

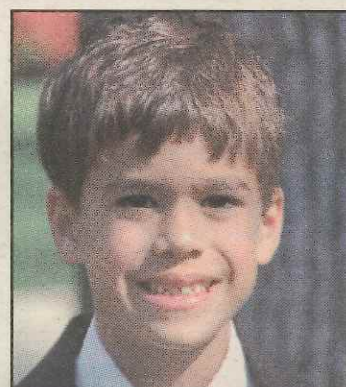


Photos Courtesy KRT/MCT Campus, Erin Coggins, Erin Parker, Kate O'Connor



Photos Courtesy of CaringBridge.org, Ron White, Kate O'Connor

Many families are going all-out this year in decorating their homes, like this one on South Kings Highway for the holidays. One family, the Whites, carve famous pumpkins every year. One of this year's pumpkins (bottom right) feature local boy Ben Sawczuk (top right), who was hit by a car and was sent into a two-month coma.



Carving Out a Holiday Niche

Laina Schneider

Business Manager

For two families in the community, holiday decorating is more than just a string of lights or a jack-o-lantern. The Whites and the Farmers receive widespread recognition every year, for their over-the-top decorations.

"It has just become something that the neighborhood loves," said father Rick White of his family's tradition. Every year, White's family carves dozens of pumpkins to display in their front yard for Halloween.

For a family that loves celebrating holidays, Halloween is a perfect opportunity to go all out on decorations. The Whites are always over-the-top in their now famous pumpkin carving, and every year, they add a couple

of more pumpkins to their repertoire.

Their love for pumpkin carving started a family tradition that dates back eight years. It takes patience and preparation, but results in a huge display of pumpkins across their front yard. They usually average 20 to 25 completed pumpkins a season, but this year, White and his family set a personal record of 32.

For the Whites, pumpkin carving is not a holiday obligation; rather, it has become an event to look forward to. The pumpkin process begins with a family discussion on what designs should be featured that year. Every member of the family gets to choose a few designs for the pumpkins. These are not just old-fashioned jack-o-lanterns. The Whites have found ways to spice up traditional holiday designs,

incorporating pop culture celebrities like Hannah Montana, Zac Efron, Captain Jack (Sparrow?), and SpongeBob SquarePants. In an election year, it would not be surprising to see a candidate's face on a pumpkin accompanied by an image of the White House on another pumpkin.

After fresh designs are chosen, the White family has to select the perfect pumpkins. Each design requires a specific type of pumpkin. For example, images of people require longer, thinner pumpkins. For landscapes, rounder pumpkins work better.

"This year, I had to place a special order at Safeway to get enough pumpkins, to do all the designs we wanted. When they came in,

See Decking, page 5

History Teachers Travel Abroad as Part of New Program

Laura Howell

Reporter

Where in the world is Azerbaijan?

Azerbaijan is a country that is very important to a great deal of our Government students. It is located in western Asia between Iran and Georgia, near Russia.

Four teachers at our school, Emily Millions, Matt Toothaker, Hassan Mims, and Salvatore Olivo, participate in a special program, Deliberating in a Democracy (DID). "Deliberating in Democracy is a program that promotes civic education across the globe by connecting students and

teachers in different countries," said Toothaker.

The Constitutional Rights Foundation (CRFC), Constitutional Rights Foundation (CRF) in Los Angeles and Street Law, Inc. have founded this six-year teacher-based initiative. This program is connected to the Bush administration's democratization campaign and will most likely remain funded because of its philosophy and goals. "Because this project is federally funded, there is required evaluation of the program and its participants including students who participate in the deliberations.

See Democracy, page 5



Photo Courtesy Mr. Mims

History teacher Hassan Mims (back row, center) was one of the four history teachers at our school who traveled overseas to participate in a new program, Deliberating in Democracy.

Dramatic Crimes Grab Center Stage

Paul Disselkoen

Sports Editor

In this area, violence is usually no higher than other districts and the people live peaceful lives, but the crime rate over the last couple of months has experienced a rough patch from the 12% decrease in 2006.

Almost every day, area newspapers feature stories about someone being tragically killed or a robbery at a local convenient store. Not until recently, however, have locals seen these occurrences affect them in such close proximity. Since the beginning of the school year, there have been multiple occurrences where people have found out about increased police activity in our area.

Last month, there was a situation in which a woman was shot and killed at Huntley Meadows Park, just five miles from our school. The gunman then proceeded to get on a Fairfax Connector bus with the handgun and travel a little way down Route 1 to the Hybla Valley shopping center, where he had a four-hour standoff with the police.

Also, although the crime rates have steadily gone down in the past, the rate in robberies has gone up by 1.76% following the national trend of an increase in robberies by 13% in the past year.

The increase in crime so close to home sent a shockwave through our student population. For the first time, our school had a lockdown drill. The rules for the lockdown required all classes to close and lock their doors, close and lock windows, close the blinds on the windows, eliminate a way for anyone to see inside the classroom, have the class back away from all doors and windows, turn the lights off in the class, and stay quiet until instructed to return to normal learning. Students were thrown off guard by this change in safety regulations. Junior Elise Emmons said, "I was walking through the hallways and got pulled into a random classroom and I had no idea what was going on. I was completely thrown off guard by the lockdown, since for my first three years at the school, we hadn't had them." Never have our school hallways been ridden with lockdown drills to ensure school safety.

According to the Fairfax County police captain

See Crime, page 5

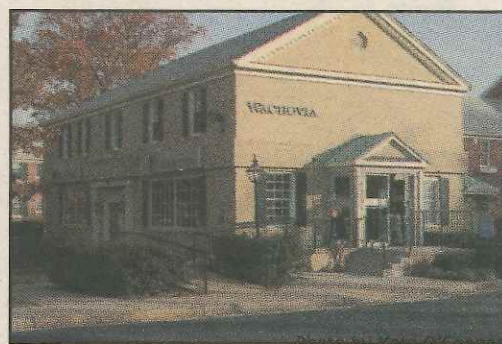


Photo by Kate O'Connor

This Wachovia, at Bellevue Shopping Center was robbed last month. Recently, there has been many dramatic crimes in the area.

We Really Wantakkah Time Off for Hanukkah!

We all wait for winter break, debatably the best break of the first semester. It is all some students look forward to, but what exactly is the break for?

Winter break is based around the holiday of Christmas. For people who celebrate Hanukkah (Dec. 5 - Dec. 12 in 2007), the negligence towards their holiday is sad. There are approximately 6,400,000 Jews in North America, which is about 2.1% of the three hundred million, four hundred thousand population. This may seem like a small percentile but, of the 6,400,000 in the United States, 70,400 reside in Virginia. In Texas, there are only 38,400, meaning the population of Jews is more condensed in Virginia (The CIA World Factbook).

Fairfax County, being one of the largest counties

in Virginia, should realize that there are going to be students who celebrate Hanukkah.

Some people at our school believe that there should be a break for Hanukkah. "I celebrate Hanukkah and I think its ridiculous we don't get days off!" said sophomore William Betz. Betz's opinion is shared with many other students who are not Jewish. "I think it's unfair that winter break is designated to the week of Christmas, we should get another week off so everyone is happy," said sophomore David Burns.

However, some people are not for getting Hanukkah off. "Students can take off school for any religious holiday, and the week we get off of school should be the week of winter solstice, or during the New Year's celebration. [There should be] no religious interference

in the state. Any [person] can make a religion, but just because someone says they talked to God, doesn't mean they should kick kids out of school," said sophomore Patrick Commons. Commons has a somewhat secular opinion.

There are many different opinions about this topic but in the end, it is the county that decides whether the students get any days off at all, and surely most students would rather have a week and a half off than none at all.

The repercussions of taking days off for Hanukkah would likely be a shorter summer by a few days, and perhaps even a shorter Christmas break. This has been the same for years, and for people who celebrate Hanukkah, it will be a celebration on a school night.

RANTS and Raves

A **RANT** for Sean Taylor's unexpected passing. Our prayers are with his family.

A **RAVE** for Thanksgiving break!

A **RANT** for the twelve teenagers killed in the Washington area in the last month.

A **RAVE** for consistent cold weather. No more of that hot and cold weather all in one day!

A **RANT** for the tough process of switching classes.

A **RAVE** for Optimus Prime! He doesn't get enough respect.

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

Corrections

On the front page, athletic trainer Alisa Zamudio was incorrectly referred to as Alisa McDonald last issue.

Also, on the front page of last issue, the photo of Drew Reese was actually courtesy of Ivania Martinez.

We sincerely apologize for printing a picture of the text of the Quran in our first issue.

Insulting the Pastime is a Crime

After reading Mr. Dankmyer's "Laughing from the Bench" column last month, I felt compelled to leap to the defense of our national pastime. Taylor complained that baseball was too low-scoring, that it was too slow, and that it was boring. He lifted up American football, of all sports, as a model sport. I would like to know what he thought of last Monday's 3-0 game between the Pirates and the Marlins... wait... that was actually the Steelers and the Dolphins? Enthralling stuff, those field goals are. I would also like to know if he was excited by Sunday's game between the Redskins and Buccaneers that featured more fumbles (4) and punts (9) than it did touchdowns (3). Perhaps we could ask the English—the most passionate football fans in the world—what they think of the American version after the Giants and Dolphins played a stirring 13-10 game in London in which the two teams combined to complete 25 passes for 208 yards. Baseball? Naaaaah... it's too slow. Give Taylor two lines of players who run into and fall on top of each other and then stand around for 35 seconds and talk about how to do it again. What's next, professional Red Rover? And who needs Spring Training and warm summer evenings at the ballpark when we can freeze our tails off in the rain and snow?

All that said, I may change my mind about liking baseball if the Red Sox win another World Series...

Only 78 more days until pitchers and catchers report,

Colin O'Grady, English Teacher

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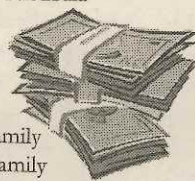
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Winter, the Most Pleasin' Season



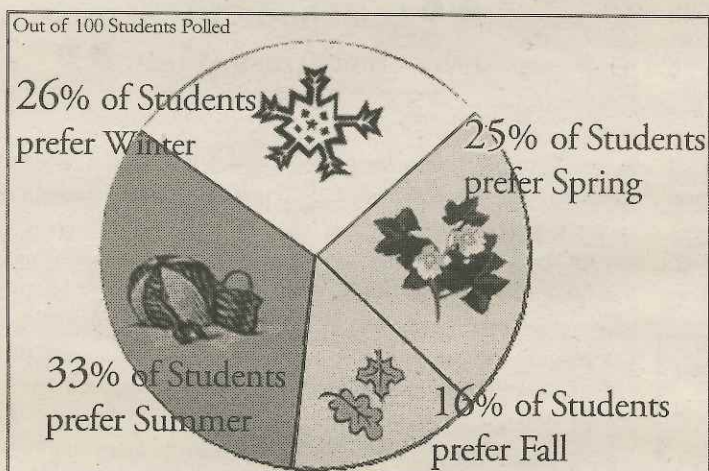
Shannon Bowdring
Features Editor

Spring is for pansies, summer is too humid, and fall is just another excuse for back to school shopping. So, whether one enjoys snuggling up by the fireplace, shredding the slopes, or slapping together another Frosty the Snowman, winter is just right.

Winter is the gift—that keeps on giving. Take the holidays, for instance. Christmas, Kwanzaa, New Year's, Valentine's Day, and throw Hanukkah in there for a winter primed for celebration. Sure, fall has Thanksgiving, but it is just a poor excuse to get off school. No one even gets presents. Winter holidays bring families closer and truly celebrate the meaning of togetherness. Where would Lucy and Snoopy

be without Linus' "meaning of Christmas" speech? Without winter, the Grinch's heart would still be two sizes too small, and millions of heart-shaped boxes of chocolate would go unsold.

Besides the holidays, think about the mountains of activities winter provides—literally. All the skiing and snowboarding aficionados can appreciate the powdery fresh snow blowing through their hair as they race down slope after slope, not to mention daredevil sledders who fly down the biggest neighborhood hill with their legs crossed.



Poll by Mary McKnight; Graphic by Patrick Dunford

Those slightly faint-of-heart can still get a kick out of everything winter has to offer. Slap on some gloves, roll together some snow, and the recipe for a fun-filled afternoon of snowman making is complete.

Not one for the cold? Well, that is just another reason to head over to 7-11 and trade in that Slurpee for a steaming cup of hot cocoa (the peppermint syrup is always a nice addition). Or, just stay at home, pour a warm cup of tea, and cozy up by the fire. Add some snowflakes falling gently to the blanketed world below for a picture worthy of Ansel Adams.

The best part is that your day can be full of boarding,

snowmen and hot chocolate without having to worry about getting behind in all that school work. Winter is the only season that gives students and teachers "Get Out of School Free" cards. Here in northern Virginia, all the weatherman has to do is hint at a snowfall and the school board jumps into action. Nothing can compare to the smile on a

child's face when the rolling news strip at the bottom of the television says, "Fairfax County Public Schools CLOSED." Who does not like to make children (and teachers) happy? Winter spreads joy throughout all of Fairfax County, which is saying a lot, considering the vastness of this region.

No matter what age one is, winter is the best part of the year. Even the old guys get an excuse to fly down to Florida for three months. With all this season has to offer, it will be a warm day in Antarctica when the winter wonderland becomes a wasteland.

Holler "Happy Holidays," Please



Mariya Ilyas
Managing Editor

"Jingle bells, jingle bells, jingle all the way!" Everyone knows the rest of the carol. Like many people, I simply take part in the Christmas spirit, but do not celebrate the holiday on the 25th.

Christmas spirit begins with the beginning of November. Every store I walk into, my eyes are welcomed by red and green. Stockings, trees, gift wraps, lights, wreaths, decorations, and of course, the husky red-suited man, are all things that encourage Christmas, not holidays. With jolly Christmas songs playing, the rush at stores, and all the huge sales, who would not be in the upright spirit of Christmas?

Black Friday is the day after Thanksgiving when huge sales offer customers a chance to shop early for Christmas presents. According to the ShopperTrak's National Retail Sales Estimate, \$18.1 billion was spent on holiday shopping during the Black Friday weekend in 2006. Malls and chain stores compete for the lowest prices over select gifts and items every year. Just because I buy a camera does not necessarily mean I am purchasing it as a present for someone. I may buy it for myself because it was at a discount, or simply because so many advertisements urged me to take part in the jolly shopping season.

I do not celebrate Christmas for religious reasons. Although I believe in the Prophet Jesus, I do not believe he was born on the 25th of December. Instead,

as a Muslim, I celebrate Eid-al-Adha — Feast of Sacrifice. It commemorates Abraham's willingness to obey God by sacrificing his son. Muslims believe the son to be Ishmael, rather than Isaac, which is what the Old Testament says. However, although I take part in the spirit of Christmas — that is, singing carols, watching *I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus*, and exchanging gifts with friends — it does not necessarily mean that I have a decorated pine tree with gifts underneath it at my house. Nor does it mean that I am a Christian.

Be honest, people, how many holidays, other than Christmas, exist between October 31st and January 1st? Halloween, Ramadan, Eid-al-Fitr, Thanksgiving, Eid-al-Adha, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, St. Lucia, St. Nicholas Day, Weihnachtszeit, Dagur nemenda, Winter Solstice, New Year's Eve, and New Year's Day. So, is it really fair to greet someone with "Merry Christmas?" Why not "Happy Dagur nemenda" or "Happy Eid Muhbarak?" Let us make our lives easier and simply say "Happy Holidays."

Aherents.com reports 76.5% of the U.S. population to be Christian. Although the majority of Americans follow the religion of Christianity, many do not celebrate Christmas for religious reasons. According to Cathy Lynn Grossman in *USA Today*, 60 percent of Americans cannot name five of the Ten Commandments. If Christians themselves do not celebrate Christmas — the birthday of Jesus Christ — then who says I cannot take part in the Christmas

spirit just for the fun of it?

While it is true that corporate giants, such as Sears, Gap, Target, Kmart, and Best Buy, have changed the greeting of "Merry Christmas" to "Happy Holidays," the decorations and the merchandise of these stores are meant for Christmas only. When was the last time you saw menorahs on store racks? Or gift cards for Kwanzaa at the check-out counter?

Fairfax County is not only one of the richest counties in the nation, but also one of the most diverse, representing a wide range of ethnicities and religious backgrounds. Fairfax County has certain limits it cannot

cross in terms of offending someone by siding too heavily on one ethnicity, race, religion, etc. That is why the greeting "Happy Holidays" is more often used than "Merry Christmas." And I do not blame them for trying to make everyone happy during the holidays — hence, "Happy Holidays."

There are no such things as holiday trees, holiday wreaths, or holiday hats. If there were, we would all be happily "fa, la, la, la, la, la-ing" after the words "tis the season to be jolly."

GET YOUR FACTS STRAIGHT

76.5% of U.S. Population is Christian.

60% of Americans cannot name five of the Ten Commandments.

\$18.1 billion - total spent on holiday shopping in 2006.



Photo by Clipart

Just Talken

He does not see much, he does not write about much, either.



Photo by Taylor Dankmyer

Ken Llewellyn

Opinions Editor

Well, I made it through. Today is Wednesday, so I have made it through both Monday and Tuesday, the most hated days of the week. However, I have to disagree with the world on this one, and say that Tuesdays are definitely the Cincinnati Bengals of the week.

Tuesday is so bad that if it were a person, it would be an evil villain, probably either Joseph Stalin or Megatron. Sure, Monday may be the farthest from the weekend, but Tuesday is not much closer. Another reason for Tuesday's lameness is that there are never any holidays on a Tuesday. Sometimes, a three or four-day weekend will encompass a Monday, but rarely does Tuesday get a piece of the holiday action. One could say the same for Wednesday, but Wednesday is always the day of early release to start Thanksgiving break. Wednesday is also the middle and everyone likes the middle (just look at Oreos).

Even if the day was horrible, one can always sit on the couch at the end of the day and watch some quality television. Well, not on Tuesdays. After perusing the TV guide, I have determined that Tuesday is definitely the worst day in television. On a Tuesday night at 8:00 PM, one's choices include a show based on a commercial ("Cavemen"), a show that is basically a televised fat camp for adults ("The Biggest Loser"), and two crime shows, one of which involves the navy and an old guy ("NCIS"), while the other is about this hot chick and some skeletons ("Bones"). So, when the tube is involved, I think Monday deserves an apology. Where would you fans of "Heroes" and "Dancing with the Stars" be without Monday? Reading books and playing Monopoly, that is where!

In terms of sports, Tuesday is worse than grape Gatorade. Unlike Monday, there is no football on Tuesday. There will usually be a basketball or baseball game on a Tuesday, but one knows they save all the good games for later in the week.

If the proof is in the pudding, then call Wizards forward Caron Butler tapioca. Last year, Butler averaged 16.6 points on Tuesdays, his lowest average of any day of the week and well below his season average of 19.1. Butler could not be reached for comment on his Tuesday woes, but if he could have been reached, he probably would have said that Tuesdays are like Brendan Haywood: horrible.

Tuesday stinks in literature, as well; just look at Mitch Albom's *Tuesdays With Morrie*. Sure, it is an emotionally touching book or whatever, but if the best part of your Tuesday is chilling with some old dude, then you know it is the worst day of the week. Tuesday also lacks in the restaurant department. While the food at Ruby Tuesday might be slightly above mediocre, it is the service I have a problem with. The one on Route 1 took about 15 minutes to get my drink order, but it was not their fault; they are named after the worst day of the week, after all.

Have I been too hard on Tuesday? Maybe so. So, Tuesday, I am sorry if I hurt your feelings, but with all due respect, you blow. I hope we can still be friends... sike!

Lots of Stress Causes a Hefty Mess



Laura Howell
Reporter

You wake up at 6:30 to make sure you are in your first period class before the bell rings. You go through the routine of the normal school day: two tests, a pop quiz, a paper due, and running the mile in gym. You stay after school to review for a Calculus quiz next class. You go straight to basketball practice and get home in time to squeeze in a bite to eat before you babysit for your neighbor. It is 10:00 and you are finally sitting down to start some homework.

To some extent, this is a common

day for students at our school. The abundance of activities, a tremendous amount of homework, and added pressures from parents, teachers, and society eventually add up. There is no question about why teenagers are stressed today. The

five main stressors in an average teenager's life are school, parents, friend relationships, romantic relationships, and younger siblings, as proven in a study by TeenHelp, an organization which counsels teenagers in all sorts of predicaments.

"One third of U.S. teens say they feel stressed out on a daily basis," reported Reuters Health, based on a study conducted by the University of Michigan.

Stress is an unavoidable occurrence with teenagers today. Contributions to stress

come from various sources, such as demands from adults and society. Today, students are expected to go onto a higher level of education, whether it is trade school or a large university. Parents are pressuring their children to be "straight-A" students. These unneeded pressures just build up.

Stress can negatively affect the body in the form of headaches, lack of sleep, skin breakouts, and an increase in sweating. Stress causes anxiety, depression, sadness, mood swings, heart disease, and anger. It is prevalent through actions and behaviors. Web MD said, "Some people who face a lot of stress respond by smoking, drinking alcohol, or eating poorly." Teenagers tend to believe that these hazardous decisions relieve stress, when in fact, this is false.

According to *The Washington Post*, 66 percent of Americans say they are likely to seek help for stress.

Stress management is one of the fast roads to success that students have to learn to get by. Statistically, girls are more affected by stress than boys. However, girls also tend to seek help for their stress, while boys deal with stress by not dealing with it at all.

The best way to cope with stress is having a support system. This support system may be a friend, parent, teacher, or even a coach. According to TeenHealth, having someone to talk to allows people to have a positive way to release their anguish. Another recommended way to release stress is through exercise.

Exercise can release built-up symptoms of stress, such as anger and a feeling of being overwhelmed. "I don't get stressed out often because I do yoga and Pilates daily. My mind is always in a peaceful and carefree place even if the environment I'm in is hectic," said senior Maja Blaszkiewicz.

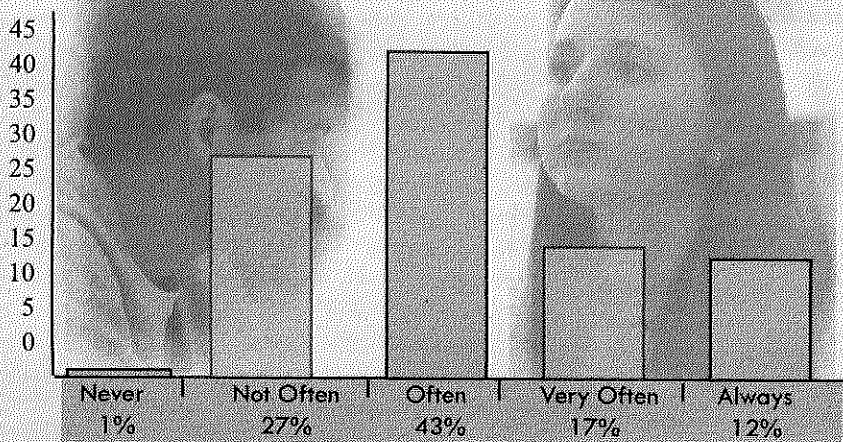
An excellent way to prevent stress is to remain organized. By writing in a planner, keeping a little to-do list and not procrastinating,

school work will not seem as unbearable, and students can remove some of the main causes of stress. Every student has different ways to handle stress. "I get stressed out when I have a lot of stuff to do in a short period of time. I handle it by not doing anything until the last minute. That way, I am only stressed out for a night," said senior Michael "Clemson" Ashton. Also, students need to learn that it is okay to say "no." You do not have to join the Key Club if you already have three activities on Monday afternoons. It is okay not to play soccer in the spring if you are already working or are in the musical. By saying "no," students can open up their schedule for a little more "me" time.

54 percent of Americans are concerned about the level of stress in their everyday lives. If you do not have to be stressed, why are you? Take a moment out of your hectic schedule and relax. Talk to a friend, take deep breaths, or go for a walk. Stress can cause more problems in the long run. You do not want any more stressors then you already have!

“One third of U.S. teens say they feel stressed out.”

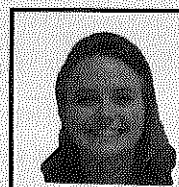
HOW OFTEN ARE OUR STUDENTS STRESSED?



Out of 100 People Polled

Photos Courtesy of KRT/Handout

Mix It Up Day's Blender is Broken Lunch Diversity Promotion Fails with Students



Emily Kuhbach
Copy Editor

Bright paper chains and blaring Top 20 hits greeted students as they trudged into the cafeteria on Tuesday, November 13. It had seemed like just another Tuesday – completely depressing and morbid, according to one columnist – until the Candy Land game board once again came alive, this time in the cafeteria, to celebrate the nationwide Mix It Up Day. This project, spearheaded by the Southern Poverty Law Center, is an attempt to encourage cross-cultural communication in the one place students are forced to occupy together regardless of age, gender, race, or academic ability. Students strolled down the aisles to find the table corresponding to their birthday months. Each table featured "icebreaker" questions, ranging from "What is your favorite fast food place?" to "Have you heard any racial slurs lately?" to pique discussion among strangers. There's nothing like a question about racial slurs to promote easy, friendly conversation.

Why exactly did the student government decide to create an entire day devoted to putting people in awkward positions? Because anyone who makes even the most subtle glance around the cafeteria will notice that it is diverse – and divided. Students of a certain race tend to congregate in specific areas of the cafeteria. No one forces them to; simply put, people feel more comfortable (read: they do not need icebreakers taped to the table) when they are around other people like them. This raises the question, is it our responsibility to encourage – and Mix It Up Day was more than a subtle push – integration when students choose to sit with people like them?

According to our school's profile on the Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) website, our school serves "one of the most widely diverse student bodies in Northern Virginia." Students come from over 50 countries and speak more than 35 languages. It is an incredible opportunity that is often times taken for granted, for many students in different ethnic groups do not interact extensively with members of other groups. Visit the hallways, classrooms, or cafeteria. For this reason and this reason alone, Mix It Up Day was great... in theory.

The execution was different. The loud music could not drown out the awkward silences, and the overdone decorations were even more of a reason for kids to look away from their tables – and the issue at hand. We used a birthday party guise to cover up a serious issue. Out of the fair number that participated, "The only people who could have benefited were the organizers, who may have felt good for patronizing the 'awkward kids.' Others include the emotionally weak, or elementary school students who may have been lost and wandered into our cafeteria that day," said senior Sara Kepple, who found the "balloons, magician, and general feeling of elementary entertainment... disgusting." Will we throw a party every time we make members of different races sit together? Should it take that much work?

The website also boasts that our school's diversity is "an asset to celebrate and explore." Mix It Up Day was an opportunity to do this. Although it may not have achieved its ambitious goal of encouraging discussion between groups that have been self-segregating for years, it was a step in the right direction. We will have to wait and see, however, if this one-time party will really achieve its goal of encouraging cross-racial conversation.

According to Mix It Up Day's website, the goal of this day is to show students of different races, cliques, and ages what they have in common. The most common behavior I saw, however, was widespread apathy in the activity.

School Of Thought

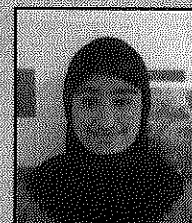


Photo by Brad Lupton

"Mix It Up Day wasn't so great. I didn't participate, no one really did."
-Freshman Jarfa Ashrafi

"It looks good in theory, but not in the execution...like communism."

-Senior Graham Jenkins



Photo by Brad Lupton



Photo by Brad Lupton

"Mix It Up Day was fun, but not enough people participated."

-Freshman Princess Harvey

"I had a lot of fun, but I didn't participate right away. Neither did my friends."

-Junior Hannah Brooks

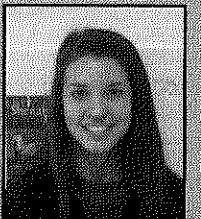


Photo by Brad Lupton

Harvard Now Offers Elite Education for Free

Mariya Ilyas

Managing Editor

Harvard. Tuition. Free. Wait, what?

Students, at least once in their lifetime, think about going to an Ivy League college. Today, the best and most prestigious Ivy Leagues schools in the United States range from Harvard University to the California Institute of Technology. However, high costs – approximately \$50,000 tuition a year – are enough to deter even the most dedicated students.

Founded in 1636, sixteen years after the arrival of pilgrims at Plymouth, Massachusetts, Harvard is the oldest college in the nation, followed by the College of William & Mary, which was founded in 1693. In fact, almost all Ivy League colleges and universities are among the oldest in the nation. Their strong traditions continue to offer a wide range of opportunities for exceptional students.

Just recently, Harvard University announced free tuition to students who come from low-income families. If a student is accepted to Harvard University and the total income of his or her family is less than \$60,000, he or she is eligible for

free tuition. "It shows that they understand that intelligence exists not only with the fortunate," said junior Hussein Fahema.

"We discovered that only 10 percent of the students in elite higher education come from families in the lower half of the income distribution," Harvard President Lawrence H. Summers said to *The Washington Post*. "We are not doing enough in bringing elite higher education to the lower half of the income distribution."

One of the major issues that Ivy League colleges face is the affordability. The gap between the rich white and the poor minority results in lack of diversity at these schools. According to web.lemoyne.edu, "ninety six percent of all living Ivy League alumni are white." That leaves only four percent for other racial groups. "High costs definitely do [dissuade bright students] and it's a shame, but that's the reality of it," said Fahema.

To encourage minority acceptance and cultural diversity on their campuses, Ivy League colleges, like Harvard, initiate programs that do not create financial affordability as a roadblock to applying. "I think it helps diversify a student population if those applying are feasible candidates. It's a good way to help kids who can compete academically with other students from a higher income bracket," said alumnus Alex Keckeisen, who now attends the University of Missouri.

According to admissionsconsultants.com, Harvard's acceptance rate is about 9%, lowest of all the Ivy League colleges in the U.S. That means, only 9 out of every 100 students that apply get accepted to this prestigious university. On average, Harvard receives about 20,000 applicants

and accepts only 1,800.

Now, there is hope for students who wish to apply to Harvard University, but do not have the money to afford it.

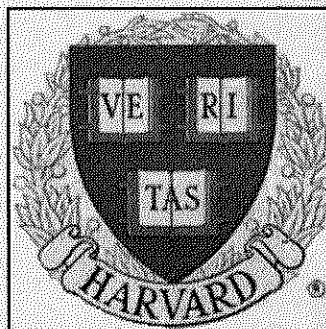


Photo by Fair Use

Harvard University recently announced free tuition for low-income students.

Recent Crimes Strike Close to Quander

December 2006

Bank of America, Wachovia, and two different BB&T banks robbed. Robber shot by police.

Wednesday, October 17, 2007

Woman's body found in Huntley Meadows Park.

Wednesday, October 17, 2007
(an hour later)

Police corner a man covered in blood on a commuter bus. He threatens to kill himself. Standoff ends after four hours.

Continued from page 1

for the Mount Vernon district, Mike Kline, said, "Crime has actually gone down by about 30% over the past 33 months in the Mount Vernon Police District. I can tell you that a rough blush at October and November of this year indicates that there is no increase in comparing them with 2005 (appears to be a status quo)." Captain Kline said that while crime in our area of Fairfax County is the

highest among other areas, the crime rate as a whole has gone down.

Captain Kline hopes that we are out of the rough patch of crime that the Mount Vernon district has experienced the past few months. The crime rate in the district has steadily gone down over the past couple of years except for robberies and the police force and students hope that crime continues to decrease.

Discussing Democracy in Detail

Continued from page 1

Teachers have been provided with specific permission forms both passive [to cover use of the student-to-student message board] and, in a few cases, active [when outside evaluators from the University of Minnesota visit FCPS in late spring to interview the DID teachers and a few students.] In both passive and active processes, teachers are required to seek parent permission," said government teacher Hassan Mims.

DID gives students the opportunity to communicate with their peers all the way across the world, for instance, in Azerbaijan. "We have a web discussion board, a teleconference linked with TVs, so students can ask each other questions and [receive] cultural exchanges," said Toothaker. They then are further introduced to the other culture. Students from both countries will discuss controversial issues such as abortion and politics. Senior Jessica Dunn said, "It should broaden our perspectives and give us a new outlook and insight into controversial issues that concern the entire world."

Notably, teacher exchanges between the United States and Azerbaijan have occurred. Our school has hosted Azeri teachers for the past four years and three members of the history department have traveled to or worked in Eastern Europe. "I was able to travel to Azerbaijan and see a whole new culture. I showed my students pictures and had the chance to tell them what it was like over there. Hopefully, it gives the student some perspective on life," said Toothaker. This program has been established for four years at this school.

"During the first week of March, Azeri teachers will be visiting schools in Fairfax County (including West Potomac) in teams of three with a translator and will visit West Potomac. During the visit, we are encouraging schools to arrange for them to tour the school, observe additional classes as time permits, and possibly participate in after school meetings," said Mims.

"What I think is most relevant about DID, even those of us who aren't full-fledged DID members, is its instructional approach. Deliberation is a carefully planned analysis of opposing viewpoints followed by a discussion of multi-faceted issues. Each deliberation has an end goal of reaching some sort of mutually agreeable conclusion as the end of the simulation. I like deliberations because you actually walk away with a sense of accomplishment or better understanding about an issue, something you don't always get from a run-of-the-mill debate," said AP Government teacher Alexander Case. It is focused on improving the teaching and understanding of democratic principles through civic deliberation. Seniors agree that the experience will benefit both them and the students in Azerbaijan.

"I also feel that the high quality of the pedagogy inherent in the deliberations and the experience of meeting teachers from Azerbaijan will also greatly benefit the students," said Mims.

"Even though we may not be able to have the best communication [because of the language barrier], it will hopefully be a fun experience and help us understand another part of the world," said Dunn.

News Brief-Senior Car Raffle



Photo by Rosey Carmichael
Senior band members pose in the car being raffled for ANG.

The senior class' All Night Graduation Celebration Committee (ANGC) is hosting a car raffle. They are raffling off a 2008 Mazda GX 3. All the profits go towards the ANGC. The tickets are currently on sale for twenty dollars. They can

be purchased in lunch or at extracurricular events. The drawing will be on Tuesday, December 18th at the boys' home basketball game. If you are interested in supporting the ANGC, please e-mail Regina Howell at rhowell21@cox.net.

Holiday Decorations With Style

Continued from page 1

I handpicked the perfect pumpkins for the designs we had already decided on," White said of his pumpkin selection process. Once the White family buys the pumpkins, about two days before Halloween, the carving can begin. If they are carved too early, there is a risk that the pumpkins will start to rot and cave in.

Next, the pattern for each design is tacked on to the face of the pumpkin and traced meticulously. White said, "Cleaning out the pumpkin is very important, the thinner the skin, the easier it is to carve. In addition, all the insides must be removed for a clean, neat presentation." Finally, all the pumpkins are placed on tables around the front yard of their home and lit for the neighborhood to admire.

However, the Whites' carving goes far beyond holiday celebration, and into a love for the community. This year, one pumpkin featured Ben Sawczuk. Sawczuk is a local eight-year-old boy who was struck by a car while riding his bike in Bethany Beach

this past summer. After being hit, he was transported to Johns Hopkins Hospital, where he spent three weeks in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit. Since then, he moved to the Kennedy Krieger Institute, a Hopkins rehab facility. Although he experienced brain damage, he is now recovering and re-learning things right on schedule. "He's had absolutely phenomenal therapists, doctors and nurses to help him recover, and has surpassed all of their goals for him at this time," Joanne Sawczuk said of her son. After Halloween, the pumpkin featuring the carving of Ben was given to the Sawczuk family as a gift. "We were so thrilled to receive the gift of Bennie's face on a 'White pumpkin.' The Whites are quite a special family, and have been very supportive friends to us."

Pumpkins like these show how above and beyond the White family goes for the community. So, the next time the Halloween season rolls around, take a visit to the Whites' to experience a fantastic presentation of true holiday spirit.

Memoirs of Distant

Ole' For Italian Futbol

Erin Parker

Photographer

Shots rang out as people cheered and paraded the streets of Italy. These were the sounds of Italy winning the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) World Cup against France in the summer of 2006.

Although hosted in Germany, it felt as if the game was being played in the parking lot of our Italian hotel. That night was the most memorable night on my twenty-one day trip with the student ambassador group People to People. Exploring Athens, Vatican City in Rome, and the Eiffel Tower was a once-in-a-lifetime experience, but something was different about the FIFA World Cup.

That night, our group went out to a traditional Italian restaurant. At the restaurant, the workers greeted us with great hospitality. Even though there was a language barrier, we could feel each other's excitement about the soccer game. We finished our dinners quickly and went back to the hotel to watch the game.

By the end of regulation, the score was tied 1-1 and the

game was forced into extra time. The 110th minute of the game was the most unforgettable minute. France's star midfielder, Zinedine Zidane, was given a red card for deliberately headbutting Marco Materazzi after an exchange of words during extra time.

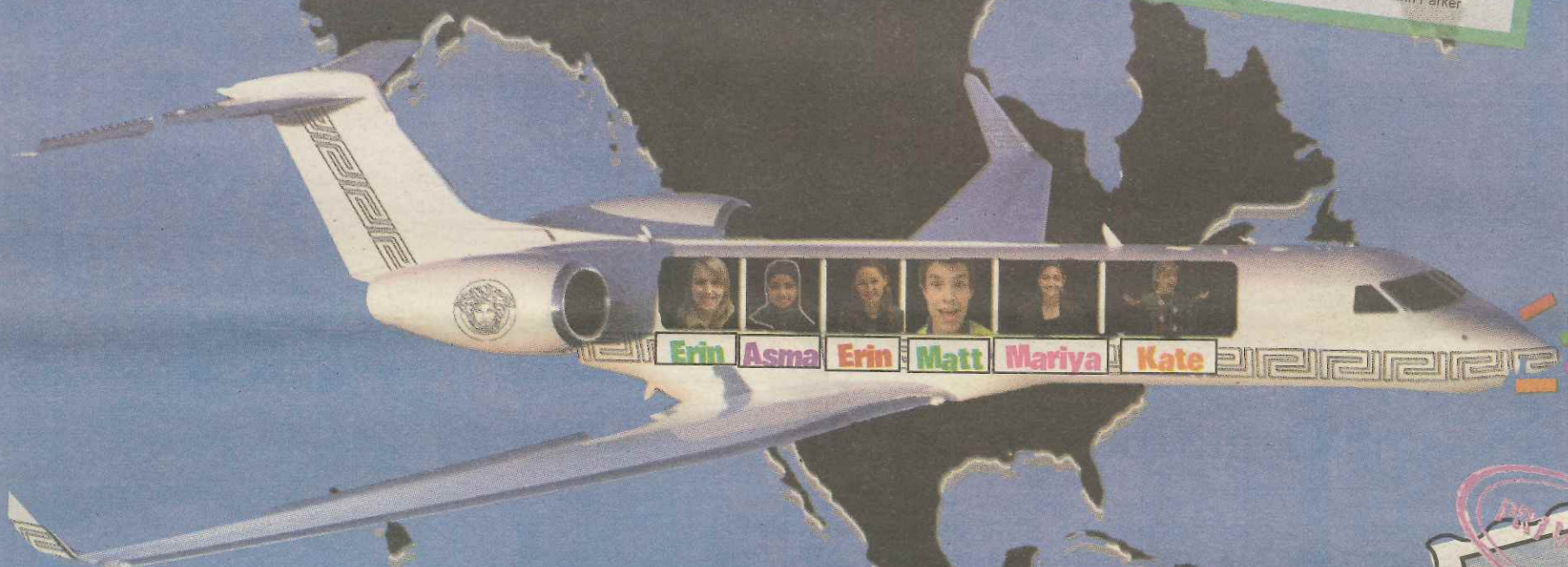
No goals were scored and up next was a penalty shootout. Italy won over France with a final score of 5-3. We felt the rumbles from the cheers of fans around the hotel and those celebrating blocks away.

We all thought that France's World Cup loss to Italy had already died over, but it did not. There was a strange tension in the air, nothing like in Italy. We noticed that soccer is a bigger deal worldwide than we expected and were warned not to wear Italian jerseys. But that disheartening loss in the World Cup did not stop the French children we met from wanting to play some soccer.

Photo Courtesy of Erin Parker



Photo Courtesy of Erin Parker



Bladder Concerns in Africa

Kate O'Connor

Editor-in-Chief

I squirmed and crossed my legs in the back seat. My cheeks were warm and pink from the African sun and my hands were clammy with sweat. The air was thick with heat and swarms of bugs. I was able to ignore most minor annoyances because I was in Namibia, Africa, but at that moment, I could not ignore my agonized bladder.

We were miles and miles from camp. Kruger Game Park is a massive preserve but has only one bathroom outside of the camp walls, marked on the map with an 'X.' Half an hour earlier, my family and I had located the 'X' and found three green, mud-spattered outhouses lying forgotten on their sides. The barbed-wire fence surrounding the derelict porter-potties lay in shambles, jutting out of the sand like crooked alligator teeth. We guessed that the outhouses had fallen victim to a stampede.

So, I squirmed and grimaced. The only thing keeping me from leaping from the car and utilizing a bush was the strict park policy mandating that tourists stay inside their cars at all times. Only a few weeks earlier, a family of Chinese tourists foolishly stopped for a photo-op and was attacked by lions. Yet, my conviction dwindled. I needed relief.

From the front seat, my mom turned around and offered to stand watch if I wanted to go outside.

"Are you crazy? I don't want to get eaten," I snapped. The whole car was on edge. I lay down in the back seat and stared at the clouds through the sunroof.

I felt the car slow to a stop, and at my wit's end, I asked if we had finally gotten to a bathroom.

"No," my mom answered, without looking at me. She stared out the car window at something right outside my door. I sat up and followed her gaze. Outside of the car, less than a foot away, was a great, golden lioness.

Her body shook with sinew every time she took a step. Her fur was matted and disheveled, like a wet dog's. Her eyelids dropped lazily, making her look bored and haughty. On the edge of her mouth was a smear of blood that had congealed and spiked the fur around her teeth like hair gel. I watched her walk the length of the car without giving us so much as a glance. The car buzzed with the whirling sound of disposable cameras as my parents snapped picture after picture of the beast.

That day, I learned there are some things that make you forget how badly you have to pee.

Photo Courtesy of Kate O'Connor



All united under One

Asma Ahmad

Reporter

As I traveled down what looked like a slip of stairs on a massive plane, the smell of dates, cologne, and cigarettes welcomed my arrival in Arabia in 1999. My family and I sweltered in a sea of King Abdulaziz International Airport, located in the congested city of Jeddah. I took a look around and everyone dressed in ehram, a white dress worn for religious purposes. It was evident that we were all in the same boat for the same reason: to perform Umrah, a religious pilgrimage to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. It felt as if our hearts had met before, together in our admiration for the creator, together in our sorrow for the world, and together in our hope for paradise. We came as a group, but we were all alone, just like we will stand on the Day of Judgment.

I will never forget the days I spent in Mecca. I realized that all my life, I had been facing the Kaaba, miles away. I had seen it on pictures and television, but it was nothing compared to what I saw in reality.



Photo Courtesy of Erin Parker

lands and Exotic Places

Live Sushi Cuisine in Japan

Erin Coggins

Photographer

My family, and my four-year-old self, went to a nice sushi restaurant one night in Yokohama, Japan, the country in which we were currently living. After we ordered our typical Japanese dishes, we happened to look at the table next to us. There was a party of people, using their chopsticks to eat from a living, breathing fish sprawled out in front of them. Consuming a live fish is an exceptional delicacy in Japan; many natives eat from the fish while it is still alive and must immediately stop eating once it dies. Once the fish dies, a poison is sent through the body and if the eater takes a bite, it would be a fatal mistake. This is just one of the many unique aspects of Japan that sets it apart from the rest of the world.

I was born in Japan and moved to America in 1996, when I was four. Although my dad was in the navy and we lived on an American base, I still got to experience Japanese culture. In Japan, everything feels like the complete opposite of the U.S. The language, the customs, and even the roads are entirely different from those here. It can make living there a tricky task.

Japan is extremely crowded. It makes living in New

York City look like living in the country. Thinking about taking the subway? Well, accept the fact that you will not be able to move one muscle in your body. Japan is also very expensive. Everything available for purchase will inevitably burn a hole through any consumer's wallet.

In Japan, family values are of great importance. Families always honor and respect each other, from parents to children and brother to sister. They respect and look up to their ancestors. Religion also plays a big role in their society. When walking around the country, it is common to see statues of Buddha or other religious figures.

Even though my siblings tease me and tell me that I can never become President, I feel lucky and proud to have been born in Japan. I think it is cool that I spent my first four years in a country where the culture is interesting, unique, and so very different from the one we live in.

Photo Courtesy of Erin Coggins



Photo Courtesy of Kate O'Connor

Neapolitan Villians Attack During the Opera

Matt Husband

Special to The Wire

My father has been employed in the United States Air Force for my entire life. Relocation assignments are commonplace in the military and assignments usually only last up to three years for Air Force officers. A long stay in the military involves a lot of moving, and that is certainly the case for me. I have lived in four different countries and have moved eight times.

One of the weirdest places to live was Naples, Italy. On my way to school, I was able to see Mt. Vesuvius every day, as well as visit the ruins of Pompeii. Neapolitans are a different brand of people, though; the drivers there were out of control. I was hit by a car once on my way to my house and my Dad bought a shirt that said "I survived the tangenziale" (Italian highway). There were also many thefts - our car was stolen once and something very tragic happened to our friends. They came back from dinner one night to find that their car was missing

from their driveway. The next morning, their car magically reappeared with the note on the front saying "Thank you for letting us borrow the car, our daughter was very ill and we had no way of getting her to the hospital, here are some opera tickets to show our gratitude." Our friends were quite shocked at what had happened, but were thankful that they helped out strangers through their car. The whole family went to the opera show the next week and saw a lovely three-hour performance. When they came home and opened up the front door, they found out that they had been robbed once again, except this time, nothing was returned. All of their belongings in their house had been taken: their beds, bookshelves, carpets, everything. After hearing that story, we decided never to attend the opera.

Photo Courtesy of Erin Parker



Common Belief

harmony entered my heart as I stepped into the holy mosque of Haram Sahrif. I felt as if I had met my final destination.

When I first set my eyes on the Kabba, I stood still and stared at it, overwhelmed with joy and contentment. After gathering my thoughts, I made my supplication. I prayed for anything and everything that crossed my mind. Tears poured down my face like never before, and as I looked around me, everyone I saw was in the same emotional state as I. At that moment, I could not see the rich brain surgeon or the poor street sweeper, all I could see was unity that made us all human. Thousands of Muslims from different races and backgrounds prostrated all at once to the same God. This vision made me realize the beauty of life, because just for that one day, we were all united.

Photo Courtesy of Asma Ahmad



Growing up in Pakistan

Mariya Ilyas

Managing Editor

I will never forget the first eight years of my life that I spent in Pakistan. I can still smell the frying pakoras on the streets as vendors persistently yelled for "two rupes, two rupes." As I close my eyes and recall my childhood, memories come flooding back to me, some pleasant and others painful.

I visited my family and relatives in Pakistan in the summer of 2003. After spending eight years in America, the culture clash was not only shocking, but also an unbearable experience for me as a female. I had forgotten the conservative society of Pakistan after having pursued a liberating life for eight years in America. The contempt, the shame, and the dishonor that came with my "inappropriate" behavior - openly conversing with men and not covering my hair - are by far the most terrifying experiences of my life.

It was a scorching hot evening, just like any other summer day, and we were invited to yet another dinner. (It is common to be invited to dinners by almost everyone when returning to Pakistan, especially from a country like America.) Once we reached Baba's (Dad's)

friend's house, my mother, my sisters, and I were led to a separate lounge to converse with females while a separate lounge to converse with females while Baba headed to the bigger, more luxurious lounge. Not wanting to sit with my mom, I made my way to where Baba sat talking with his friend. I sat there quietly, not interrupting at all, yet my father still looked uneasy. I did not understand what was making him uncomfortable. When dinner was served, my sisters and I giggled amongst ourselves while eating. At about 10 p.m., we left the house.

The ride back home was the most horrendous experience, as both of my parents scolded us all. Baba, while driving, turned around every few seconds to scold us with hand gestures that suggested severe beating. "I want to go back home, I want to go to America," I thought with tears streaming down my cheeks. That night, as I lay in my bed sobbing, I realized a shocking truth about my life: I *enjoy* living in America, a land in which I can breathe, but one day, I *must* return to Pakistan, the land in which my every move is watched.

Photo Courtesy of Mariya Ilyas



Thoughts from the Bench

R.I.P. Sean
Taylor
1983 - 2007

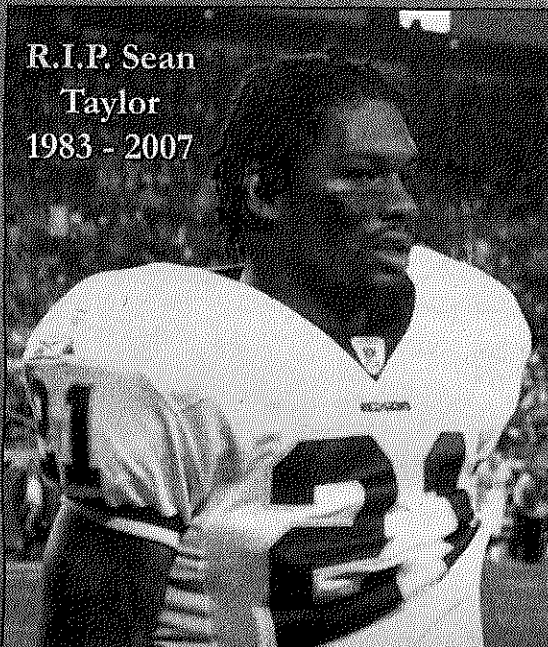


Photo by Gary W. Green/KOT

Taylor Dankmeyer

Editor-in-Chief

I was ready to hit you with enough stats to blow your mind, covering every single problem the 'Skins have, tell you where the 'Skins needed help, talk about all the turnovers they committed, praise Jason Campbell and the offense for getting things together. But what is the point?

24-year-old Sean Taylor is dead.

In the last five weeks, Washington was starting to pull it together. They scored both 10-1 Dallas and Green Bay, almost winning. Campbell was passing for over 300 yards a game, even Portis ran for 333 yards in two games. Although these good statistics and improved play did not result in many victories, things were looking up. With free safety Taylor injured, the defense was practically falling apart. If there was any doubt in anyone's minds about his importance to the Redskins on the field, it was erased immediately after Terrell Owens burned the secondary for four touchdowns. Where was that terrifying force with his big hits and awesome strength?

But Taylor's absence is permanent. When I first heard the news of his shooting, I kind of chuckled. Taylor had gotten into a fair amount of trouble in the past. "Now this?" I said to myself. Plus, when I think of a player getting shot, I never think anything horrible could happen to them, especially if he was shot in the leg. Players, especially those as athletically gifted as Taylor, have such a Superman aura that death did not even cross my mind. However, when I jumped into my car at 2:30 p.m., Redskins radio reported Taylor had been shot in the femoral artery and was "clinging to life" at Jackson Memorial Hospital.

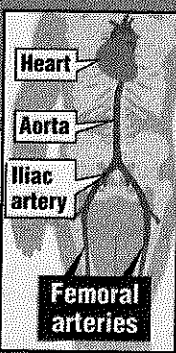
Sean Taylor was currently tied for third in the league in interceptions with five, a career high for him, not even halfway through the season. But his presence on the field was much stronger than some numbers. His bone-jarring hits made wide receivers question whether or not they would catch a ball over the middle. But with his passing, all the potential he had died, and Redskins fans are left asking, "What if?"

Taylor made some mistakes in the past, but lately he seemed to have truly improved. By all accounts, the birth of his daughter made him a changed man.

No one knows for sure if these robbers, and now murderers, were an enemy of Taylor's or random people. We, as journalists, could go on and on about Taylor's troubled past and how that could have led to his death. We can speculate as much as we want, but the fact is, his past is not the important thing. No one deserves to die the way Taylor did, no matter what the circumstances. As Redskins fans, as football fans, as sports fans, as University of Miami fans, as residents of the Washington, D.C. area, and as human beings, we should all mourn the death of Sean Taylor and cheer the Redskins on more than ever on Sunday.

Femoral Artery

- One of the largest arteries in the body.
- Can cause rapid blood loss and even death if damaged.
- About the width of your index finger.



Cradling His Native Roots

Sam McCann

News Editor

Lacrosse is not only one of the fastest growing sports in America, but one of the oldest. It has deep roots in Native American culture, and some, such as senior Forrest Cox, are trying to connect the game back to its storied past. Cox, a member of the Prairie Band Potawatomi Tribe, recently made the Iroquois National Team, a team committed to the tradition of lacrosse.

The Nationals held tryouts for their U-19 team throughout September. Intrigued by the opportunity, Cox and his mom made their way up to the Onondaga and Akwesasne reservations in New York. Between those sites and the other two tryout locations, around two hundred kids participated in the first round. Cox managed to proceed onto the next round, once again in New York, but this time at Hobart and William Smith College. Cox managed to grab a spot on the Under-19 team.

As one of the 32 selected to compete in the tournament phase, Cox is not only playing against other teams, but also vying for a spot on the world tournament roster. Only 23 are able to advance to this stage of the competition, and Cox hopes to be one of them.

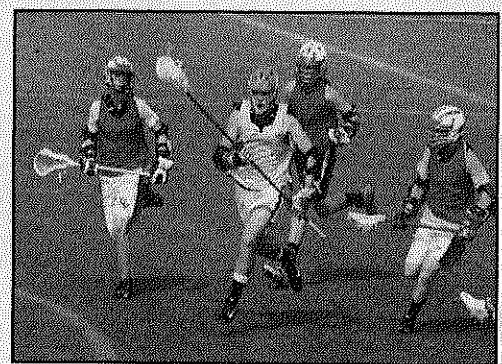
They are looking for, according to Cox, "power on the field and presence off the field [e.g. character]. And apparently they will not tell who the top 23 are until two weeks before the world tournament. So pressure, pressure, pressure!"

That pressure is raised up a notch by a demanding schedule. "There were only three weekends I think that

I was here in D.C. between the month[s] of September and October, so yeah, that really put the pressure on for keeping with my academics and previous obligations." Luckily, Cox found his instructors accommodating. He said "As I explained to teachers what I've been doing with my time - getting back to my culture - most teachers were understanding and able to work with me."

Aside from the tryouts, members of the team practice for three to four hours before their fall tournaments. When not at these practices, the team uses the Iroquois Nationals online social network. Through this network, coaches are able to share a video playbook with their team.

Aside from working towards what Cox described as the team's ultimate goal, "to be successful in the U-19 world tournament in British Columbia, Canada," the Nationals also incorporate some of the more traditional aspects of the game. One important component of lacrosse in Native American culture is spiritual



Courtesy of Forrest Cox

Senior Forrest Cox (second from the right) practices hard with his teammates on the Iroquois National Lacrosse Team.

reflection. As Oren Lyons, an Iroquois chief, told the *Boston Globe*, "There is something a little different about lacrosse than football, basketball, or any other thing - the spirit that is there."

The game of lacrosse is considered spiritually important itself, as it emphasizes the importance of the "creator." According to the Iroquois Nationals website, "We acknowledge the creator and give thanks to the four protectors and all life sustainers. Now, the creator has endowed upon all human life a game call dehonchigwiis [lacrosse] for all to enjoy. The young men who participate in the creator's game will generate a gift of healing so that we may have peace of mind."

On Sunday, November 25, Cox and the Nationals participated in the Madlax Capital Classic. After playing five games against area teams they managed to come away with the hardware. "We didn't let up even when we were winning, and that's our mentality - physical 'til the end," said Cox.

For More Information
on the Iroquois
National Team go to
www.
iroquoisnationals.com

Hockey's Popularity on Thin Ice

Drew Reese

Reporter

"The first person in the 2007 Hall of Fame class is Ron Francis!" Applause like thunder shook the room as five elite players began the greatest walk of their lives.

Hold on. Wait. You do not know who Ron Francis is? He had 1,249 assists during his 24-year career. What about Scott Stevens? No? How about Al MacInnis or Jim Gregory? Okay. Well, you have to know who Mark Messier is, though. He played in over 1,756 games and totaled 694 goals and 1,193 assists. Do any of these names sound familiar? What about Wayne Gretzky, the greatest to ever play the game?

If you do not have any idea who any of these people were, do not worry, you are in the same boat as many Americans. To those who still do not understand, the answer is simple. It is hockey. Yes, that sport, the one that no one follows or cares about. In fact, it is more likely that one remembers the National Hockey League (NHL) strike a few years ago than the winner of the Stanley Cup last year (the Anaheim Ducks).

Because of this lack of perceived interest, the NHL and hockey as a whole gets a bad rap. But, according to a recent article on MSNBC, the NHL just recently had its most financially successful season. Even though this means the fans show up to the games and support their teams, it does not necessarily imply people are watching at home. One of the main problems for the NHL is that it does not have a contract with a specific broadcaster to show games. While the other three major sports (football, basketball and baseball) have multiple television deals to ensure their entertainment is seen, hockey is left in the dark, literally.

Hockey, however, is attempting to combat this by trying to work out a deal with ESPN to make sure its product is seen. Another advertising scheme the NHL is considering is playing more games in foreign countries to try and beef up worldwide interest. Proof of this is the recent Ducks and Los Angeles Kings game in London. Plans have also been made to hold games in Asia as well.



Photo by Cha'Vais Summers

Junior Max Kreis is ridiculed by Senior Peter Doku and Junior Abu Yillah for his avid support of his hockey team.

Also, TV programming is not near as sparse as some believe. In fact, ten national channels broadcast NHL games. Furthermore, according to Nate Ewell, a Capitals Media Representative, "You can also watch every Capitals game live on the web, and highlights are available afterwards via our web site and NHL.com." In short, the media options are available, although it just can not seem to draw the large audiences other sports attract. In fact, when junior Katie Roddey was asked how often she watches an NHL game, she answered "never."

While hockey no doubt has a dependable fan base that allows it to continue, it just has not been able to transform itself into a vehicle of national obsession.

In addition, although revenues have been increasing yearly, the NHL will need to create more inroads until it receives as much media and national attention as the other more mainstream sports in American society. So, while we wait for that to happen, go look up Wayne Gretzky on Google and try and tune in for a Capitals game to see how entertaining the sport actually is.

TV Set on the Internet

Asma Ahmad
Reporter

Nowadays, most local television networks such as ABC, NBC, and The CW are providing faithful TV lovers with full episodes they can watch online for free.

According to a report by the TNS Media Intelligence, "Nearly 16 percent of American households with Internet access watch television broadcasts online." Sure, cable has over two hundred channels and infinite shows to choose from, but that can also be part of the problem.

Plopped down in front of a computer is where most students can be found doing their homework, but they can also be found there chatting online, messaging on Facebook, and watching television at the same time. Our generation has mastered the art of multi-tasking, so taking a break to laugh at an episode of "The Office" is acceptable. It is evident that convenience is the key to getting through life, which is why we like everything at the same place, same time.

Though commercials can be informative, funny, or even beneficial, those who are dying to see the next scene of their favorite show could care less about the new mistletoe-shaped cookies on the market. One of the major reasons why ad-supported video streaming is growing is due to the lack of commercials between shows. There are usually about 4-6 commercial breaks per episode and they only last for thirty seconds or less. Most of the commercials may be repetitive, unlike those on television, but think of all the things one can do in thirty seconds - maybe check e-mail, think about doing homework, or take a sip of coffee.

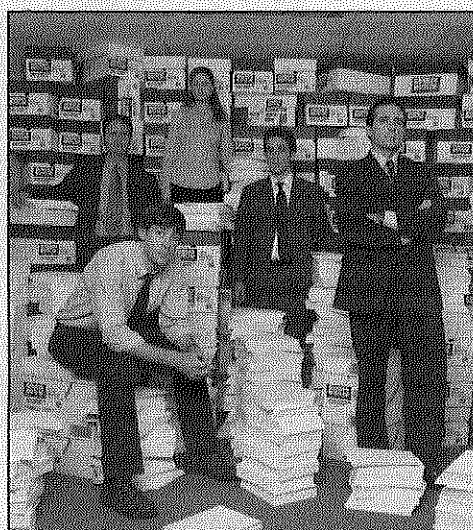


Photo by Handout/KRT

NBC's "The Office" is one of many shows that is now streaming online.

"With three AP classes and a sport to worry about, watching television shows online without commercials is great," said junior Chloe Kougas.

High Definition Television (HDTV) is another factor that most local online networks are addressing to make online viewing less strenuous for the eyes. ABC has selected episodes from different shows in HDTV format that stream so clearly, it is as if you are watching a television show in a movie theatre.

Just as with any technological advancement, there are shortcomings to relying on the Internet for television. First of all, most computers do not provide a convenient remote that allows one to flip to whatever show he or she wants to watch. Going on the website, choosing a show and an episode, and waiting for the player to load can take up some precious time. Second, it is not uncommon for an episode player to stall for minutes at a time leaving one with raging feelings of anger, anxiousness, and aggravation. "The television is larger than a computer so I can see all the details better and I can get more comfortable while watching my favorite show," said junior Brianne Wilson.

Nonetheless, watching television on the Internet is a growing method of entertainment for those of us whose busy lives give us a desire for convenience. So, if you miss an episode of your favorite television show this holiday season because your Aunt Lilly just did not feel like leaving, catch up on all the action by logging onto the network website. You just might find an episode there to greet you.

Christmas Hits the Big Screen

Emily Smith
Opinions Editor

The Christmas season is here. Every year around this time, at least five new Christmas movies come out in theaters, while countless movies of varying degrees of cheesiness are shown on television.

From 1999's *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, to Lifetime movies, holiday movies play on every channel. However, even among all of the cheaply made heartwarmers are some true gems. Here is a list of my vote for the top five best Christmas movies.

5. Home Alone

Home Alone tells the story of whiny Kevin McCallister, an eight-year-old boy tormented by his family members. After being sent up to the attic in disgrace, McCallister fervently wishes that by the time he wakes up, his family will have disappeared. McCallister gets his wish, but soon learns that two burglars have targeted his house and it is up to him to save it. Although the movie may have been made for preteens and their families, teenagers will still find it funny. Overall, *Home Alone* is a silly movie with a nice and sappy holiday message.



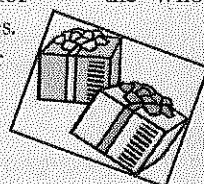
4. The Muppet Christmas Carol

The Muppet Christmas Carol, starring Kermit the Frog, Miss Piggy, Fozzie, and the rest of the Muppets retells Dickens' classic "A Christmas Carol." However, it is not only Muppets who act out the drama. Human actor Michael Caine plays Ebenezer Scrooge and does an excellent job of channeling his inner "Christmas humbug." *The Muppet Christmas Carol* is basically a funnier version of "A Christmas Carol," with a better cast. How could this go wrong?



3. How the Grinch Stole Christmas

Dr. Seuss would never have wanted Jim Carrey to star as the Grinch. Therefore, the movie referred to is the 1966 cartoon version, or, in other words, the classic. The Grinch, bitter and green, lives on Mount Crumpit and spends every Christmas moping around and developing his hate for the Whos down in Whoville and their holiday festivities. Finally, the Grinch tries to ruin Christmas for them by stealing their food, decorations, and presents. In the end, though, the Grinch learns that Christmas is about the love of a family rather than material goods.



2. It's A Wonderful Life

George Bailey loses an \$8,000 deposit for his company and falls into a pit of despair. Bailey decides everyone would just be better off without him and decides to commit suicide. However, his morose plan is foiled when Clarence, Bailey's guardian angel, drops from the heavens. Clarence shows Bailey how the citizens of Bedford Falls would have lived if Bailey had never existed. It does not take long for Bailey to realize how much he means to the people around him. Although this film may be in black and white, the lack of color does not subtract from its quality.

1. A Christmas Story

"You'll shoot your eye out!" This classic phrase pops up everywhere during the holiday season and reflects the true greatness of the movie *A Christmas Story*. All 9-year-old Ralphie Parker wants for Christmas is "an official Red Ryder carbine-action 200-shot range model BB rifle with a compass in the stock." The only thing he has to do is to survive soap poisoning, avoid getting beat up and convince Santa, Mrs. Shields, and his mother to buy him his Red Ryder BB gun. This movie has been showing for 24 years and shows no signs of stopping.

Graphics by Clipart

SHRED SHED

The Title Track

Brad Lupton
Opinions Editor

Most bands that make it big in the music industry started their music careers early in life. Take Bradley Nowell of Sublime fame. He started garage bands in middle school and high school, and then grew to be a huge success. The Title Track boldly strides to do the same.

Sophomores Ardan Mosley, Colin McConville, Ryan Mach, and Nick White are the components of this musical foursome. McConville plays bass guitar, Mosley, rhythm guitar, Mach, lead guitar, and White, the drums. In their songs, loud guitars and hefty bass fill the air, while fast drumming keeps a strong beat in the background. White's drumming is characteristic of the genre, but is enough to separate him from the crowd. What is most important in rock percussion is a great rhythm in the music, which he does well. Mach's guitar adds excellent flavor to the fast chords flying from Mosley's guitar. McConville's bass playing is a perfect compliment to the fast guitar-playing duo. Finally, McConville's and Mach's vocals, are perfect for their sound.

The Title Track began very early, White said, "The band started in the end of elementary school. We always thought it would be cool to start a band, so we just did." They have been practicing and playing shows since, and are wrapping up a CD. To promote their band, Mosley said, "We just put our music out there and hope people like it. We gave out some CDs a while ago, and that worked nicely." McConville said, "We first just got our friends to listen to our music, but after that, other people started listening and that was really cool." When asked about how they keep their shows and band together, McConville said, "The fact that we come up with our own music keeps me going."

They feature a solid hard-punk sound harkening to The Bad Brains and Against Me. A rebellious tinge and sarcastic vibe echo through their music with lyrics like "I don't care what you say" and "Punk is Dead". Other times, friendly banter wraps up songs. Beware though, for curse words pop up frequently in their songs.


The Title Track is a young band with lots of experience already under its belts. Its members' strong sound shows that they know what direction they are going. Search their Myspace for show schedules and look for their currently untitled CD coming out in December.



Photo Courtesy of Brad Lupton

Sophomores Colin McConville, Nick White, and Ryan Mach jam. These are three of the four members of The Title Track.


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South African Danger Brings New Student to States

Reared in the South African city of Cape Town, Alexandra Botha moves here to escape racial tensions.

Zach Feinstein

Online Editor

When people hear about whites from Africa, many immediately think of apartheid in South Africa or in *Mean Girls* when Cady is asked, "If you're from Africa, why are you white?" In reality, there are many whites who are born and raised in Africa. One white South African in our school is freshman Alexandra Botha, who was born and reared in the South African city of Cape Town.

According to the CIA World Factbook, 9.6% of South Africa's 43,997,828 people are white or of European descent. Due to this statistic, Botha describes being a white South African as being "extremely confusing to many people. I get the *Mean Girls* comment a lot." Botha's family is a mix of South African and American; her father is from Johannesburg, the largest city in South Africa, and her mother is from America. For the seven years that they lived in South Africa, Botha's father worked at a company called Koo, which is a leading canned foods company there.

Botha's parents chose to move here in 1999, seven years after she was born. The reason for the move, she said, was because "at the time in South Africa, it was very dangerous." This was likely because of apartheid, the South African racial rules that completely separated whites and blacks. During this period, whites and blacks could not live in the same areas, work in the same jobs, or go to the same schools. In comparable terms, apartheid was on the same

scale as segregation in the American South. But Botha and her family members are not racist by any means. In fact, Botha said, "My parents were against it. They didn't like the divisions."

While living in Cape Town, she attended a Montessori School that had gates around it because of crime. Most of her friends in school were white, but she had a few close black friends. She had her own close encounter with crime when a play date was interrupted by burglars breaking into her friend's home. Botha describes Cape Town as being "more built up, like Virginia [with] a lot of big buildings." There is also Table Mountain (which is a mountain that resembles a table) in Cape Town and a world-renowned game park, Kruger National Park. Not to mention, Botha's mother has met Nelson Mandela,

South Africa's first president after apartheid.

To Americans, whites from Africa are as rare as albinos from China, but to many Africans, they are fairly common. Junior Amazing Grace

Danso, who is from Ghana, knows many white Africans and said, "There were a lot [of white Africans] at my school back home." Danso also thinks that if you are from the continent and you appreciate the culture then you are African.

“ [It is] extremely confusing to many people. I get the *Mean Girls* comment a lot. ”



Photo courtesy of Alexandra Botha

Freshman Alexandra Botha pets a cheetah in South Africa, one of many great experiences she had while living there.

Regardless of color, Botha is South African and very proud. Eugene Fischer, her Spanish teacher, described Botha as "very much like any other kid at West Po." Fischer also noted that, unlike her father, she has no South African accent. Botha plans to return to Cape Town in the near future to reconnect with the art, the people, and the wildlife of South Africa. While she hopes the *Mean Girls* comments will eventually subside in America, back in Africa, Botha knows that white and black will not be a problem for her.

Bogdan Creates a Social Networking Site While Still in High School

Hooff Cooksey

Managing Editor

It is hard to come across a high school senior who is not thinking about going to college, not because they do not have the funds or the motivation, but because they are too busy crafting the future of competitive social networking websites, not to mention their advertisements. Senior Jeremy Bogdan, however, is living this dream and has already made huge strides in making this incredible advancement a reality. "Forget what you know about websites, because when the full platform comes out, it will push the boundaries of what has been done before," he said.

"The company name is looking to be 'Core Domain,'" said Bogdan. "After picking out what I really did not like about the Internet and many featured sites, I set out to create the next generation of ad platforms where the ads would be for something the user actually wants, rather than something stupid and out of place." The site plans to feature ads that are somewhat interactive and very appealing to the younger generation. "Most people

block it out or accidentally click on [the advertisement] and 99% of it is irrelevant [and this website plans to change that]." Bogdan has not only designed templates for the Internet, but also for phones and PDA's. These include almost every feature offered on the main site, "but I'm sure we won't see [them released] for a while," said Bogdan. The site will feature many different personalized pages based on the user. There will be sports ticker tapes, weather updates, music and picture sharing options, and other features exceeding those of other social networking sites. "The platform should have something for just about everyone, and hopefully in the near future, we will see enough progress to do a closed WPHS beta [a test session open only to members of our high school]," said Bogdan.

Not only is Bogdan looking to start one of the most advanced websites around, he is also in the process of designing and developing a new kind of computer. "[It would be] something easy to use and easy to upgrade - just snap in and snap out components - [with] no more complicated silicon boards with strange standards," said Bogdan. All of Bogdan's ideas and plans, if successful, will be rolled out to the public in stages. Some of them are in the development and idea stages, while others are almost ready to be released soon.

Bogdan's success, however, has not been due to a solo effort. "My uncle has been a huge help throughout this process. He has supported me from day one and is funding the initial round of development to stake out the market and get a mockup ready for the big investors," he said. He also thanked his parents for supporting him and offering help whenever needed.

Due to many products in development, Bogdan had to hold back some information for copyright and development purposes. "Maybe once I've made a little more progress, I can give *The Wire* a scoop," he said.

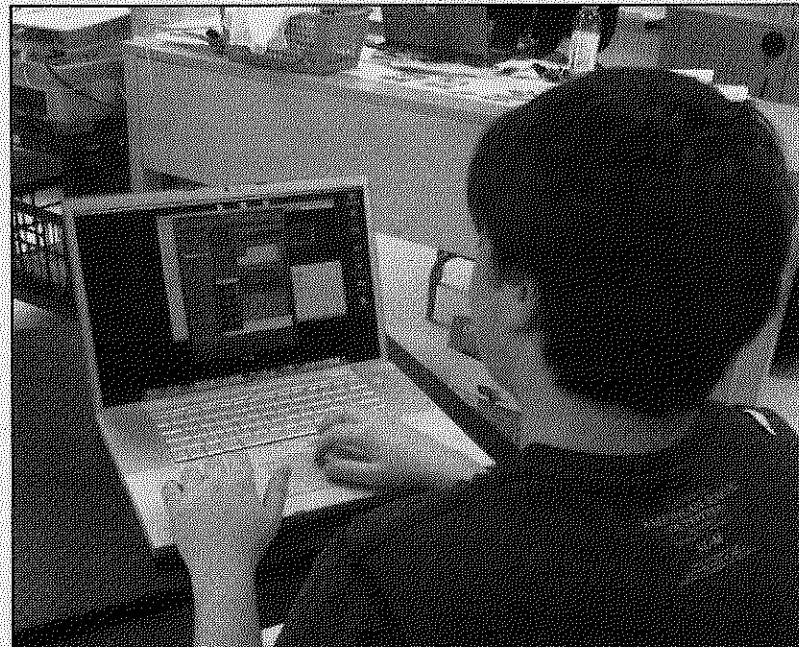


Photo by Caroline Staples

Senior Jeremy Bogdan works on his new social networking site that will allow people from all over the world to communicate.

Winter Fashion on the Rise as Temperatures Drops

Tess Mackey

Reporter

When the seasons change and the temperatures drop, many teens can be spotted walking around bundled up in puffy jackets and furry boots. This is a typical day at our school. The student body is often seen displaying fads that have become popular over the last couple of years. Winter fashion is similar every year; it is what one makes original that stands out. Are there victims of these trends that have swept the hallways or are there still people with their own sense of style?

Three out of every five students wears a North Face jacket, Uggs, or both. Moccasins have also become popular over the past couple of winters. Frigid mornings allow fashionable girls to wear their designer scarves and furry gloves. Senior Jessica Dunn said, "I find that the biggest winter trends are big stylish sweaters and jeans. Boots seem to be making a comeback, dresses and leggings are always trendy, and everyone seems to have on their Uggs on." However, there are some individuals who opt out of these trends and feel it is necessary to wear their own style of clothing. "Everyone has their own style; some follow the magazines, others like to be unique and different," said Dunn. Many knit their own scarves and feel that North Faces are a waste of money; therefore, they wear peacoats or trenchcoats instead.

Photo by Caroline Staples

Winter is a time for layers. Stores advertise their merchandise to market to those who purchase more than one thing; because it is cold, we need more to put on. Sweaters are worn under jackets and T-shirts are worn under sweaters. Corduroys may replace jeans as trendy pants. Meanwhile, girls can wear skirts with tights to signify the change in weather and differences in personality.

Winter fashion is a great way for those who love clothes to express themselves in color and styles. Many feel that these months are crucial for fashion, because they allow them to wear more than one piece and have fun with what they wear. Winter is a time of dark colors and thick materials that allow many to still feel stylish throughout the cold months. Winter fashion in our school shows uniqueness and influences all to have their own styles.



The Sub Way: Teaching Fresh

Alex Fabrizio

Features Editor

"Yes! No work!" is the exclamation of students everywhere when they step into their classroom and notice that their teacher has been replaced by a dazed-looking substitute.

However, some substitutes are not so dazed. At our school, there are a handful of subs that receive a cry of praise and excitement when they are found in classrooms. One in particular is Sid Smith, who took up substitute teaching after finishing a career with the Navy. He said, "[I have] a sense of order and organization and hopefully a friendly demeanor." This explains why so many students say that Smith is their favorite.

"He seems like a cool guy and he's really attractive," said sophomore Erin Spangler about Jesse Robinson, a young sub who keeps to himself and is often referred to as "the hot substitute." He also does not usually interfere with his temporary students' conversations when substituting. Many like this because it gives them a greater opportunity to chat with their friends.

Another great substitute is James Fullah. He is a lively man with an African accent. He has tight rule over the classes he substitutes for, but he still knows how to get a few

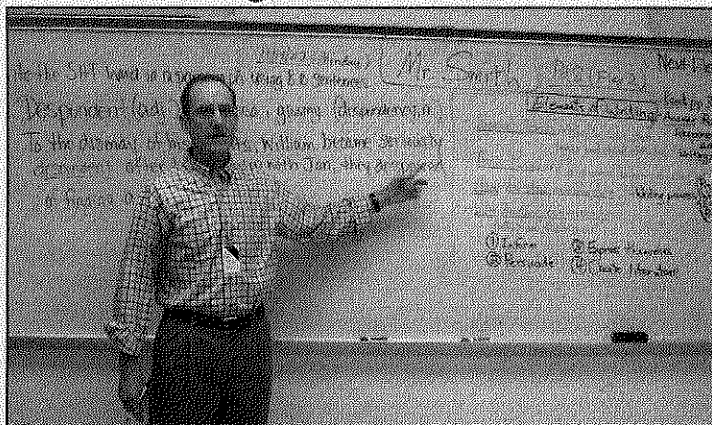


Photo by Kevin Fowler

Substitute Sid Smith outlines the class plans to his students and makes the work as exciting as he can.

laughs out of his students.

Not only do the substitutes connect with their students, they also take charge of their classes. This is not done in a "lame" way like sending kids out of the classroom or punishing everyone by requiring the work to be done in silence. They exhibit fairness, which is a revered quality in teachers, especially substitutes.

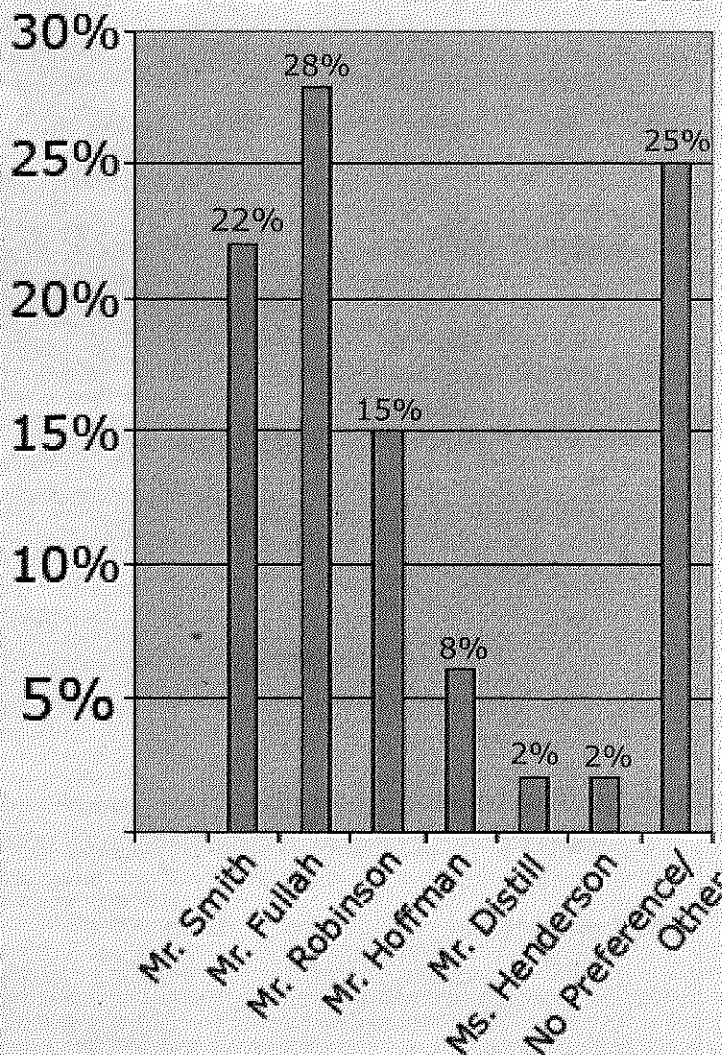
This is not to say that there are not other great substitutes; Mr. Gee and Ms. Henderson are other preferred temporary teachers. Less preferred teachers generally do not try to connect with their students. This is to their disadvantage because connecting with students is a big factor in gaining the students' respect. No

one wants a substitute who cannot count, and does not even look at the students whom they are subbing for. Yet, substitute teachers do not get the respect and appreciation they deserve. Everyone walks all over them, even if they are doing everything right.

I think most can agree that the least favorite substitute is an actual teacher at our school, especially when students have that teacher in another class. Usually, they are very strict, even if they are the most relaxed teacher in the world in their own classroom.

Out of all of the subs my teachers have had, Smith, Robinson, and Fullah are the best because of their personalities and how well they perform such a disrespected job.

Favorite Substitutes



Out of 100 students Polled

Poll by Mary McKnight; Graphic by Alex Fabrizio

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Yes, Country for Old Men

Sandy Slippen

Copy Editor

Unsettling and provocative, *No Country for Old Men* grabs hold of the audience right from the start and never comes close to letting go.

The Coen Brothers, known throughout for varied career including quirky films such as *Fargo* and *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, may have achieved their best film yet with their twelfth feature *No Country for Old Men*, an adaptation of author Cormac McCarthy's novel of the same name.

By combining dark humor with sudden bursts of violence, the film proves to be an unforgettable experience. If one thinks they know where *No Country* is headed in the course of its running time, they will inevitably be proved wrong. Although the film is never normal, it is consistently brilliant.

No Country follows three different characters that appear unrelated at the film's outset but whose paths are destined to cross in Texas in 1980. Llewellyn Moss (Josh Brolin), a poor man living with his wife (Kelly Macdonald) in a trailer, is on a hunting trip in the desert when he encounters the results of a drug deal gone wrong: several dead bodies, a truck packed with heroin, and a suitcase full of cash. Seizing an opportunity, Moss steals the cash but comes to regret it when others involved in the drug deal manage to discover his identity. Soon, he is being pursued by Anton Chigurh (Javier Bardem), a sadistic, relentless psychopath who follows Moss cat-and-mouse throughout Texas with a distinctive pneumatic air gun in tow. Meanwhile, a local sheriff (Tommy Lee Jones) becomes involved when Chigurh escapes from one of his deputies and plays a role in the drug

deal that occurred in his territory.

The Coens know a thing or two about how to effectively pace their films. *No Country* follows suit, as it gradually builds until it reaches a cataclysmic, chaotic conclusion. One way it does this is through the use of sound throughout the film. Many scenes contain long periods of silence interrupted by a loud noise to jolt the audience. No events occur in a predictable or expected fashion, which certainly works to the film's advantage.

No Country contains several strong performances, with one standout that is bound to earn an Oscar nomination. Josh Brolin manages to make the audience empathize with Moss, despite his apparent greed and selfishness.

As his almost childlike wife, Scottish actress Kelly Macdonald adapts a flawless Texas accent. Tommy Lee Jones injects moments of dry humor into the film in order to bring some comic

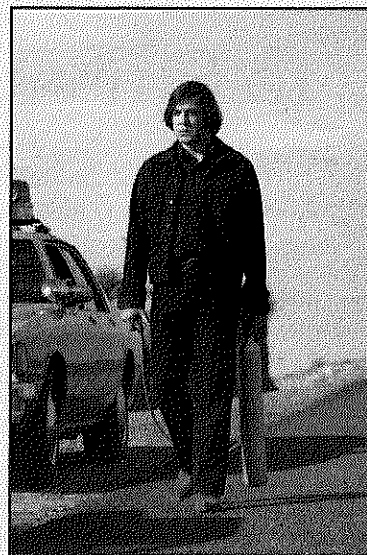


Photo by Handout/KRT

An unconventional murder weapon adds an interesting element to *No Country for Old Men*.

relief to the dark subject matter. However, it is Javier Bardem as Chigurh who elevates the film to a higher level. With a constantly remorseless expression and snarling intensity, Bardem creates one of the most frightening villains to ever inhabit a film. While searching the Texas plains for Moss, he brutally murders just about everyone he encounters except for those who manage to "win" a coin toss; clearly, playing God is one of the reasons he comes across as so terrifying.

By providing no easy answers and raising many new questions by the time of the credits, *No Country for Old Men* is a powerful examination of the true nature of evil and is one of the best movies of the year.

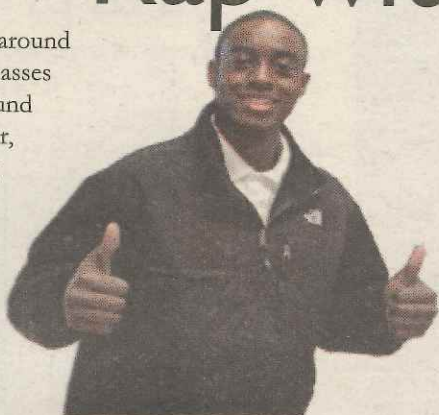
Senior Session

Cha'Vais Summers

Sports Editor

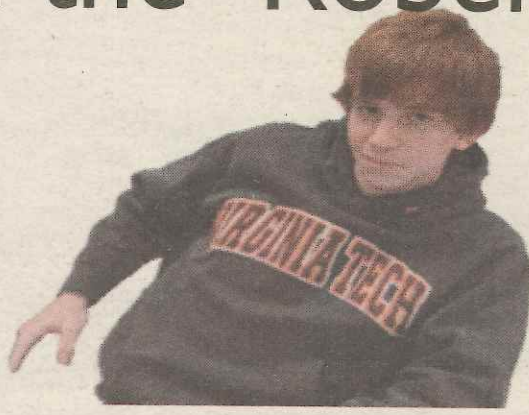
Rap with the "Roberts"

It may have been Robert Byrd horsing around in the hallways or catching touchdown passes Friday nights, Robert Long walking around our school with his quiet demeanor, completely oblivious to everything around him, or Robert Straus bringing attention to himself by cracking jokes and making everyone laugh. Whichever one of these Roberts crossed your path, you have seen one of these young men throughout our school. Now here is your chance to learn a little about them and how different they really are.



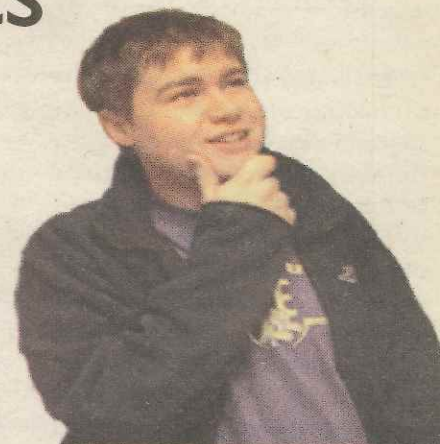
ROBERT BYRD

...is a three sport athlete at our school (football, basketball and spring track). He lives with his Mom and two sisters. He one day hopes to be a professional athlete. His friends describe him as funny, funny and funny.



ROBERT LONG

I am the guy you need when stuff goes crazy. I am a funny friend to have if you get to know me. I love to play all different kinds of sports from roller hockey to rugby. I try to do the work before play but that does not work out all the time. I am a good student and awesome friend. I AM BEOWULF!



ROBERT STRAUS

Life is a precious commodity and I value it. I live everyday like it is my last.

About Me

What is it like to be a 'Robert'?

It's really cool. A lot of Roberts are successful, such as me.

What describes you?

I don't front, and I don't go backwards; I don't practice and I don't lack [talent].

What types of things do you do outside of school?

Hang out with teammates, and help Jeremy Devalle lift weights because he is so frail.

What are your plans for after high school?

I am playing college football and majoring in Criminal Justice.

If you could be anyone in the world, who would you be?

I would be Michael Jordan because he is a smart, wealthy man, and everyone knows him.

It's cool.

I am a cool, fun-loving guy. I am quiet because I am cool.

I play sports like rugby with my brothers and video games with my friends.

Playing [baseball] with my friends at the RecCenter.

Demetri Martin because he's a hilarious comedian.

It's great to be Rob Straus...I don't know about the rest of those guys.

"Which way is the beach?"

Boogie board, surf, Corey Gray and the Dinobabies.

College, go to Cal Poly with Paul Cambon.

Allen Cambon, because he is a swell guy with a tough attitude.

Photos by Cha'Vais Summers

How to Survive the Holidays

Mary McKnight

Poll Editor



1

If you belong to a tense, emotionally bottled-up family, know the family history before you start a conversation. Avoid initiating any potentially dangerous topics, especially on subjects of politics or religion, as well as any hot-button issues of conflict between family members.

2

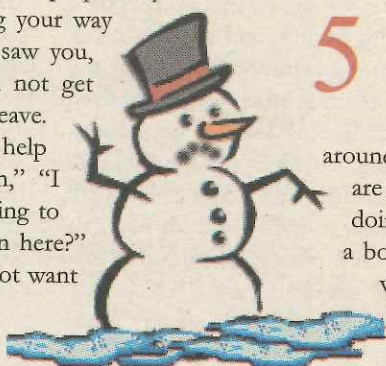
If you belong to a large, loud family and are not feeling as boisterous as everyone else, find a quiet place such as the backyard or a secluded corner to read. Also, see if you can find someone who feels the same to hold a reserved conversation with, because chances are, you are not alone.

3

Have a list of potential excuses to leave the table or room on hand. That way, if you spot that perpetually annoying family member walking your way with greetings of "When I last saw you, you were just a baby," you will not get stuck fumbling for a reason to leave.

Some suggestions: "Here, let me help you take those dishes into the kitchen," "I have to visit the restroom," "I am going to get something to drink," or "Is it hot in here?" Or you could try honesty: "I really do not want to talk to you." I would not recommend the latter.

Graphics by Clip Art



4

If you are leaving town, as you are packing, pretend you are a solitary monk who is going camping, which means three things: One, prepare to entertain yourself (i.e. books, , writing journal, laptop, homework), because chances are you will be looking for something to do when you get sick of just hanging out with your family; two, be prepared for any weather, warm or cold; three, do not pack anything illegal or embarrassing. If you are sharing a room with snoopy cousins or curious grandparents, the last thing you want is for them to find something private.

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If all else fails, turn the attention back to you. Chances are your family wants to know what is going on in your life and it takes the spotlight off the other problems going around the dinner table. Mention what you are learning in school, how your friends are doing, something funny you read online, or a book you read recently. If that does not work, talk about cute fuzzy animals. That is something everyone can agree on.

B-RAD'S POETRY CORNER

CHALLENGE

Looking through the pages,
Some folks posin' as rhyme sages,
I spit mad fire, if they want some, come to *The Wire*,
I'll be here, rhymes in my noggin,
Try to bring it, my mind'll be joggin'.
You are knocking on the wrong door,
After you see me, your brain will be sore.
So bring me some conflict,
You'll see what I inflict.
Straight wordplay on my paper,
So hot, turnin' water to vapor.
I'm lookin' forward to a nice battle
Gonna make all your cages rattle.
Next issue look forward to the clash,
All my words will cause a monster mash
Chill, bro's I'm just havin' fun,
Either way, don't mess with number 1.



Photos by Shannon Bowdring