictator, and with the help of his sons, committed

countless atrocities against the Iraqi people. Idealistically, I wish we could go around the world doing what is right, but sometimes it is just unfeasible. Bush Sr. didn't overthrow Saddam Hussein because he knew one thing that Bush didn't. Once you go into a country and destroy their government, water supply, and pretty much everything else vital to their way of life, it is difficult, and almost impossible to fix it. With our struggling economy, we should not have attempted this.

So what now with Iraq? With no weapons of mass destruction, no link between Saddam and Osama, and no feasible plan for the withdrawal of our troops, it's really a no-win situation. On one hand, I feel we have a responsibility to the people of Iraq to fix the mess we have created, but on the other hand I'm not sure we can fix it, and therefore staying in Iraq is just a waste of our time, resources, money, and more importantly the lives of our soldiers. Bush asks us to go along on faith. But both blind faith and patriotism are very dangerous things. We should instead be reasonable, look at the facts, and not listen to our leader's baseless rhetoric to support his mistakes. Bush is great at making you feel like if you don't follow him, you don't have faith or patriotism, and Americans should not be made to feel that way.

## The LaBarrometer

Measuring the Pressures of Daily Life



Photo by Sam Vigneri

### A Scary Responsibility

Ansley LaBarre

Editor-in-Chief

Admit it, cafeteria food is gross.

I'd rather spend an extra couple dollars on a decent sandwich than try to digest greasy cardboard. Since most students would too, a constant war for the privilege of an off-campus lunch is waged between the administration and hungry adolescents.

I confess, I have been an ignorant rebel. Balking the rules and racing past the gate, I, too, have ditched the little blue seats of the West Potomac canteen for more satisfying delicacies. And I, too, have mocked the administration for trying to implement what is a seemingly childish and power induced rule.

That was before I realized the stress accompanying the responsibility of another person's life. Taking a job at a private school, I guard dozens of elementary students until their parents pick them up each night. Some are as young as three years old. They do not have the freedom to walk to the restroom by themselves because of potential problems. They are minors with boundaries, and so are we.

The liability that comes with giving any student freedom, no matter how much they want or deserve it, is too great a risk for the care taker. Sometimes it seems ridiculous to deny a child a drink of water because they can't go by themselves, but what if they were to hurt themselves and no one else knew? It would be my fault, as their lives are in my hands for the time being.

The same liability is what keeps the administration from allowing us to go off-campus for lunch. We, as overconfident and inexperienced drivers, are susceptible to mistakes. Regarding recent statistics, teens are being killed on a weekly basis because of automotive accidents. If we were to be injured or killed while we leisurely drove off-campus to feed our cravings, all responsibility would be placed on the school. If you were a principal, it is not likely you would want to be held responsible for a death on top of your typical work load.

Although it may seem selfish, it is totally reasonable that we are restricted to our decent campus setting for lunch. The administration does not want any harm to come to us, nor do they wish to be held accountable. You would not allow a four year old to baby-sit herself. So why allow a sixteen year old to speed off in a situation holding the same potential dangers? As hungry as we may be, I'm sure we can get through the day on soggy spaghetti instead of a wreck of an administration.



## Commercial Chaos



Mark Peterman

Wire Reporter

The winter season was once a time to be with family and relax beside a fire with a good book. Now the wholesomeness of the season has been overshadowed by constant advertisements. If you can't stop thinking about what you should be buying, then how are you supposed to enjoy anything?

Most kids these days have no clue what holidays like Christmas or Hanukkah really are. All they think about are how many new toys come out; they know if they pester their parents about it, then they might find it under the tree Christmas morning. They begin to look forward to the seasonal specials on TV and forget about how the particular holiday they celebrate came to be.

Movies and TV shows are some of the biggest forms of commercialization out there. The movie industry jumps at the chance to exploit certain beliefs, and the holiday season is no exception. TV stations love showing classic movies like *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* and *Charles Brown's Christmas* solely to increase their ratings. It's a holiday every day for directors and producers this time of year.

Commercialization of the holidays is mainly centered around Christmas. The many other religious celebrations are not immune, however, but are also not targeted as much as the former. The Romans have always been a source for religious equality as they have movies out for Christmas, Hanukkah, and Kwanza. *Eight Crazy Nights*, an example of a Hanukkah movie, is actually adopted from a Christmas movie, as Adam Sandler plays the animated equivalent of Ebenezer Scrooge.

Proof of the advertising craze during this season is the time it starts. You start seeing ads for products, movies, and special sales almost two months before Christmas. What happened to the holiday season starting the day after Thanksgiving? Now you're seeing Christmas displays at stores before the Halloween costumes are down. Soon, America will be celebrating the holidays every day of the year.

Christmas is the only holiday taken advantage of in such an extreme. Easter and Thanksgiving aren't advertised six months before hand. The only holiday that comes anywhere near Christmas is the Fourth of July, when fireworks start going up before school is even over.

The fact that these companies use something like Christmas to help them make money is horrible in itself. But none of them notice when they are doing because it has become such a habit during the winter. Had we not had so long as we have things, CEOs will continue to use our cherished holidays for their own selfish ends.

## Few and Favre Between

Jason Yaworske

Wire Reporter

Sports heroes are hard to come by today. It seems as though the top athletes in each sport keep getting into trouble. Ron Artest and Kobe Bryant of the NBA have had their issues, and evidence of steroid use is stacking up against Barry Bonds, Major League Baseball's MVP for the 2004 season. Can anybody still be at the top of their game while retaining a respectable reputation? I think so, and one great example of someone who I still consider a sports hero is Brett Favre.

Favre is to football what Cal Ripken Jr. was to baseball. Recently against the St. Louis Rams on Monday Night Football, Favre started in his 200<sup>th</sup> consecutive NFL game. This streak has spanned thirteen years, which is almost as long as Ripken's record-breaking streak of 2,632 consecutive games, which lasted sixteen years.

Yet Favre has not received as much attention as Ripken did. For an NFL quarterback to start that many games consecutively is unprecedented. Week after week, NFL quarterbacks have to stand in the pocket and make throws, completely vulnerable to vicious hits from 300-pound linemen.

In fact, Favre has been on the NFL's injured list for 41 of the 200 games he has started during his streak. Last year, Favre played the last nine games of the season with a broken thumb on his throwing hand, all the while accumulating a league high in touchdown passes. This year alone he has withstood a concussion, a bruised hamstring, a sprained right throwing hand and a sprained right thumb. Let me try to put his streak into perspective: During the thirteen years the streak has spanned, 178 different quarterbacks have started for the other 31 NFL teams. As Redskins fans are well aware of, the Redskins have had sixteen different quarterbacks

during this time. Despite all of these things, Favre has never complained. In the last eleven months, Favre lost his father to a heart attack and his brother-in-law in an ATV accident. His wife was diagnosed with breast cancer a week later. When the Packers started the season 1-4, you did not hear Favre make excuses. All he did was go about

**During the thirteen years [Favre's] streak has spanned, 178 quarterbacks have started for the other 31 NFL teams.**

his business, leading his team to six straight wins, putting the Packers (7-5) back in the playoff race.

Of course, Favre has had his problems. Throughout the first half of his career he battled addictions to alcohol and pain killers. He was known as a guy who would never shy away from a good time, and considered a wild partier. But he has matured. He has had two daughters with his wife Deanna, who Favre has known and dated since grade school. He is proud to say he has been alcohol-free for six years, and says he puts his family above everything else.

Every year retirement talks surround Favre. He has had a long and illustrious career, and has expressed interest in retiring. He has said that if he were to win another Super Bowl at this stage in his career, his decision would be much easier. So with the Redskins sadly already out of the playoff picture, this year I will be rooting for the Packers to go all the way. Although I would love to see Favre play for a few more years, nobody in the league deserves a storybook ending like Favre does.

## Have Yourself a Merry Little...

Hana Beckerle

Editor-in-Chief

'Twas the night before a major winter holiday, and all through the house, not a creature of any ethnic, social or economic background was stirring, not even a mouse. The stockings were hung by the chimney with care, in hopes that someone, but not anybody who might represent a specific holiday tradition, would soon be there.

You have just experienced your first politically correct Christmas, excuse me, *winter story*. Pretty soon it'll be tales like this that we tell in public places, rather than the versions that we were brought up on. Traditional Christmas stories will be one of the many casualties of the Mandate of PC (political correctness).

The philosophy behind PC is to eliminate discrimination, an admirable goal. This growing trend has produced an awareness of traditions other than Christmas, which is practiced by the majority of the citizens of this country. It is regrettable that for many years the traditions of people who are not Christian were not recognized.

Thanks to PC, which includes a push for separation of church and state, this is no longer always the case. Along with Nativity scenes and Santas, we see Kinaras and Menorahs at this time of year as well.

While the PC trend can be valuable, it's been taken too far. The Mandate,

in an effort to create a culture of inclusion, has created a culture in which just about everyone is excluded. It's almost impossible to mention one's beliefs and traditions without worrying about others of a different background, and wondering if they are offended in any way when we say (gasp!) "Merry



Photo by Houston Murphy

Christmas." Better not bring it up in the first place, just in case.

This situation leads to incidents such as one that recently occurred in Denver. A "Winter Parade" boasted floats and performances from almost every imaginable group, including homosexual Santa Clauses. However, a Christian choir was barred from performing Christmas carols in the parade because it was thought that many would be offended. I find this humorous and upsetting at the same time, especially as over 90% of our population observes Christmas in some way.

Another far more alarming incident that signals the demise of cherished values at the hands of PC is a situation that took place at a public school in California. A teacher at this school distributed copies of the Declaration of Independence among his fifth grade students. The teacher was reprimanded and restricted after this because the Declaration bears the word "God." Heaven forbid our founding fathers, who laid out a plan for our nation under a Judeo-Christian belief system, would use the G-word.

It has gotten to the point where a document that spells out the underlying principles of liberty and justice upon which this country was founded is no longer an acceptable symbol of our nation. We joke about not being able to say "Messiah" on the morning announcements, but the truth is that there are far more serious consequences of PC. God, Christmas, the Declaration of Independence... according to PC, these divisive and offensive symbols and beliefs have no place in our society.

PC has created openings for under-appreciated traditions to be recognized. However, it comes closer every day to destroying all public traces of the convictions and practices of the majority of citizens of this country.

Merry Christmas. I'm sorry if that offends you.



## Questions for Thought

Do blind Eskimos have seeing eye sled dogs?

Isn't it unnerving that doctors call what they do "practice"?

Why does your nose run and your feet smell?





# Sarah's Scholastic Section

**Sarah Raser**  
Wire Reporter

**Marymount University-** Located in Arlington, Marymount reposes itself on offering a personalized education through small classes and a faculty focused on teaching. The school offers a wide amount of internships located in Washington DC, and prepares its students for future careers.

Tuition: In state- \$16,300  
Room and board: \$7,230  
Enrollment: 2,106  
Average SAT: 997  
Location: Arlington



**Emory and Henry College-** Emory & Henry is a vibrant, refreshing, liberal arts college comprised of young men and women from around the world.

Tuition: \$15,700  
Room and board: \$  
Enrollment: 886  
Average SAT: N/A  
Location: Emory



**Mary Baldwin University-** Being an all girls school, Mary Baldwin believes that single sex education is an advantage because there aren't any distractions.

Tuition: \$19,811  
Room and board: \$5,689  
Enrollment: 1,440  
Average SAT: 1056  
Location: Staunton



**Ferrum College-** FC has an excellent honors program called "Boone Honors Program". It consists of an interdisciplinary, liberal arts program committed to challenge students enrolled in the program, and the campus culture as a whole, to strive for excellence.

Tuition: \$15,640  
Room and board: \$5,600  
Enrollment: 951  
Average SAT: 899  
Location: Ferrum



**Hampden- Sydney College** - Renowned for its gentlemen, the all guys school is well reputed for having challenging classes where A's are difficult to come by. The environment is defined by its honor code of no cheating, lying or stealing.

Room and board: \$7,020  
Tuition: \$20,446  
Enrollment: 1,039  
Average SAT: 991  
Location: Hampton-Sydney



## KUDOS TO...

Seniors who were accepted to their first-choice colleges early, including several Ivy League schools and West Point.

All of the Band members who made the All-District Band.

The West Potomac Choir for handling their grueling December schedule to provide the community with beautiful music.

Kate Griffin, Rishi Chopra, and Emmanuel Gamor for their savings bond awarded by the INOVA Mount Vernon Hospital for their extraordinary amount of volunteer work.

Mr. Bristol Martin for organizing the 4th annual HBCL at West Potomac.

# New Boundaries Divide FCPS

**Jeff Snyder**  
News Editor

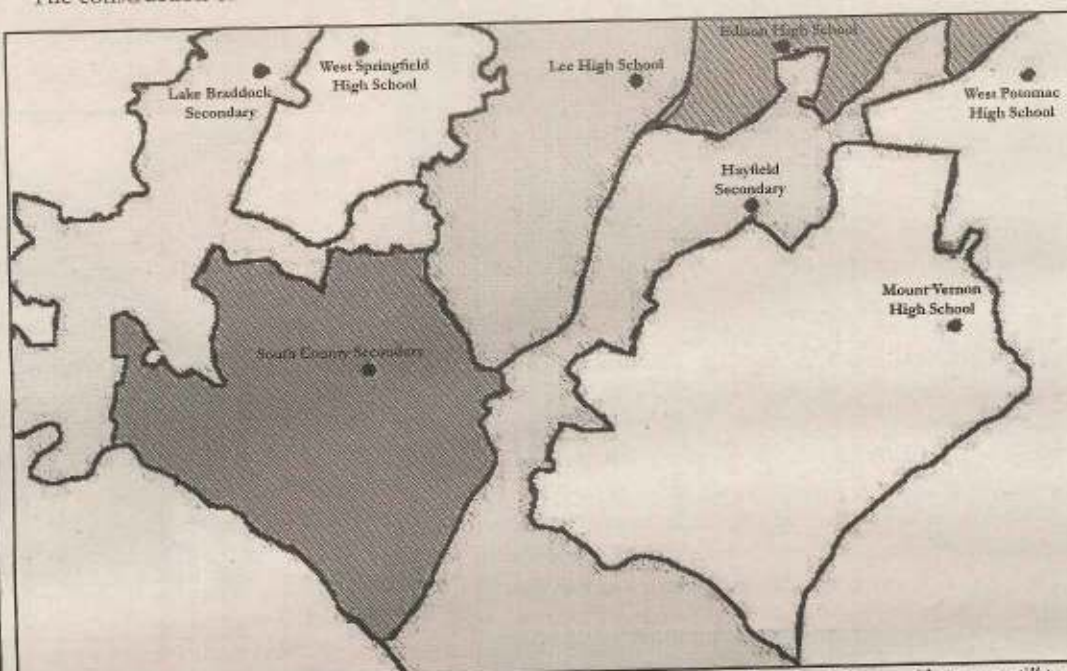
On October 12, November 3, and November 15, a series of town meetings took place at Hayfield Secondary School to discuss the new school district boundaries for South County Secondary School in Lorton.

The construction of the new school

available space, establish a new school boundary that allows for future growth, and conform to School Board Policies and Regulations. The first meeting on October 12 strove to help define the considerations that FCPS should use to draw the new attendance area and to identify those neighborhoods FCPS should assign to the new school. The

residence and their high school. Although proximity is a major concern, the boundaries still insist that many Hayfield Secondary students, even with a Lorton zip code and much closer to South County Secondary than Hayfield Secondary, must still attend Hayfield. The border line between the proposed South County Secondary boundary and the new Hayfield Secondary boundary is divided by I-95.

More controversy has risen because of the under populated Lake Braddock Secondary which is located northwest of South County. Many people believe that much could be



The new school boundaries are causing much debate among Fairfax County residents, primarily because Lorton residents must still travel very far to Hayfield High School even though the new South County Secondary School is closer.

Photo Illustration by Jeff Snyder

is on track and going as planned, according to officials. The school building is 70% complete and is still expected to open in the fall of 2005.

Parents and teachers from all over Fairfax County gathered to share their thoughts and concerns about the new school's boundaries. The meetings' attendants were placed into small groups to get as many ideas together as possible, and provide everyone an opportunity to express thoughts and ideas. The objectives behind adjusting the boundaries are to relieve overcrowding, make effective use of

second meeting proposed to evaluate several attendance area plans drawn from input at the previous meeting. Finally, the third was set to fine-tune an attendance area plan for School Board consideration.

Some attendants of the first three meetings were distraught over the proposed boundaries for South County Secondary. Out of approximately 60 small groups that spent hours bouncing ideas off of one another and expressing their concerns, all of them expressed some sort of concern over the proximity of a students

resolved if Lake Braddock's boundary extended into the proposed South County boundary and let the Lorton residents going to the distant Hayfield, go to nearer South County. This proposition was frowned upon by many South County residents because Lake Braddock is currently under renovation.

A recommendation will be made to the School Board on December 16, and public hearings will be held on January 4 and 5. Finally, the School Board will approve and vote on January 27 at Jackson Middle School at 7 p.m.

## FEEL LIKE YOU DON'T BELONG? JOIN A CLUB!

### Amnesty International

- To support the fight for freedom of prisoners of conscience throughout the world
- Sponsor: Anne Groves
- Meeting Place: room 319 Quander
- Open to all students

### Art Club

- To beautify the school, its students and to find enlightenment through art
- Sponsors: Ben Premeaux, Adam Sanchez
- Meeting Place: room 504 Springbank
- Open to all students; Bi-annual fees

### Debate Team

- To promote competitive debate
- Sponsor: Matt Ellis
- Meeting Place: English Workroom
- Open to all students

### Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA)

- To develop vocational and career supportive competencies and to promote civic and personal responsibilities
- Sponsors: Daryl Mackey, Marilyn Moore
- Meeting Place: room 213 Gunston
- Members must be enrolled in a business class

### Literary Magazine (Syzygy)

- To publish a literary magazine representing the best creative writing, art work and photography of students
- Sponsor: Paul Russell
- Meeting place: room 324 Quander
- Open to all students

### Math Team

- To participate in monthly puzzle contests
- Sponsor: Amy Galitzer
- Meeting place: room 206 Gunston
- Open to all students who have passed Algebra 1

### Photography Club

- To develop an appreciation of photography as an art medium
- Sponsor: Anne Dunn
- Meeting place: room 503 Springbank
- Members must have an interest in photography and some knowledge of dark room use

### Science Club

- To explore science related topics and to gain an understanding and respect for the natural world
- Sponsor: Danielle Schoolcraft
- Meeting place: room 167 Gunston
- Open to all students; \$5.00 dues



## New Tardy Policy Shows Up Right on Time

Marissa D'Orazio

Focus Editor

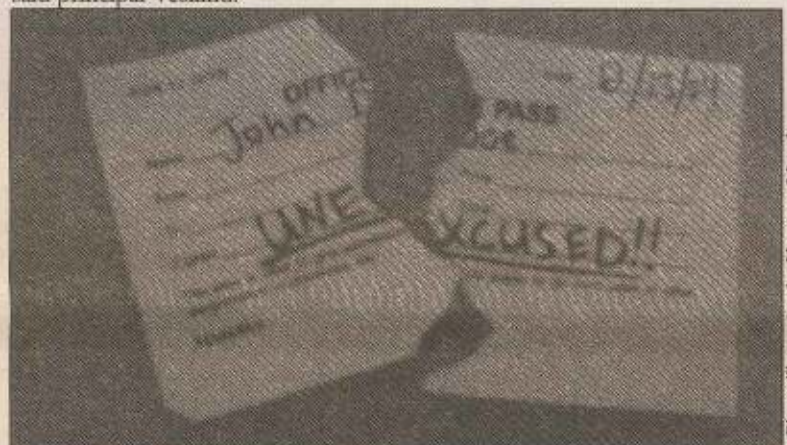
Imagine you are a minute late for class. What makes more sense, coming right into class, or walking to the tardy desk, proceeding to wait ten minutes for your pass, and then mosey into class, disrupting actual learning time? The answer was obvious to our principal, Mrs. Vesilind.

The tardy policy is very similar to the way it was before. All consequences are exactly the same. The only difference is that the tardy desks have been completely abolished. It is now up to the teachers to record the tardies themselves, thus saving students, teachers, administrators, and the adults who would be manning the tardy desk an immense deal of time. The policy looks very promising to everyone as long as the teachers follow through with recording tardies.

For teachers to record tardies since we have our school's administrative student information (SASI), and recording tardies can now be done by the push of a button. The reason tardy desks were instituted in the first place was to keep an efficient record of tardies without the advancements we now have in technology.

"I'm a little concerned with not having a paper trail [of the tardies], but I've been pretty religious about inserting into SASI the ones that are tardy, so I think if everyone can do that, the new policy will be great," said Mr. Hoag, 10<sup>th</sup> grade Special Ed English teacher.

The new policy is student-targeted. It has been made with our best-interest in mind. "The reason we've decided to do this is that we were concerned that kids were lining up down the hall at the tardy desks. It was taking them longer to get to class because of that, so they were missing more, and they were so frustrated! There's no reason for our kids to be frustrated like that," said principal Vesilind.



The new tardy policy says "goodbye" to late passes.

## Asbestos Becomes a Pest

Adele Hampton

Asst. Business Manager

Although only hazardous in the long run, years after first exposed, asbestos has lately become a concern at this school.

Principal Vesilind first found out about asbestos in our school on July 9, 2004 when the school had its yearly inspection. A letter was recently given to all the students and parents, addressing the asbestos detection. It was found in the floor tiles that are several layers down and covered by carpet, and also in the walls and ceilings of all of the buildings.

Even though asbestos is a cancer causing material, there is absolutely no danger because the chemical is inaccessible and therefore poses no threat to anyone here at this school. "It's fine and causes no real danger," said Chemistry teacher Gary Relton.

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral fiber that is usually used to strengthen building materials. It is commonly found in old homes and schools because it is fire resistant it was used in lots of older buildings. "West Potomac is an old building, built in 1966 and contained asbestos," said Principal Rima Vesilind. It can be found in things commonly used, such as insulation materials, asphalt, vinyl, and floor tiles. The asbestos fibers are released into the air and are easily inhaled into the lungs.

Asbestos can be an extremely harmful chemical that can eventually be fatal. The fibers can cause

lung cancer which is a leading cause of death in the United States. It can also cause Asbestosis which is a long term lung disease that makes it hard for oxygen to get into the blood causing the lung tissues to scar. Another result of inhaling asbestos is a rare form of cancer, called Mesothelioma. This is a cancer most often found in the lungs, chest, abdomen, the heart and caused typically by exposure to asbestos. Most of the diseases caused by inhalation of asbestos doesn't appear until about 30 to 40 years after exposure.

The Environmental Protection Agency has issued regulations for schools that have asbestos in their

perform inspection every three years for asbestos containing materials, develop and maintain an asbestos management plan and keep it at the school at all times. They also perform periodic surveillances of the known ACBM, and give asbestos training to all custodial staff. If schools don't meet any of these requirements they are subject to civil enforcement



Asbestos was commonly found in the insulating material above the ceilings in our school.

Photo by Houston Murphy

actions.

Because the asbestos is contained and unattainable, no renovations will be made to the school and nothing will be done to the chemical. In order to remove asbestos, it must be bagged up and the air must be vacuumed, which is a very expensive process. Most students aren't worried about the circumstances. Sophomore Kosta Sarakinis said, "I think that people shouldn't be worried."

Now that the administration knows that there is no real danger to the school the year will progress normally.

# BJT

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# UPCOMING EVENTS

December 17

- Winter Play Meeting in Auditorium (2:30pm-6:30pm)

December 20

- Interiors Distributed
- Winter Sports Pictures in Small Gym (2:45pm-6:30pm)

December 22

- Holiday Concert Assemblies in Auditorium (9:00am-11:30am)
- SOL Remediation: Math and English (2:15pm-4:15pm)

December 23 - January 2

- WINTER BREAK

January 5

- Tiny Tots Concert in Auditorium (9:00am-12:00pm)
- SOL Remediation: Math and English (2:15pm-4:15pm)

January 6, 7

- Tiny Tots Concert in Auditorium (9:00am-12:00pm)

January 8

- Drama Tech Day (9:00am-3:00pm)

January 10

- Counselors Touchbase with Juniors in Guidance (7:30 am-2:00pm)
- SOL Remediation: Science and Social Studies Rooms 142, 153, and 411 (2:15pm-3:15pm)

January 12

- SOL Remediation: Math and English (2:15pm-4:15pm)
- NHS Meeting in Cafeteria (2:15pm-3:00pm)
- FCA Meeting in Room 130g (2:20pm-2:50pm)

January 14, 15

- Band Boot Camp in Auditorium, Band Room, and Art Classrooms (2:30pm-7:00pm) on 14 and (8:00am-2:00pm) on 15

January 19

- Choral Clinic in Auditorium and Chorus Room (9:00am-3:00pm)
- FCA Meeting in Room 130g (2:20pm-2:50pm)

January 23

- SAT Test in Cafeteria plus Quander Classrooms (7:30am-2:00pm)

January 23, 24, 25

- Musical Auditions in K Theater (2:30pm-6:30pm)

January 26

- Musical Auditions in K Theater (2:30pm-6:30pm)
- One-Act Play in K Theater (7:30pm-10:30pm)

January 27

- Musical Auditions in K Theater (2:30pm-6:30pm)
- One-Act Play in K Theater (7:30pm-10:30pm)

January 28

- Musical Auditions in K Theater (2:30pm-6:30pm)
- One-Act Play in K Theater (7:30pm-10:30pm)

January 29

- District Scholastic Bowl at Edison (8:00am)
- Region Scholastic Bowl at Edison (1:00pm)
- Drama Tech Day (9:00am-3:00pm)

## Lack of Vaccine Puts Some in the Cold

Evan Dobbs

Photo Editor

Recently, over three thousand doses of the flu vaccine were given to area doctors and other medical distributors, insufficient to fill the deficit. The Virginia Health Department has been working with other sources to provide more available vaccinations for the public.

Although some eligible citizens were able to receive doses, the demand is not close to being fulfilled. The VHD is providing doses for emergency cases, as well as children who qualify for the Federal Vaccine for Children Program. Qualified children are those whose families cannot afford insurance, and are only required to pay the minimal fee.

Doctors are emphasizing that the flu is preventable, and if individuals follow the

suggested procedure, they can avoid catching the virus. If you think you might be experiencing symptoms, which include scratchy throat, fever, and muscle aches, call your physician immediately. To prevent

**If you think you might be experiencing symptoms, which include scratchy throat, fever, and muscle aches, call your physician immediately. To prevent symptoms wash your hands and utilize hand sanitizers**

symptoms, wash your hands and utilize hand sanitizer. Sanitizer is cheap and available at drug stores. The VHD encourages everyone to stay away from crowds if possible, and stay out of the cold, although they are aware of the difficulty of this inevitable task.

The Virginia Health Department said doses should only be given to individuals who absolutely need them. This includes

pregnant women, adults who are 65 and older, people working with those who have special conditions, and children 6 to 28 months.

Many believe teachers and faculty should be able to receive a dose, because they work with kids. Counselor Gloria Spriggs thinks teachers should receive a vaccine with any major risk. "But that would mean that we would have to receive a shot for every

little thing, that'll be too far," Spriggs said. Treatment is only available to those who encounter the most potential danger. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) said, "To reduce the risk of transmitting flu to high-risk persons, such as the elderly, transplant patients, and people with AIDS, who may have low antibody response to the flu vaccine, and also to protect

themselves from infection"

The FDA contradicts the Virginia Health Department when both the FDA and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommend vaccination for students, police, firefighters, other essential workers, and community service providers.

Other teachers think it is not necessary to receive treatment. "I guess my immune system is strong, I've never needed it," said history teacher Bristol Martin. While people are debating whether or not they need a flu shot, others have already received the flu, and in some cases, are endangering students and faculty. There has been an increase in absences of students and teachers.

The virus can be prevented from spreading. If you have any questions on getting the flu shot, or if you qualify, go to the FDA website, [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov).

## Lending a Helping RAM

Katie Staples

Features Editor

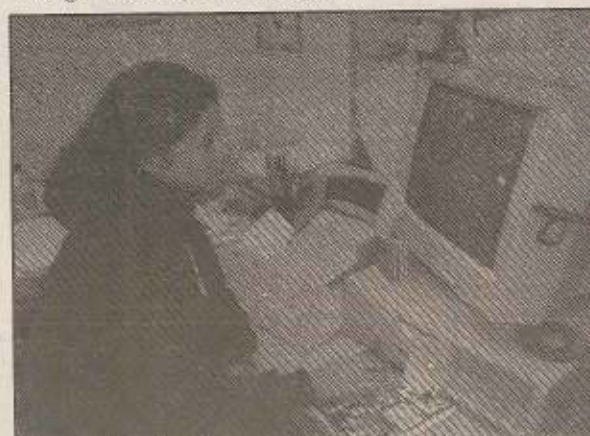
Need help with homework? You're in luck; Fairfax County Public Libraries (FCPL) has created two homework help lines available to all students. Found online at <http://www.co.fairfax.va.us/library/internet/-homework.html>, FCPL's Homework Helpers assists students with biographies, literature, science, math, and social studies.

The Homework Helper's site has topics for every grade level. For example, on the science part of the site, it has sub-topics biology, chemistry, physics, anatomy, etc. United States history, geography, government, and politics are all included on the history site of Homework Helpers. Shakespeare, other authors, and writing basics are on the literature part of the site. All topics include pictures, fact sheets, and links that provide information in an easy-to-read, interesting way.

Because it is so easily accessible, students are encouraged to use the website. Junior Freddie Guzman said, "I might use the site, if it helps me pass the class."

FCPL also offers additional help at <http://www.co.fairfax.va.us/library/homework/default.htm>. This is the address to the Live Homework Help website. It provides students access to subject specialists and free one-on-one tutoring.

The only setback of the Live Homework Help are the hours it is accessible. Students inclined to start their assignments at 2am are out of luck. The available hours are 2-10pm everyday. It is also available in Spanish, Sunday through Thursday from 2-10pm.



Features Editor Katie Staples samples the Homework Helpers on the FCPS website.



Thousands of people received flu shots administered by a doctor this winter.

Holiday Service, from front page

Key club members at this school gathered at Belle View Shopping Plaza and Hollin Hall Shopping Center on Sundays, December 12 and 19 to collect the donations. "I think it's most important to help people during the holiday season because we receive so much and forget about the people that have so little," said senior Key Club member Caitlin Coggins. A canned food drive sponsored by the Key Club took place last month to provide a proper Thanksgiving dinner for unfortunate families. Approximately 850 pounds of canned food was collected by students at this school. The Key Club is also helping the Mount Vernon Kiwanis, a service and community-minded organization, sell Christmas trees and wreaths at the Belle View Shopping Plaza.

The West Potomac Thespian Troupe adopts a family every year for the holiday season. This year, they have adopted a West Potomac family with six children. This has been a Thespian Troupe event every holiday season for the past seven years. The troupe never sees or meets the family. Instead, they collect money, food, and buy items for the family from their wish list and give it to a representative of the family. In years past, they have collected as much as \$450, and clothing items and toys from the wish list. "We're hooking them up with a Game Cube this year," said senior David Hanson.

This year's holiday service projects are far from over and reportedly going as planned. "It's awesome to see the momentum from our schools accomplishments with donating canned food for Thanksgiving lead into the holidays," said senior Jon Marchand. Leaders of these clubs doing charity are still advocating that it is not too late to help out the needy.



# Happy Christmas

## Forgotten by Commercial

Marissa D'Orazio

Focus Editor

What is Hanukkah? Before you break out the guitar and sing in a loud wavering voice, "Hanukkah is...the festival of lights...instead of just one day of presents, we have eight crazy nights!" Let's take a closer look at this holiday.

Hanukkah, also spelled Hanukah, Hannukah, Chanukah, or Channuka, commemorates a miraculous event that came out of a very scary time in Jewish history. The Jews had been fighting the Greeks under Alexander the Great to protect the Holy Land. The Greeks put up an idol and commanded the Jews to bow to it, but instead, the Jews fled to the mountains, choosing to preserve their religion. They were called the Maccabees, or hammers. The Greeks met up with the Jews in the hills, and although the vast amount of Greeks and meager amount of Jews made it seem like an easy win, the Hammers, who got their name from the strength with which they fought, defeated the Greeks and chased them out of Jerusalem. When they finally returned to their temple, it was nearly destroyed. They lit a Menorah as soon as they got there, but, much to their dismay, they had only



Traditional Jewish menorah includes real and fake candles.

enough oil to last one day. Miraculously, the lamp burned for eight days.

Hanukkah celebrates every night that the lamp burned for them. This is why Hanukkah lasts eight days. Each candle of the Menorah (there are eight in total) is lit each night of Hanukkah, until the last night, when all are ablaze.

Many students in our school celebrate Hanukkah. Jewish Americans are often very under-represented. Stores air commercials to get people to do their Christmas shopping, not holiday shopping. They are concerned with the amount of profits they are going to gain and what "sells"—the All-American family exchanging gifts underneath a tree. Why show a Menorah? Businesses want the majority of people to come to their store. They have little concern for the minority.

"Even on Home Depot commercials they advertise Christmas," said junior Brett Smith. Smith is Jewish, and he and his family religiously celebrate Hanukkah.

But Hanukkah is not the only Jewish holiday America chooses to ignore. "We don't even get the really important holidays off, and we have to pray and fast during school," Smith remarked. "Everyone thinks Hanukkah is a joke. They say it's because Jews need a Christmas," when, actually, Christmas came 2000 years after Hanukkah."

Other Jews argue that Hanukkah, like Christmas, has been commercialized. "Hanukkah became very

commercialized because of Christmas. Parents are so bad that kids weren't getting gifts when their friends were, so they turned a small holiday into a giving extravaganza," said senior Annie Levin.

Commercialized or not, Hanukkah is an overlooked holiday that people should regard as more important than it is.



Laura Bruff reveling over a Menorah in Springfield Mall—only a few Menorahs that can be found in a commercial environment.

## Keeping Christ in Christmas

Katie Staples

Style Editor

End of November, and Christmas season has already started. My parents even start playing Christmas music the day after Thanksgiving. Overly-enthusiastic decorators have blow up Santas and snowmen in their yards. But do people know the true reason for this season?

Christians believe an angel went to the Virgin Mary and told her she was going to give birth to a son. The Bible tells Jesus was born in a barn in Bethlehem to Mary and Joseph of Nazareth. Then, three kings followed the North Star, shining brightly over the barn, to Bethlehem, to bring gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh to baby Jesus.

There are many things about the Christmas season Christians celebrate, be it the celebration of Jesus' birth or that Christmas is a time of giving to others. Junior Cat Brokaw said, "In my religion, we celebrate Christmas as the birth of Jesus Christ. It's a joyous holiday where the focus is God and what he gave us, the ultimate Christmas present." Families who aren't so religious concentrate on other reasons to celebrate the season. "My family puts up a Christmas tree, but

we celebrate the good feelings of Christmas," said junior Thomas Luhring.

For some, the holidays are a time to be together. "My mom and I put ornaments on the tree together,



Churches help people to stay as focused as possible on the traditional meaning of Christmas.

do an Advent wreath, and going to the candlelight service at our church.

Each year my mom takes a picture of me putting the angel on top of the tree," Brokaw said.

"My whole family goes to my grandmother's

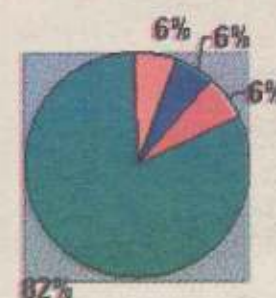
house and we open presents together on Christmas morning. As a family, we read the story of Christmas from the Bible," said freshman Shelby Boruff. Junior Tyler Gray spends Christmas at home with his family. "My little brother, Brendan, wakes me up really early Christmas morning because he's so excited to open his presents," said Gray.

Over the years, Christmas has become one of the most commercialized holidays; from Hallmark cards to store sales, Christmas rush starts on Black Friday,

the dreaded shopping day after Thanksgiving. "It's way too commercialized. Christmas is just a money game, really. Big stores like Target and Wal-Mart know that if you can get this much stuff on the shelves for this low of a price, this many people will come," said senior Paul Cambon. Brokaw agreed, "Seeing how I'm really religious, I feel that everyone should focus on the true meaning of Christmas. It seems everyone just goes to church randomly during the holidays, but at least it's getting them to church."

### What holiday you celebrate?

\*out of 100 students polled



Ram  
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## Merry Christmas!

## FROHE

Happy Festivus!

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Joyeux Noël



# Hannukwanzidan!

## Seven Values, Seven Nights

Rob Jones

Wire Reporter



Kwanzaa incorporates African Culture with ideals of community.

Kwanzaa is a relatively new holiday, founded by Dr. Maulana Karenga in 1966. It is not religious in nature, rather celebrating the start of the African harvest. Kwanzaa promotes seven traditional values of the African social structure, exalting community, self-sufficiency and personal growth. The holiday starts December 26<sup>th</sup> and continues through January 1<sup>st</sup>, with each of the seven days representing one of the values of Kwanzaa.

The holiday commemorates Umoja, Kujichagulia, Ujima, Ujamaa, Nia, Kuumba and Imani. These symbolize, respectively, Unity, Self-Determination, Collective Responsibility, Cooperative Economics, Purpose, Creativity and

Faith. The symbol perhaps most readily identifiable with Kwanzaa is the Kinara, a candle holder generally made of wood that displays seven candles, one for each value promoted during the holiday. The Kinara is not to be confused with the menorah, a traditionally Hebrew symbol often associated with the Jewish festival of Chanukah.

Creativity and self-sufficiency are two of the integral foundations of Kwanzaa. For this reason, homemade gifts and decorations are preferred to store-bought ones. The house is decorated with red, green and black, and African prints and artwork are displayed prominently. A special placemat called a Mkeka is one of the primary decorations. It is traditionally made of straw, but a cloth placemat with an African print may be substituted. A basket of crops, or Mazao, symbolizing the harvest, should be placed on the Mkeka. Finally, an ear of corn is set out for each

child in the house, although families without children should still set out at least one ear, since Africans traditionally believe in social parenthood.

On the eve of the final day of Kwanzaa (December 31<sup>st</sup>), a Karamu, or Kwanzaa feast, is held. It is an opportunity to celebrate African heritage. A communal feast is prepared and set out on a large Mkeka on the floor. Food is self-served, and the feast features cultural entertainment. Music and dancing are featured, and are usually followed by a lecture by a guest speaker.

"[Kwanzaa is] the best seven days of my life!" exclaims sophomore Elex Speights. Elex is just one of many students at West Potomac who celebrate Kwanzaa. Says fellow sophomore John Jordan, "The last day of Kwanzaa is the best, when the family all gathers together and celebrates together."

## Rama-dawn Til Dusk

Laura Lofgren

Reporter

"Do you want to learn a Pakistani dance?" my Muslim friend asked me. I entertained the thought for a moment.

"What for?" I responded.

"We're performing a cultural dance for a Hybla Valley Elementary School show, and we need more dancers." Why not? It sounded like a good idea. I joined my friend and the other dancers at her house that night for practice. We were served Pakistani food, and given gorgeous

outfits — all bright colors with amazing embroidery. The dancing was difficult, but I learned these fancy costumes, food, and dancing are all present at the festivities of three day long Muslim weddings.

The Islamic religion and Muslim culture are so deeply entwined — creating a very unique way of life. While the Jewish Hanukkah and the Christian Christmas holidays are very commercialized, the Islamic Ramadan is not in the least. It is a purely religious celebration: considered a time for inner reflection, devotion to God, and self-control. Muslims who participate in Ramadan must abstain from

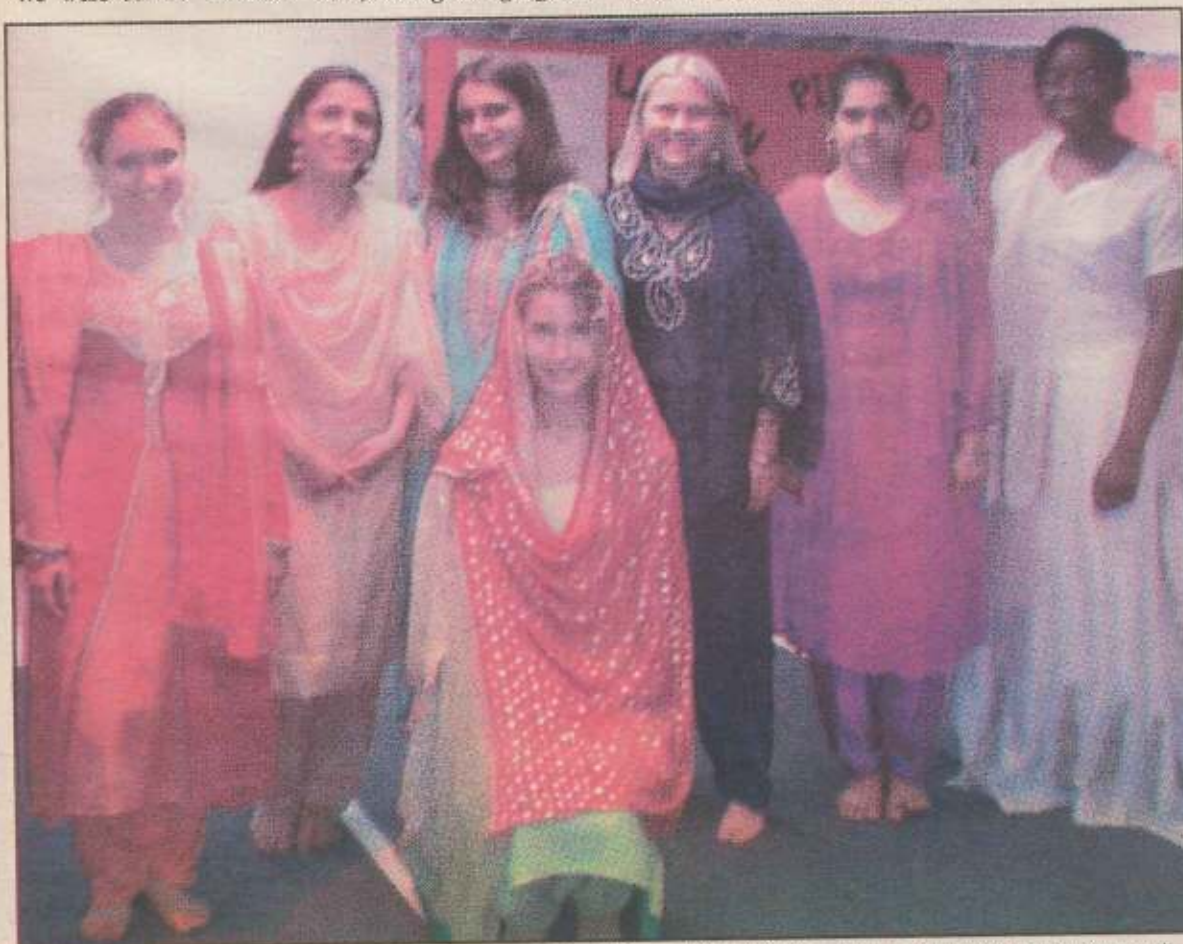
food, drink, smoking, and marital sex from sun up to sun down. It is used as a means of self-control, which becomes a means of getting closer to God. It is also a way of experiencing hunger, developing sympathy for the less fortunate, and learning thankfulness and appreciation for all of God's gifts. Senior Rami ZamZam says, "To me, Ramadan is a month of self sacrifice and self reflection. During the month, you not only fast from sunrise and sunset, but you are supposed to show kindness and acceptance toward others. You gain great amounts of knowledge about yourself and others due to the great spirituality associated with Ramadan."

The night on which the first verses of the Qur'an were revealed to the Prophet, known as the Night of Power (Lailat ul-Qadr), is generally the 27<sup>th</sup> night of the month. Many Muslims spend this entire night in prayer. "Then after, you celebrate the ending of the month with the celebration of Eid, a three day long holiday intended to be a time where you celebrate with other Muslims as well as give presents and money. Ramadan and Eid are very important holidays in the Islamic religion and allow Muslims a good opportunity for religious discovery."

Here in West Potomac, many Muslims seem to feel that their religious beliefs affect them in a good way, as is no different from any other religion. "I personally feel that Islam teaches me to be a better daughter, sibling, student, classmate, and friend as it provides me with a structure that is adaptable to almost any environment. Just as Christians turn to God, Jews to Yaw, Muslims turn to Allah to 'seek refuge' and peace from even everyday school stress," said Senior Michelle Khilji.

As for fasting, the lack of energy from not eating can be very difficult for some students. "Fasting is really hard, especially with sports. But at the end of the day, I go home happy to know that I didn't give in and stuck to my principles," said Freshman Mohamed Chouat.

Ramadan is a beautifully powerful holiday that teaches values and self-control, and celebrates the spirituality within the Islamic religion.



Laura Lofgren, Maria Baptiste, Laura Bruff, Bea Capastany, Marissa D'Orazio, Michelle Khilji, and Ijeoma Nwatu before performing a traditional Pakistani dance.

Feliz Navidad!

Happy Kwanzaa

Happy Hanukkah!



## Keckee's Katch

Better Than Doing Homework

# Someone Needs an Attitude Adjustment, Young Man

Alex Keckeisen

Sports Editor

Thanksgiving weekend I walked out of the hotel I was staying in to see three small kids and a father wearing Indiana Pacers jerseys, two with Reggie Miller and the other two with Jermaine O'Neal printed on the back. A fact that has been almost completely forgotten is what these professional basketball players really are: role models.

It may sound like words from your mother's mouth, but these multi-million dollar professional basketball players are supposed to be well-behaved. The melee in Detroit (coincidentally the second most dangerous city in the country) only made the situation worse for the state of sports today. Kids that watch all this violence don't know what's right. Most of them have only just begun playing organized sports. They see Stephen Jackson, Ron Artest, and Jermaine O'Neal throwing punches and they think that's common procedure. The league is going through a period in which a bunch of thugs have taken over the league, and Commissioner Stern will have no part of it. He has issued suspensions of 73 games for Artest, 30 games for Jackson, and 25 games for O'Neal.

All championship teams have someone to set the standard and show the younger players how life is in the big leagues. Every team needs its fair share of veterans. The Red Sox had Schilling, the Pistons (last year's NBA champions) had most of their

roster above the age of 29, and the Tampa Bay Lightning had Dave Andreychuk. The Pacers only have one player born pre-1974, and that's Reggie Miller, who hasn't seen much play because he's been ailing for the last few seasons. I shouldn't forget to mention that four of the players didn't even attend college. And, surprise surprise, Jackson and O'Neal are two of them. They just haven't grown up yet, and that shows, especially after multiple incidents this season and years before.

For those of you that think this punishment was too harsh, remember all those times Artest committed flagrant fouls and started fights two seasons ago. Commissioner Stern said himself the punishment probably wouldn't have been as harsh if he hadn't had any prior suspensions.

What Stern has done over the years as Commissioner has been amazing. He strictly disciplines any player he believes stepped out of line. He knows that handing out over 140 games in suspensions was the right move on part of the NBA. Not suspending them would be a crushing blow to the fan base, and to the wallet, because corporate sponsors would not want to be involved. The most memorable quote I heard from him was about how he made the decision by himself. "Yes it was unanimous," Stern said. "It was 1-0 and I won."

I'm not one to become aggravated when a player yells at a ref or complains, because I am not immune to emotions of the game.

I've yelled at my fair share of referees and been disciplined for it, but I have never thrown a punch or intentionally hurt another

like Barry Sanders? Every time he scored a touchdown he just handed the ball to the referee. Now we have choreographed dances.



Security has been increased to the point where the Indiana Pacers have hired Rambo to guard the court during warm-ups to prevent any more brawls.

player. I was kicked in the face multiple times and given a cleat to the head, resulting in swelling the size of a softball, but I didn't retaliate. I got back in the game. I'm not even being paid ten million dollars. These players beg for attention that should not be given to them. The suspensions that Stern gave out were fair for Artest, O'Neal, and Jackson. Many complain that it was too harsh, but if anything it was too light, if not just right.

Whatever happened to role model athletes

What about Michael Jordan during the 1997 NBA finals, when he played game five sick to the point that he could hardly stand, let alone run? We need better role models and better sports figures in today's society, and we just don't have enough of them.

Handing out these punishments was the right way to keep these players out of trouble. Believe me, we won't see an incident like this for a very long time in the NBA.

## Out with the New, in With the Old

Rob Jones

Wire Reporter

This school's track and field team has experienced another change in leadership after losses in its first meet of the season. After the loss of head coach Corey Bowerman and long-distance coach Don Beeby, both of whom stepped down prior to the start of this season, the position of head coach was filled by Coach Coates, who had previously worked as a personal trainer. However, it was announced last week that, due to undisclosed circumstances, Coates is no longer in control of the team.






Bowerman and Beeby have agreed to step up and coach

for the remainder of the season. Bowerman is temporarily reassuming his position as head coach, while Beeby will be primarily coaching shot put and discus athletes.

School officials refuse to disclose the details of Coates' departure, saying only that they were largely "beyond his control." Several athletes speculate that his inexperience coaching large teams was an important factor. Coates' arrival was met with anticipation; since many of his current and former athletes have gone on to compete in international meets in Sydney, Australia. However, his expertise was apparently better focused on individual attention for exceptional athletes, rather than general management of a

large team. "[Coates] used to work as a personal trainer," says junior distance runner Dan John. "His administrative inexperience became apparent at meets, when he scheduled far too many athletes for some events and none for others." This may have been responsible for the embarrassing loss the boys' team suffered at their first meet, scoring only nine points in a sport where the losing team generally scores at least forty.

Bowerman and Student Activities Director Jeffery Dietze are currently searching for a replacement coach for the spring season. If one cannot be found, Bowerman may continue to coach for the remainder of the year.

SPORTS CALENDAR				
				
<b>Tuesday, December 21</b>				
Varsity Boys Basketball	7:45 p.m.	vs T.C. Williams		
Varsity Girls Basketball	7:45 p.m.	at T.C. Williams		
<b>Wednesday, December 22</b>				
Varsity Wrestling	4:15 p.m.	at Robinson		
<b>Monday, December 27</b>				
Boys Basketball Tournament	TBA	at Mt. Vernon		
Varsity Girls Basketball	9:00 a.m.	vs George Mason at Chantilly		
<b>Monday, January 3</b>				
Varsity Boys Basketball	7:30 p.m.	at Hartsfield		
Varsity Girls Basketball	7:30 p.m.	vs Hartsfield		
<b>Wednesday, January 5</b>				
Gymnastics Meet	7:00 p.m.	at Oakton		
<b>Friday, January 7</b>				
Swim Meet vs. Annandale	5:30 p.m.	at Wakefield Park		
<b>Tuesday, January 11</b>				
Varsity Girls Basketball	7:30 p.m.	at Lake Braddock		
<b>Saturday, January 15</b>				
Winter Track Meet	7:30 p.m.	at Episcopal		
<b>Tuesday, January 18</b>				
Varsity Boys Basketball	7:30 p.m.	vs Annandale		
Varsity Girls Basketball	7:30 p.m.	at Annandale		
<b>Wednesday, January 19</b>				
Gymnastics Meet	7:00 p.m.	at Mt. Vernon		



# Swimmers Make a Splash

*Dedicated team works to win with increased team spirit*

Joy Yoo

Wire Reporter

The winter season is the longest season of the year. One team that makes this long commitment is this school's swim and dive team. The girls' captains are seniors Amy Dobson and Hana Beckerle, along with juniors Molly Turner and Leigh Rossi. The captains of the boys' team are seniors Jonathan Politte and Brent Hawkins, as well as juniors Brad Dalton and Taylor Mertins. Veteran coaches Bob and Lorraine Lombardi are back for another year.

Surprisingly, this season the girls' team has had a large number of new swimmers, adding up to a total of over sixty swimmers and divers. "This year we have the biggest team ever. We have strong swimmers in every event. I'm optimistic on this season's outcome, especially the girls' team," said Dobson.

Even though the boys' team has far fewer members than the girls' team, quality is what matters. One key member is junior Brendan

Haley, who has always been an asset to the team. This year, Haley will be expected to swim at the State competition level once again.

Starting off, the team swam against perennially strong Robinson. The meet was lost, but the next night both teams won against T.C. Williams on home ground at the Mount Vernon Recreation Center, due largely to strong performances by Rossi and Haley.

For their third meet, the swim team faced West Springfield. Although it was close, the team was unable to pull off a win. 22 points were lost by the team because of a smaller-than-average dive team this year.

The team takes these early losses in stride. The score at this meet was the closest score against West Springfield since Lombardi's arrival as head coach, which signals an improvement that could result in several more wins. Junior Beth Grady said, "We have only had a couple of meets, but I can tell the team will be very successful."

The swim and dive team is known for its unity and family-like friendships. "Not only do we have a lot of new and really talented swimmers, but the fellowship and support are already making the team close. We're only a couple of meets into the season and everyone already seems excited to get together. The season will definitely be fun," said Rossi.

The sport creates many long-lasting friendships. No matter what the turnout is, everyone can count that the team will have a lot of fun. Some members, are on the team primarily because of the friendships. "The best thing about swim team is the friendship. Getting to see people



Junior Brendan Haley gets ready to jump in the pool during warm-ups of the meet against West Springfield. Warm-ups are vital to getting ready for a race before the meet.

Photo by Hana Beckerle



Coach Bob Lombardi gives junior Leigh Rossi a pep talk before her race. The swim team has worked hard on improving from last season and would like to win every meet.

Photo by Hana Beckerle

## Wrestlers Put Challenges in Sleeper Hold

*New coach, new system creates hope for increase in skill and strength*

Laura Lofgren

Wire Reporter

Few people consider wrestling when looking for a winter sport. The team has not experienced a lot of success for the past two years as a result of their lack of a stable team. This meant that the team had to forfeit up to eighteen points



Members of the wrestling team work to perfect new moves at a recent practice.

Photo by Houston Murphy

because there weren't enough wrestlers for each required weight class. Many of the wrestlers join find the practices very strenuous. On top of this, the team has had three different coaches for the past few years.

However, despite its troubles, the team members are very dedicated and have high hopes for the team's success this season. The team seems to agree that the new Coach Mac

is one of the best they've had in years, and that they can expect good things from him. According to Junior Abdullah Ahmady, "Coach Mac is a very great coach who knows what he's doing and teaches very well off the mat. He wants me to do very well, and he will make me a better person and better wrestler." Some students have even gone to summer camp to learn moves and improve technique.

Wrestling teaches complex moves that can be later used in self-defense. Practices start out with a fifteen-to-twenty-minute jog followed by a couple of stretches. The wrestlers are then taught a different kind of move or technique and practice until it is perfected. Once the team is able to execute their new move with no problems, they are given time to wrestle amongst each other.

The wrestlers are usually given two rest periods, which last about two minutes, to get hydrated. Unlike any other sport, wrestlers are required to take showers after every practice. Having good hygiene prevents many diseases from spreading among the team. The wrestling mats are cleaned twice a day, before and after practice.

Junior Abdullah Ahmady, a wrestler on the team, said, "The sport of wrestling is one of the hardest sports in the high school level. The practices take a lot of dedication and self-discipline."

The sport teaches self-discipline. Wrestling sometimes requires students to lose weight, and although not enforced by the coach, they are expected to be exactly on or below their weight class. Dieting has its drawbacks. "In the wrestling room, we put an ice bag on the thermometer to make the room really hot, which makes workouts tough. We do lose a lot of weight from it, though. I guess dieting is just part of the sport," said senior Joe Voellm.

According to sophomore Nick Friedrich, "Wrestling is tough to do, but all it takes is a little discipline and focus and it'll come easy there on."

Even though the team lost a lot of key senior wrestlers, the returning wrestlers and some of the new athletes that have taken up the challenge are showing signs of a successful season.

### Upcoming Matches

Date	Location	Time
12/22/04	Robinson	4:15 p.m.
1/6/05	Jefferson	6:00 p.m.
1/8/05	Wakefield	1:00 p.m.
1/12/05	Home	6:00 p.m.
1/13/05	Falls Church	6:00 p.m.
1/19/05	W-L	6:00 p.m.

## In The Numbers

23

Points scored by girls' varsity basketball guard Lauren Arthur in a 29-point win over Falls Church.

1, 2, 3, 4

Places won by the girls' swim team in the 50 meter freestyle event in a meet against T.C. Williams.

11

Point difference in a 76-87 loss for the boys' varsity basketball team to Wakefield.

Wakefield has averaged 35 points in their other wins.

145

Yards allowed by the Washington Redskins in the 31-7 trouncing of the New York Giants. At least we know we aren't the worst team in the league.



12 Days  
Of West  
Potomac

12 Steppers  
Stepping

11 Juniors  
Hyping

10 Trips to  
Wendy's

9 Minutes  
Walking

8 Freshmen  
Fleeing

7 Seniors  
Sighing

6 Ceilings  
Dripping

5 Wolverines

4 JENGA  
NERDS

3 Detentions

2 Snoring

Sophomores

1 Permanent  
Principal  
in WP

## A Day in the Life of... A Dedicated Disciplinarian

Ansley LaBarre  
Editor-in-Chief

"I think I'm an effective disciplinarian, I like sending kids in the right direction."

Greg Oliver is spending his first year at this school as the ninth grade assistant principal, meaning he has the final say in most disciplinary situations involving these students. He was open to working with freshmen as he says, "I believe in the ninth grade you can have the most influence on students."



Oliver directs the traffic to ensure student safety.

before they get set in habits they will carry throughout the remainder of high school."

After retiring from his former school district in Michigan, Oliver has moved to the metropolitan area to experience the diversity associated with D.C. Not wanting to give up the opportunity of working with America's youth, he gladly accepted the job at our school.

But what does an administrator do? Several major jobs arise from ensuring the safety of the students. Oliver arrives at 6 a.m. each morning to begin his work at school.

Around 7, he strolls over to the senior parking lot to direct traffic. At 7:20, he moves into Springbank, where his office resides. The majority of the day is spent focused on paperwork and referrals—mostly students who have created minor behavioral interruptions, or

have too many class cuts and tardies. Although discipline is seemingly the worst part

of a teacher's job, Oliver believes it is what administration implies. "I enjoy getting kids squared away and having hope they've been sent down the right path," he said.

Oliver does suffer from his share of aggravating moments, though. "I don't really enjoy cafeteria duty," Oliver said, "it gets loud, and can be nerve wrecking with the presence of so many students." He, along with the rest of the administration, is aware that most students would rather eat somewhere else during the lunch period. "We try our best to make sure students stay on campus. I'm not sure why they'd want to leave because the cafeteria food is good."

Oliver spends the second half of his day dealing with the Social Studies Department,



Oliver carries out administrative duties during the day.

of which he is the head administrator. Typically, this involves teacher evaluations and working with the staff to make improvements. At the 2:05 bell, he is once again in the senior parking lot to help dismissal.

Oliver lives alone and does not usually return to his home until around 7, unless he attends evening functions at school where the presence of an administrator is required. Although he enjoys being with students, that can create a long day. On the weekend he visits the nation's capital, or, travels to Ohio to spend time with his children.

## Hoppin' Holiday Movies

Mark Peterson  
Wire Reporter

There is no season more suitable for movies than winter. Whether there is a blizzard outside or it's just too darn cold to even get out of bed, movies have always been used as a remedy for the winter blues. Add a nice warm fire to the mix and you will be set for quite a while, and thoughts of going outside will drift away.

One of the most well-known of holiday movies is *White Christmas*. It has been a seasonal hit since 1954 when it was first released. It's about two World War II veterans, Bob Wallace and Phil Davis, who team up after the war to become a top song-and-dance act. They meet a pair of beautiful sisters, Betty and Judy, who also have a song-and-dance act and are instantly attracted to them. When the girls go up to Vermont for a Christmas show at a lodge, the guys follow suit and end up running into their former commander, General Waverly, the owner. A series of blunders and mess ups follow them as they try to help the General.

Arnold Schwarzenegger's *Jingle All the Way* is about a hard-working father who is never there for his son. He misses his son's karate class, which prompts him to make up for all of his past mistakes by attempting to

buy his son the most popular action figure, "Turbo Man," on the market.

He didn't realize how hard it would be until after having no luck at every toy store in town, getting ripped off by a

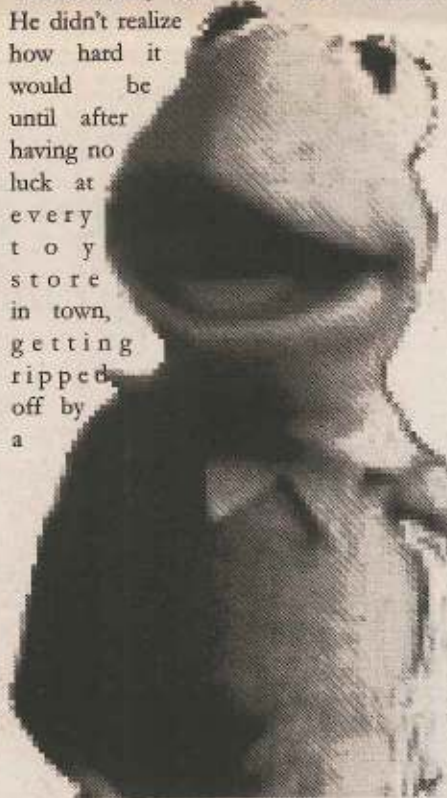


Photo by Evan Dobbs

bunch of corrupt Santa's, and running from a rabid reindeer. He is so desperate that he tries to steal the doll that

his neighbor was going to give to his kid. By sheer luck, he dresses up as the doll in a Christmas parade. After a climactic battle between him and a very disgruntled mailman, he finally gets a special edition doll for his son. It is a good movie to get you in the holiday spirit and laugh at the same time.

One of the most famous holiday movies of all time is *A Christmas Carol*, a story about a mean old man who dispises Christmas. On Christmas Eve he is visited by many spirits including his former partner, Jacob Marley and the ghosts of Christmas past, present, and future. The whole experience scares him to death and causes him to change his ways for good.

There have been many versions besides the original, like *A Muppets Christmas Carol*, which follows the original story to the nose.

The holiday season is great for movies simply because of all the options. There are comedies, dramas, action flicks, and even horror films that are perfect for winter, and there are always new movies coming out that are worth the money. If you still can't decide between all these great movies, then you might as well read a book all winter.

The Christmas After-Party  
Wednesday, December 29

Lyric Opera House  
Baltimore, MD

State

Martina McBride's the Joy of Christmas

Sunday, December 19

1st Mariner Area  
Baltimore, MD



Larry the Cable Guy

Friday, January 2

1st Mariner Arena

Baltimore, MD

SR-71 New Year's Eve 2004

Friday, December 31

The Recher Theatre  
Towson, MD

Localpalooza

Thursday, December 23

Jazz Nightclub

Springfield, VA

The Machine

Saturday, January 15

State Theatre

Falls Church, VA

Arts

Kristmas with Kix

Friday, December 17

Jazz Nightclub  
Springfield, VA





# Making the Movie

## Guide to Fabulous Films

**Drew Macklin**  
*Opinions Editor*

Sometimes, inspiration is so strong it has to be let out. It wells up deep inside, and bursts forth in rush of creative expression. Such a yearning has recently found its way into my soul through the Film Studies class offered at this school. In an astounding way, I have grown beyond the naïve movie-goer of the past, and have come to appreciate the fine, subtle craft that goes into the construction of a true cinematic masterpiece. My mind has been opened to the intricacies of film beyond the basic plot and acting – sound and music, camera angle, lighting, and the plethora of possible camera shots all are threads with which the filmmaker creates a breathtaking tapestry.

This new knowledge created within me an overwhelming desire to make my own film, to use what I had learned to fashion a thing of beauty and poignancy. So, I gathered about me friends who had felt the same inspiration and were eager to make a movie too. We had ideas, but sadly, we lacked resources; we had a digital camera, a computer, and not much else. It began with Jenga Club. We needed a shamelessly cool self-promotion for our brand new organization, so we put our talents and know-how to use.

When it finally showed, it was a hit. However, the masterpiece we made was anything but easy to form. We filmed for hours over several weekends, often taking certain shots several times. We had plotted out every shot on paper in a storyboard fashion – this is the first and most important part of the making. Still, we were

constantly  
re-forming

and re-thinking the progress of the film. Every technique and every nuance came together to make a film that flowed together spectacularly.

Our success was like a shot in the arm. It energized us and made us desperate to continue filming. To watch something that you created, which reveals your ideas and your creativity is an experience unlike anything else. We had been using one of the boys' digital camera and his editing equipment; all of a sudden, the rest of us became incredibly intent on buying a camera of our own.

Truly, there was no limit to our aspiration. We began forming plans to build our own dolly, which is a sort of cart that provides a stable moving platform for transitional shots, and a crane, which hoists the camera high into the sky and gives a perspective unlike what we are used to.

Then, with  
unspeakable  
joy, our next

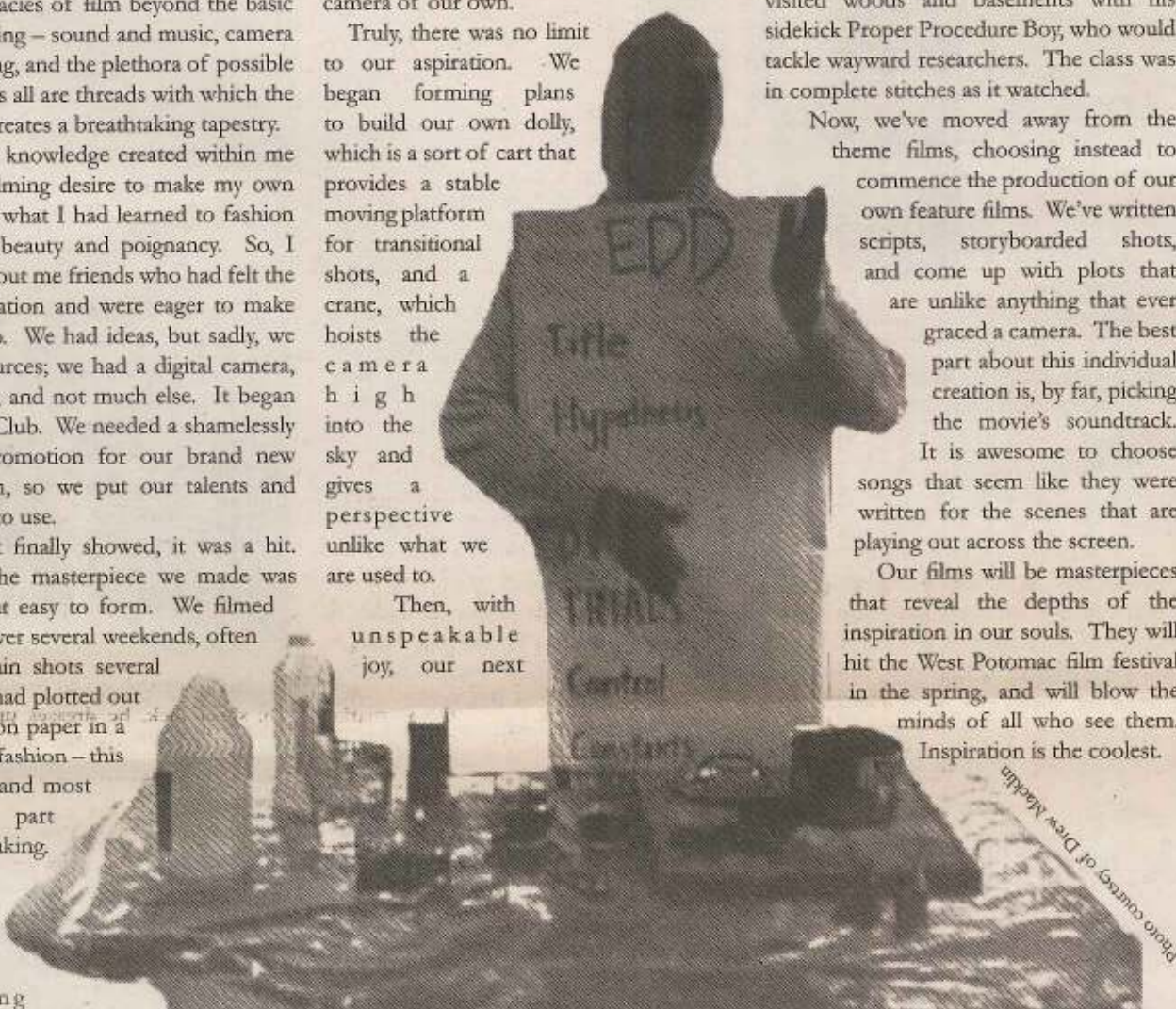
opportunity to film was handed to us. Two other seniors and myself were assigned the task of making a video explaining the ins and outs of the Scientific Method for our AP Biology Class. We enlisted the help of our friend, brainstormed, and EDD was born.

EDD, Experimental Design Diagram Man, traveled around explaining the Scientific Method to good little scientists in the area. EDD was me, in a sweatshirt, wearing a large cardboard box. We filmed his exploits with poise and brilliance. EDD visited woods and basements with his sidekick Proper Procedure Boy, who would tackle wayward researchers. The class was in complete stitches as it watched.

Now, we've moved away from the theme films, choosing instead to commence the production of our own feature films. We've written scripts, storyboarded shots, and come up with plots that are unlike anything that ever graced a camera. The best part about this individual creation is, by far, picking the movie's soundtrack.

It is awesome to choose songs that seem like they were written for the scenes that are playing out across the screen.

Our films will be masterpieces that reveal the depths of the inspiration in our souls. They will hit the West Potomac film festival in the spring, and will blow the minds of all who see them. Inspiration is the coolest.



*Opinions Editor Drew Macklin acts as "EDD", Experimental Design Diagram, for an AP Biology video*

## A-List

Newcomb names her number ones

**Restaurant:** Most days on the way home, I find not only one, who is getting sick at end of shifts, I find more than 10 people. In the past week I have gone winning 100,000, 200,000, 300,000, 400,000, 500,000, 600,000, 700,000, 800,000, 900,000, 1,000,000, 1,100,000, 1,200,000, 1,300,000, 1,400,000, 1,500,000, 1,600,000, 1,700,000, 1,800,000, 1,900,000, 2,000,000, 2,100,000, 2,200,000, 2,300,000, 2,400,000, 2,500,000, 2,600,000, 2,700,000, 2,800,000, 2,900,000, 3,000,000, 3,100,000, 3,200,000, 3,300,000, 3,400,000, 3,500,000, 3,600,000, 3,700,000, 3,800,000, 3,900,000, 4,000,000, 4,100,000, 4,200,000, 4,300,000, 4,400,000, 4,500,000, 4,600,000, 4,700,000, 4,800,000, 4,900,000, 5,000,000, 5,100,000, 5,200,000, 5,300,000, 5,400,000, 5,500,000, 5,600,000, 5,700,000, 5,800,000, 5,900,000, 6,000,000, 6,100,000, 6,200,000, 6,300,000, 6,400,000, 6,500,000, 6,600,000, 6,700,000, 6,800,000, 6,900,000, 7,000,000, 7,100,000, 7,200,000, 7,300,000, 7,400,000, 7,500,000, 7,600,000, 7,700,000, 7,800,000, 7,900,000, 8,000,000, 8,100,000, 8,200,000, 8,300,000, 8,400,000, 8,500,000, 8,600,000, 8,700,000, 8,800,000, 8,900,000, 9,000,000, 9,100,000, 9,200,000, 9,300,000, 9,400,000, 9,500,000, 9,600,000, 9,700,000, 9,800,000, 9,900,000, 10,000,000, 10,100,000, 10,200,000, 10,300,000, 10,400,000, 10,500,000, 10,600,000, 10,700,000, 10,800,000, 10,900,000, 11,000,000, 11,100,000, 11,200,000, 11,300,000, 11,400,000, 11,500,000, 11,600,000, 11,700,000, 11,800,000, 11,900,000, 12,000,000, 12,100,000, 12,200,000, 12,300,000, 12,400,000, 12,500,000, 12,600,000, 12,700,000, 12,800,000, 12,900,000, 13,000,000, 13,100,000, 13,200,000, 13,300,000, 13,400,000, 13,500,000, 13,600,000, 13,700,000, 13,800,000, 13,900,000, 14,000,000, 14,100,000, 14,200,000, 14,300,000, 14,400,000, 14,500,000, 14,600,000, 14,700,000, 14,800,000, 14,900,000, 15,000,000, 15,100,000, 15,200,000, 15,300,000, 15,400,000, 15,500,000, 15,600,000, 15,700,000, 15,800,000, 15,900,000, 16,000,000, 16,100,000, 16,200,000, 16,300,000, 16,400,000, 16,500,000, 16,600,000, 16,700,000, 16,800,000, 16,900,000, 17,000,000, 17,100,000, 17,200,000, 17,300,000, 17,400,000, 17,500,000, 17,600,000, 17,700,000, 17,800,000, 17,900,000, 18,000,000, 18,100,000, 18,200,000, 18,300,000, 18,400,000, 18,500,000, 18,600,000, 18,700,000, 18,800,000, 18,900,000, 19,000,000, 19,100,000, 19,200,000, 19,300,000, 19,400,000, 19,500,000, 19,600,000, 19,700,000, 19,800,000, 19,900,000, 20,000,000, 20,100,000, 20,200,000, 20,300,000, 20,400,000, 20,500,000, 20,600,000, 20,700,000, 20,800,000, 20,900,000, 21,000,000, 21,100,000, 21,200,000, 21,300,000, 21,400,000, 21,500,000, 21,600,000, 21,700,000, 21,800,000, 21,900,000, 22,000,000, 22,100,000, 22,200,000, 22,300,000, 22,400,000, 22,500,000, 22,600,000, 22,700,000, 22,800,000, 22,900,000, 23,000,000, 23,100,000, 23,200,000, 23,300,000, 23,400,000, 23,500,000, 23,600,000, 23,700,000, 23,800,000, 23,900,000, 24,000,000, 24,100,000, 24,200,000, 24,300,000, 24,400,000, 24,500,000, 24,600,000, 24,700,000, 24,800,000, 24,900,000, 25,000,000, 25,100,000, 25,200,000, 25,300,000, 25,400,000, 25,500,000, 25,600,000, 25,700,000, 25,800,000, 25,900,000, 26,000,000, 26,100,000, 26,200,000, 26,300,000, 26,400,000, 26,500,000, 26,600,000, 26,700,000, 26,800,000, 26,900,000, 27,000,000, 27,100,000, 27,200,000, 27,300,000, 27,400,000, 27,500,000, 27,600,000, 27,700,000, 27,800,000, 27,900,000, 28,000,000, 28,100,000, 28,200,000, 28,300,000, 28,400,000, 28,500,000, 28,600,000, 28,700,000, 28,800,000, 28,900,000, 29,000,000, 29,100,000, 29,200,000, 29,300,000, 29,400,000, 29,500,000, 29,600,000, 29,700,000, 29,800,000, 29,900,000, 30,000,000, 30,100,000, 30,200,000, 30,300,000, 30,400,000, 30,500,000, 30,600,000, 30,700,000, 30,800,000, 30,900,000, 31,000,000, 31,100,000, 31,200,000, 31,300,000, 31,400,000, 31,500,000, 31,600,000, 31,700,000, 31,800,000, 31,900,000, 32,000,000, 32,100,000, 32,200,000, 32,300,000, 32,400,000, 32,500,000, 32,600,000, 32,700,000, 32,800,000, 32,900,000, 33,000,000, 33,100,000, 33,200,000, 33,300,000, 33,400,000, 33,500,000, 33,600,000, 33,700,000, 33,800,000, 33,900,000, 34,000,000, 34,100,000, 34,200,000, 34,300,000, 34,400,000, 34,500,000, 34,600,000, 34,700,000, 3

**Show:** Usually after my homework break, I kick in work. However, thanks to a fellow CBS show, *"Life As We Know It,"* it may have to go on enough for Dore, who is extremely narcissistic. But how can you stop watching he wants to know their affair!

Panera built right up the hill from school, but I now personally have been eating the incredibly large bowls, and the only complaint I have is the lack of

hounding me "G!" on Thursdays I go straight  
journalist: clandestine. I became hooked to the  
horrible acting and that girl. Every day not  
but, on the very block addicting. It is so  
when a 10<sup>th</sup> grade boy tells his English teacher



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**Marissa D'Orazio**  
Focus Editor

Just when we all thought homophobia was free to roam about the halls, the Gay-Straight Alliance formed to take a stand.

Some would dismiss it as a "chest-pounding organization," but consider this: is it so "chest-pounding" and selfish to want your Constitutional right to a free, safe and uninterrupted education? To want to know that in your school, you are accepted and not discriminated against?

GSA doesn't think so. Senior Caitlin Flynn was one of the initial founders of GSA in our school, and President of it two years ago.

"It's pretty much to get rid of the stereotypes that gays have to face, and help other people to realize that they're just normal people, and that they deserve to be treated equally."



*The goal of GSA is to unite and educate students.*

The two presidents of the club are junior Laura Herren and junior Leigh Rossi. What kind of things do they have planned for this year? "I think the big event each year has been the Day of Silence. I think we should expand past the Day of Silence by going on tours and sometimes watching videos to raise awareness in the club about discrimination," said Rossi.

Many open-minded students are aware of the benefits of having an organization like GSA in this school. "It's good to learn about different kinds of people, because we all have to live and work together," said senior Luis Robles.

Senior Joey Pope agrees. "An organization such as GSA gives an excellent opportunity for students to voice their opinions, and discuss them in a friendly, non-homophobic environment."

The main problem GSA faces is lack of members. To be truly active in the community, they need to expand. How can they do this? By changing your preconceived notions.

"A lot of people hear Gay-Straight Alliance and freak out," said Rossi. Rossi also said that when she first heard the name of the club freshman year, she, too, thought it sounded like a questionable organization. But what GSA really is is simply a peer group to raise tolerance of human beings.

If the only thing stopping you from joining GSA is shyness, or not wanting others to know your sexual preference, you have no need to worry. "People don't have to disclose their sexuality," added Rossi.

Not to mention everything is confidential. "Everything that goes on in that room stays in that room," said Herren.

Last year, many of the members of GSA were seniors. GSA is still looking for more people to join. If you are interested, see the sponsor, Mr. Daniels, in room 424. And if you aren't interested in anything but sitting back and watching the discrimination spread?

"If people aren't interested, we'll be getting their attention," said Rossi.



## Speakable Truths

Ashlee Newcomb

Style Editor

As you look back, life before high school seems so much simpler. All the drama and hostile situations did not exist. However, that does not include the summer before our freshman year in high school. We were rising freshmen, yearning to be cool. The goal is to not run home crying after the first day. Nonetheless, if one starts out on the wrong foot during the summer, there is no hope for them during the school year. Freshman Melinda, the narrator, discovers this whole scenario the hard way in the novel, *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson.

During their high school careers, many students search to become part of the "in-crowd," or some type of clique. The narrator, Melinda, gives the reader a similar version to the "Mean Girls" aspect of high school. "We fall into clans: Jocks, Country Clubbers, Idiot Savants, Cheerleaders, Human Waste, Eurotrash, Future Fascists of America, Big Hair Chix, the Marthas, Suffering Artists, Thespians, Goths, Shredders. I am clanless." As the readers go on it is revealed that Melinda did something or was a part of something that provoked the majority of the high school to be upset with her and treat her like an alien.

On her first day of school, she had mashed potatoes thrown at her. She couldn't look toward her friends for help since all of them changed over the summer and established themselves with one of the many "clans." Luckily, at one point, Melinda finds an abandoned janitor closet, which she cleans out and makes her sanctuary, decorated with a poster of Maya Angelou and her art, made out of old turkey bones.

Melinda cannot seem to meet someone to really relate to. When she makes effort

to talk to her old friends, they shut her out. She mildly befriends a transfer student, who ends up not being the type of friend anyone desires. There is one friend that she reconnects with, Ivy, who looks past the rumors. However, Melinda is not only trying to make friends, she is trying to avoid someone from the past who rekindles the memory of the unforgettable event. Every time "IT" appears, her heart stops, her adrenaline rushes, and she seeks to run.

Throughout the novel, the reader is given pieces of information about what stimulated everyone to be so hateful toward Melinda. It is not precise to what happened that summer, until the last section of the novel. It seems the memory of that terrible event gives Melinda an overwhelming sense of depression and her will to go on as a positive person has diminished. When she tries to open up to an old friend, the friend thinks she is lying and calls her pathetic.

Melinda has pretty accurate views of high school, however non-zealous they may be. She depicts Valentine's Day as a day of importance in high school, where in middle school it "went underground." To tell someone that you like them went through the standard degrees of separation to find out. And all of a sudden, boys were pronouncing their love in extremes, to the point where "I Love You, Anjela!" is spray painted into the snow bank along the

parking lot."

The yearbook arrivals are truly a huge part of the school year. However, the mechanics of the whole ordeal are just comical. Melinda comments that some students get cafeteria ladies to sign their yearbook, and wonder if they write things like, "Hope your chicken patties never bleed" or "May your Jell-O always wiggle."

Prom, what more is there to say than this: "They should cancel school this week. The only things we're learning are who is going with who, who bought a dress in Manhattan, which limo company won't tell if you drink, the most expensive tux place, and on and on and on . . . Kids aren't handing in homework because they have appointments at the tanning salon."

And of course, there's post-prom. "The total damage included one stomach pumped, three breakups of long-term relationships, one

lost diamond earring, four outrageous hotel-room parties, and five matching tattoos allegedly decorating the behinds of the senior class officers."

This book opened my mind to the dramas and dangers of high school. Things that most of us take for granted, and do not think will ever happen, can and most commonly will, if not to you, probably to someone you know. It may not seem so extreme in most cases, however, to whatever extend, cases similar to this occur. It just depends on if the victim can notice these incidents or not.



*Speak*, by Laurie Halse Anderson, is one of senior Ashlee Newcomb's favorite books.

Photo edited by Ashlee Newcomb

## Savor the Genius Harmony

Houston Murphy

Photo Editor

Simple, yet intrinsic. Thought-provoking, yet mellow and relaxing. This is just a selection of the sounds Interpol creates in their two albums, *Turn on the Bright Lights*, and their newest, *Antics*. Interpol is an indie rock band that, if you do not yet know about, you should be fiending to discover.

Rarely am I fixated with a certain album, but with Interpol's new album, *Antics*, I have become obsessed. After a friend's recommendation, I reluctantly went out and bought *Antics*. After sampling the album, it seemed like a good buy, but nothing spectacular. As I continued listening to their music, I began losing my distrust of the quality of the album little by little with every nuance of harmonious genius I suddenly realized in each song. Once I had actually taken in the whole album, every amount of cynicism I had felt was banished from my mind. By this point, I was spending hours out of my day dazed and infatuated with Interpol's hypnotizing tunes and lyrics.

Though the album didn't strike me as magnificent immediately, it grew on me, and the more it grew, the more I appreciated every little thing about each song. This is usually how it is when an excellent album comes along for me; I need to give it time to sink in. Once the music sinks into my senses, I am then able to savor it.

The rich imagery along with the emotional, serene tunes of the songs creates a perfect tone for reflection. I was captured by powerful lyrics in their first single from *Antics*, "Slow Hands", in which Interpol describes the pain of a lost love. The lead singer,

Paul Banks, sings, "Yea nobody searches/Nobody cares somehow/When the loving that you've wasted/Comes raining from a hapless cloud." Banks then goes on to ask his lost love, passionately, "Can't you see what you've done to my heart, And soul/This is a wasteland now." These intense lyrics seamlessly compliment the mellow tune of the song.

In "Narc," the tune is a bit more upbeat than most tracks, but still has a somber feel to it. With a compassionate tone to the song, Banks sings, "Baby you can see that the gazing eye won't lie/Don't give up your lover tonight/Cause it's just you, me, and this fire, alright/Let's tend to the engine tonight." Unlike most of the tracks on the album, it is clear what this song is about.

One of the things that was a bit different about *Antics*, compared to Interpol's last album, *Turn On the Bright Lights*, were the deeper, more abstract lyrics. Most of the songs are still about love and the bitter-sweet sensations brought by this emotion. The messages in each song took a while to understand, and for some of the tracks, I am still not sure, exactly, what they are about. Though very figurative, the album is still filled with plenty of clear one-liners that gave me chills when I first heard them, such as in "Public Pervert," when Banks says, "If time is a vessel, then learning to love/Might be my way back to sea," or in "C'Mere," when he sings, "It's way too late to be this locked inside ourselves/The trouble is that you're in love with someone else." Though the witty lyrics can seem powerful standing alone, the whole effect of each song could not be felt without the fitting score playing in the background.

Interpol has come a long way since their last album, *Turn on the Bright Lights*. Though that album was also excellent, the melody in *Antics* seems more complete, and brings a sense of maturity from the sound. Not a whole lot has changed in the way Interpol plays their music from the two albums. *Antics* is a little bit more upbeat and less melancholy than *Turn on the Bright Lights*. The sounds created in this album are slower and more calm, yet still energetic enough to keep me engaged; I can fall asleep to it every night, and then be able to wake up and listen to it on the way to my frantic school life. Being able to listen to *Antics* in any situation is what makes it such a brilliant album.



Junior Houston Murphy listens to Interpol, one of his favorite bands, on his iPod.

Photo by Evan Dobbes

## All Aboard

The Polar Express is in town

Joy Yoo

Wire Reporter

Choo choo! All aboard! The *Polar Express* has hit the theaters.

If you love the book or just love traditional Christmas stories, *The Polar Express* is the movie for you. Filled with phenomenal graphics and sensational music that truly tugs the heart. With Tom Hanks playing a total of five characters, the action is thrilling.

The audience is able to feel like they are actually in the movie, because of the cinematography. The animation was well-



Finally, after a long ride, *The Polar Express* arrives at the North Pole as well as local theaters.

done and very realistic. The detail was very explicit and lifelike. The selection of holiday music is just right, sometimes the characters even sing. There is everything for just about any type of audience, including thrilling action and comedy.

The story goes as follows: a little boy is beginning to doubt Santa's existence. On Christmas Eve, while he is in his bed, he hears something outside and looks out to see a black train. He grabs his bathrobe and sprints down the stairs and out the door. Pondering on whether or not he should get on the train, he finally jumps in at the last second. On his way to the North Pole, the Polar Express hits some obstacles. Finally when they arrive at the North Pole, the elves and children are ecstatic when Santa comes out. When Santa arrives, the reindeer's bells begin ringing, however, the boy cannot hear them. So, while everyone is rejoicing, he is sad. The bells were only audible to those who believed in Santa and his elves and the North Pole.

This movie appeals to any age group: teenagers, parents, and children. Senior Laura Brennan said, "I was nervous to see it because I liked the book a lot. I was pleasantly surprised to see that they did a good job." The movie was just really good. It is a movie that I suggest you see with a family member or close friend. After watching the movie, one really learns about the value of friendship and Christmas spirit. Santa no longer remains a mythical figure but a real one. Without a doubt, you'll come out of the theater with that once-a-year cozy feeling in your tummy.



# Thai love Keo's Bubble Pop Stinks

Milica Wren

Special to The Wire

If you are looking for the ultimate Thai experience, there is no better place than Keo's Thai cafe. Located at 8733-F Cooper Road, (Rt 1 South, same shopping center as Wing Stop and across the highway from Food Lion), the quaint and low-key cafe provides an authentic sampling of delicious Thai dishes. Whether you are a fan of the classic Pad Thai (which they make vegetarian), or prefer to stretch your senses towards something slightly more exotic, such as the Pineapple Fried Rice or the Chicken Cilantro, Keo's is one of the best places around. They also offer dishes such as Peanut Chicken, Pad Broccoli and for those legally permitted, domestic as well as imported Thai beer is available. The cafe offers carry-out as well as casual sit-down dining with plush booths, traditional Thai inspired wall art, complete with tranquil gurgling fountain, vegetation, and ornamental statuettes.

However, if the prospect of tantalizingly scrumptious food is not enough to lure to you Keo's, then maybe the friendly service will. For the past two months, I have made sporadic visits to this restaurant whenever I happened to be 'in the area'. On these visits, my company and I have sampled various selections from the menu, and, have never been dissatisfied. So, when the waiter asks me, "Your regular?" (because he always recognizes me), I reply, "Of course." Some other favorites of mine



Photo by Milica Wren

Keo's Thai Cafe is a quick fix for junior Diana Blaszkiewicz's hunger.

would have to be, the Green Curry, which is either with chicken or beef and features traditional style green curry, bamboo slices, eggplant, basil, pepper, green beans and coconut milk, and the Drunken Noodle, which is either chicken, beef, or pork stir-fried with flat rice noodles, bell peppers, and onions in a spicy basil sauce.

Having eaten at multiple Thai restaurants, Keo's has repeatedly proven to be the best.



Photo by Milica Wren

The cozy interior of Keo's mixed with delicious Thai food results in an enjoyable dining experience.

Evan Dobbs

Photo Editor

We all anticipated Gwen Stefani's solo album *Love. Angel. Music. Baby.* to be a great hit. Once again we learned people say, "don't buy an album because of one song," for a reason.

The confusing title, *Love. Angel. Music. Baby.* distracts us from the puzzling lyrics. "Rich Girl," produced by Dr. Dre, was a hypocritical statement as Stefani sings, "If I was a rich girl see/ I'd have all the money in the world/ If I was a wealthy girl," after she is featured on MTV's *Cribs* with a huge house, rock star husband, and fancy cars.

Another odd track, produced by The Neptunes, went bananas on Stefani. It sounded like some one was stepping on trashcans.

This album sounded like a first draft with a lot of potential. Some aspects were good, however it crashed when I got past the intro of the songs. "Bubble Pop Electric," featuring Johnny Vulture, had a lot of electric, but no pop or bubble. Freshman Skye Garrett was short on words when listening to the song. "It's good for people that like that stuff," she said.

Some things just don't mix. In "Luxurious," the beat to Biggie's "Big Papa" was murdered by Stefani's vocals. East coast should never mix with west, unless you're a rapper. "I don't think that she should remix it into something different," says sophomore Nadia Lee, who listened to "Luxurious." I'm serious about "Serious" when I say the eighties should be left in the eighties. Of



Photo illustration by Houston Murphy

On the cover of her new CD, Stefani sits next to Harajuku girls, the main inspiration of her album.

course, it's not that bad, if you happen to be Madonna.

The worst track, I'd have to say, was the duet with Andre 3000. The perfect example of the strangeness of Stefani's lyrics is, "It's beyond Martin Luther/ Upgrade computer." Although it has meaning and morale, it was weird.

I was saved when I heard "Danger Zone." It met all my expectations in one song, which is too bad, because it is only one song. It has dance, flare, and Stefani's voice the way it should be heard.

Maybe this 'solo' album wasn't solo with all of her guest artists, but overall, it was disappointing, and Stefani deserves a lot better. I love hip-hop, but Stefani is not hip-hop. With the two or three good songs, I'd buy them off of I-Tunes for ninety nine cents, and save twenty bucks.

# Halo 2: Playing 'til the Bitter End

Alex Keckeisen

Sports Editor

Video game geeks rejoice! The sequel to the best game on Xbox is now back after one of the most anticipated waits ever.

*Halo 2*, the second edition of the game *Halo*, was released on November 9<sup>th</sup> after delays in the release, put out by the games' creator, Bungie. Although the wait was long and the details withheld, the game offered better graphics and game play, but lacked in multiplayer and the overall plot line.

I admit it, I was a gaming addict. When I first got my Xbox for Christmas I couldn't put down the controller, playing the first *Halo*. I even had Xbox Live at a time when no one else did. The first in what Bungie says may create a franchise like the Madden football games, was brilliant. Not only was the storyline complete and very long, multiplayer is what truly made this game an instant classic.

And while *H2*, as it is often called by gamers, will always be compared to its counterpart which set records and shattered the competition, it is still one of the best games on the store shelves today, alongside *Half-Life 2* and *Doom 3*.

When I first popped the disk into my gaming console, I immediately went to the campaign mode, which turned out of be the least enjoyable part of the game, even though it still amazed me. The opening monologue got me excited. It was what I imagined the wait between *Rocky 1* and *Rocky 2* was. The gaming quickly began and I remembered why I loved first person shooter games. The plot went along with

many twists and turns which if I told you what went on after the second level, I would be spoiling it for you. The enemies jumped out at the Master Chief, the character that you play as for half of the game, and my guns undoubtedly destroyed them.

Somewhat suddenly you switch characters. You change from the human who fights the aliens (who are also known as the Covenant), to one of the Covenant soldiers who fight the humans. The twists continue even more, and right as you settle down as the Arbiter (the Covenant's equivalent of the Master Chief) they switch you back to the Master Chief.

Unfortunately, as the plot thickens and the cut scenes between levels get even better the game ends and you're left with one of the worst cliff hangers ever. Good thing you can still play multi-player with friends and even strangers.

Possibly the most awaited part of this game is the multiplayer mode. Levels like Blood Gulch and Battle Creek set the standard for what should be seen in every game. Both

of these levels were converted to *H2* which are now called Coagulation and Beaver Creek. They have a few variations such as Banshees in Coagulation.

A large part of this game, considering you have the online service, is *Xbox Live*. You can link up with friends from all the way around the world. If you want to play with a friend you have in California, you can. If you have a friend in the England, go ahead and play with him too! This just adds to how great multiplayer mode is. This is a particularly good feature if no one in your area is better than you because it gives you the chance to play with some of the best gamers in the world.

Weapons in this game have also been leveled out. The needler, for example, has better killing ability. The pistol has also been toned down, because you can no longer zoom in to get that masterful headshot you have perfected in the first version.

So as I leave you, pondering about whether to buy this game, or if you have already bought it, call up a few friends and play. Fifty dollars is more than worth it and just may be the steal of the year.



Photo illustration by Kate Staples

The cover of *Halo 2*, the popular new video game, which hit stores November 2004.

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# Excellent Emmanuel

Joy Yoo  
Wire Reporter

Having moved from Ghana in October of 2003, senior Emmanuel Gamor is one of many recent immigrants here at this school. However, there



Senior Emmanuel Gamor stays after school studying for history. Schools are very different than in his native Ghana.

Photo by Houston Murphy

his move halfway across the world, Gamor's workload this year consists of challenging classes: AP Statistics, AP Language, Trigonometry/Math Analysis, Forensics, US Government, Business Management, and Human Anatomy. Along with his very impressive schedule, Gamor is a member of the boys' Varsity basketball team and National Honor Society. At the NHS induction ceremony this year, he was awarded a nomination for a national NHS scholarship for having over 100 service hours last year.

In addition, Gamor is the vice president of his youth group at Faith and Victory Christian Center. He writes poetry, draws, and plays the bass guitar and drums in his spare time.

At school, Gamor is not known for his distinguished résumé among the students; he is known for his appealing smile and genuine personality. Making friends here was one

Gamor is known for his persistent effort and unrelenting determination. He said, "Coming from a place where schools are understaffed, I think that the teaching staff here is excellent. All of my teachers in all of my classes have been very supportive. Especially my counselor, Mrs. Spriggs, has been instrumental in helping me get comfortable here."

For the first seventeen years of his life, Gamor lived in Ghana. Gamor attended an all-boys boarding school. There, he made many "brotherly relationships" with his schoolmates. Starting fresh was his first challenge of coming to America. The people and

"Values here in America are totally different than those in Ghana. Even though it took me a while to appreciate the culture, it has also given me a sense of diversity appreciation."

~Senior Emmanuel Gamor

culture were quite different. "Values here in America are totally different than those in Ghana. Even though it took me a while to appreciate the culture, it has also given me a sense of diversity appreciation."

According to Gamor, multiculturalism is the best thing about America. "Socially, Ghana is more conservative and predominantly Christian. In America, the diversity is what stands out the most."

An important thing that remains in Gamor's life is cultural assimilation, the combination of one's native culture and the American culture. It is very difficult to cope with for those who have recently immigrated parents.

When asked who his role model is, Gamor immediately said, "Kofi Annan because he is an outstanding Ghanaian. He has been a beacon for most of the Ghanaian youth, including me." It is important for Gamor to keep in touch with his native culture. He speaks four languages: English, French, and two different Ghanaian dialects, Twi and Ga.

This year, Gamor was commended for his academic persistence with a National Merit Scholar Award. AP Star teacher Ms. Wolling said, "Emmanuel is a student who recognizes the value and importance of his education making him stand out from many of his peers. He contributes to his community finding it important to help others around him." Whatever he does in his future, Gamor will undoubtedly still be walking around with his priceless smile.

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# Best Ballas Forever

Ashlee Newcomb  
Style Editor

Normally each issue of *The Wire* spotlights two commendable seniors, a male and a female. However, this profile is slightly different. When one considers the extremely close friendship between seniors Lauren Arthur and Mary Lawson, it appeared unjust to split up the two and profile one of them alone. So the Editors-in-Chief made an executive decision, with my assistance, to break the guidelines and salute two outstanding senior girls.

For those of you who know Arthur and Lawson, you might wonder to yourself, why is one of their closest friends writing an article about them, would it not be biased? The way I see it, who is better to give you the scoop on these two girls than someone who knows them best? I have known both of them since our years at Carl Sandburg, and honestly, I do not know any two friends that are closer. "I can tell they have a close relationship, they are always together, and they act like sisters," said a close friend to both girls, senior Nate Fells.

When they met over ten years ago in second grade at Sunday school, the two were not the best of friends. It was not until seventh grade, when both girls began playing together in the AAU basketball league for the Fairfax Stars, that the girls quickly became friends. However, it was not until their freshman year of high school that they became the close friends they are today. They both made the Wolverines varsity girls' basketball team their freshman year.

Arthur, the point guard, and Lawson, the shooting guard, have both been playing on the varsity team together for the past four years, with the exception of sophomore year, when Arthur went to St. John's in Washington D.C. Both are team captains this year and have a heavy influence on their teammates.

"When playing with Lauren and Mary, they have such enthusiasm. They push you to want to play better," said junior Britney Majors. Not only do they have an impact on their teammates, basketball fans and their friends are aware of the girls' court abilities and leadership. "Lauren and Mary are both great players, they are phenomenal on the court and they have great leadership qualities," said junior friend Antony Minter.

Along with juggling basketball, schoolwork, and planning for the future, the girls have to find time to maintain a social life, especially for boys.

Even as tough as it may be to look into the future, they both look forward to their lives after high school. "It has always been

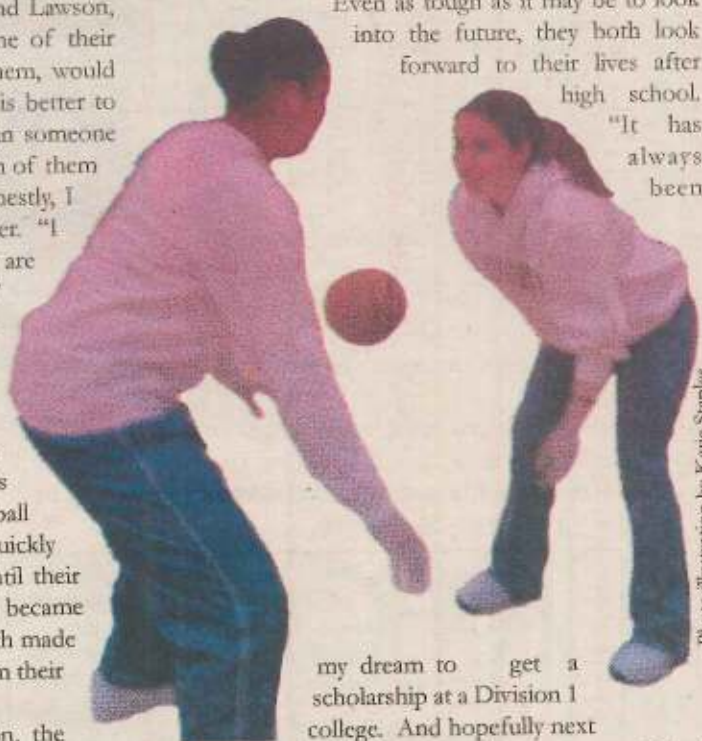


Photo illustration by Kane Staples

my dream to get a scholarship at a Division 1 college. And hopefully next fall that dream will come true and I will

be attending Campbell University in North Carolina," said Arthur.

Lawson also hopes to find basketball in her future, saying, "I want to play on Division 1 basketball in

college; however, I don't think I would like to go pro."

Lawson was pretty much destined to have basketball as a part of her life, considering her older sister, Kara Lawson, just finished her second season with the WNBA's Sacramento Monarchs. "I grew up going to all of my sister's basketball games. I saw how much she enjoyed playing it, so I decided to give it a try. My sister has been my biggest influence because she showed me how far I can go with the game of basketball," said Lawson.

For Arthur, her influence with basketball came from her father. "He is my worst critic, but also my number one fan. He has helped me through a lot of pressures of playing basketball," said Arthur.

Even though school is not their favorite part of the day, both girls enjoy taking their elective classes. Arthur is an active participant in her Television Production class, in which she helps present the morning news. Lawson is in her second year of Criminal Justice class, where she is shown the world of crime and goes on frequent field trips to various places, from the Juvenile Detention Center to the Fairfax County Prison.

Outside of school and basketball, these two do have a life. Hanging out with them is rather interesting. For example, on Fridays after school we all go on our weekly trip to Target, where they ritually push the "Princess & the Pauper" display button to listen to the high-pitched distorted version of the theme song. Not only that, they especially take delight in dancing down the main aisle to the song "Drop It Like It's Hot," even when everyone is gawking. This is after Lawson and I partake in a quick game of Nerf football, knocking down only a few display stands.

Arthur and Lawson have known each other for over ten years, and have maintained a close bond through it all. This coming fall the dynamic duo will be going their separate ways; however, their friendship will most definitely persevere.