



How can cell phones spread disease among students?

Photo Courtesy of Verizon Wireless/MCT



How much do you know about unique holidays?

## FCPS Failed to Send Grade Distributions

MARIYA ILYAS  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

As senior Andy Lutz prepared to apply to colleges, he was frustrated with his first quarter GPA, as were thousands of other students around the county. Will they qualify for merit-based scholarships?

According to FAIRGRADE, a parent advocacy group for a 10-point grading scale, Fairfax County Public Schools failed to implement a Virginia Department of Education (VA DOE) regulation, mandating the inclusion of grade distribution data on Virginia high school profiles, beginning in the 2008-09 school year.

According to Timothy Boyd, Director of Student Services, our school is sending out grade distributions to all colleges along with the school profile. "I just make sure that we are sending what we are asked," he said. According to Boyd, the school profile and the distribution report can be found on the school website.

Created in January 2008, FAIRGRADE was organized "to advocate for major revisions of the current grading policies in Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS)," according to its website. In an effort to push for GPA percentile distributions to be included on high school profiles and changing the county's grading scale, FAIRGRADE uncovered FCPS' non-compliance with VA DOE requirement.

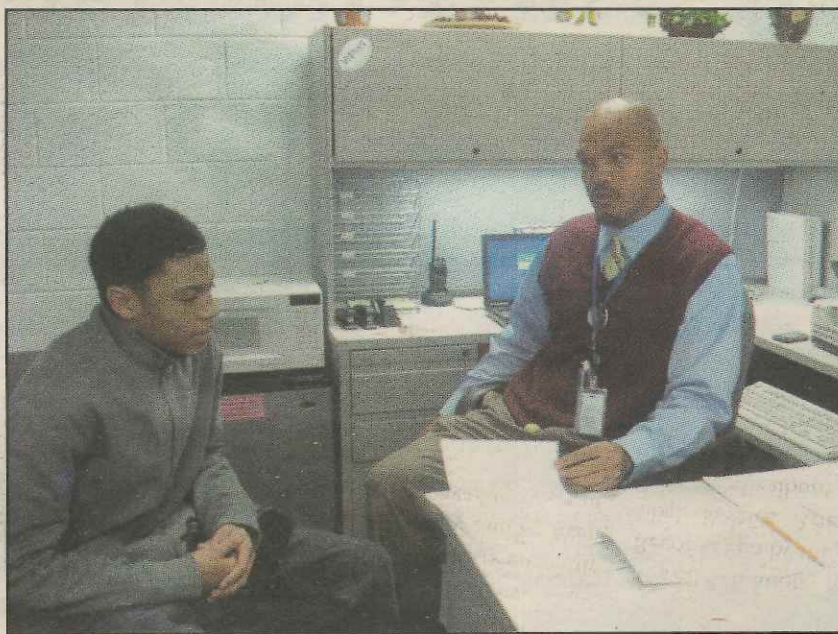
According to FAIRGRADE, this "discovery" impacts the Class of 2009 students, as its reputation "is based on the validity of our research and the facts we bring to the table." Lutz, who supports the efforts of FAIRGRADE said, "I think it's time for the necessary legislation to come."

The website [www.fairgrade.org](http://www.fairgrade.org) reports that its extensive research shows that FCPS' current grading policies put FCPS students at a disadvantage for college admissions, receipt of valuable merit-based academic scholarships, admissions to college honors programs, NCAA athletic eligibility, and car insurance discounts.

Jay Matthews of *The Washington Post* supports FAIRGRADE and wrote that "their data and arguments are first rate."

According to FAIRGRADE, students that applied early admissions to colleges and universities might be at a disadvantage. They strongly recommend that those students "consider requesting that an updated high school profile containing grade distribution data be sent

See FAIRGRADE, page 4



Mr. Hassan Mims, a history and economic teacher will become the new Dean of Students working with students such as Chris Montgomery, shown above.

## Mims to Become Dean of Students

CATHERINE BRADLEY  
REPORTER

What exactly is a Dean of Students and why does this school need one? This is a question many students find themselves asking when they hear that Mr. Hassan Mims has given up his role in the classroom to accept the position.

Mims, a history and an economics teacher, came to our school in 2004 looking for a change and a school with more diversity. He noticed that our school did not have a dean, but instead four vice principals. Mims came

from James S. Rickards High School in Tallahassee, Florida which only had three vice principals, and a 'dean.' This school was also a Title I school, meaning 70% of its population was considered "poor" by the federal government. Mims saw that the dean helped the school deal with problems such as student attendance and alleviate the responsibilities of the administrators.

In his first year at our school, Mims introduced the idea of a "dean" to Principal Rima Vesilind, who at the time did not see a need for one. Mims thought that a dean would help take

See Mims, page 5

## Obama Plans for the Future

EMILY SMITH  
MANAGING EDITOR

On Tuesday, November 4, American voters made history by electing the first African American president. Beginning January 20, 2009, the House of Representatives, the Senate, and the White House will be Democratic.

After eight years under Republican president George W. Bush, people are expecting major changes in the government, especially given our current economic crisis. Already, president-elect Barack Obama and his advisors are planning changes.

"I want to move with all deliberate haste but I want to emphasize deliberate as well as haste," said Obama in a statement to the press

See Obama page 5



Photo Courtesy of Nancy Stone/MCT

President Elect Barack Obama speaks to the public about the plan for his presidency.

## Passafire's Popularity Grows School and Nationwide

MICHAELA ACCARDI  
MANAGING/NEWS EDITOR

Adam Willis, alumni of our school and brother of senior Andreas Willis, is a member of the increasingly popular reggae-rock band Passafire, which has grown in popularity, especially among students.

Just recently completing their east coast tour of the states, the band is currently touring the west coast and gaining even more fans along the way, averaging about 150 shows a year.

When asked about having a brother in a flourishing band, Andreas said, "I really enjoy it. My brother is a great guy, and I know he loves what he does. He enjoys making music, and I enjoy when he lets me help out with songs and publicity. It's

especially awesome when people ask me all about the band. The band deserves to make it, no doubt. They are just too good."

Based in Savannah, Georgia their collaboration began in 2003. Through several tours and the debut of their self-titled album in 2006, Passafire has gained recognition nationally. The band is the newest addition to California's LAW Records, run by the independently owned label, Pepper. After the production of their second album *Submersible* in October 2007, the band has progressively gained recognition with a sound that is all their own and is respected in the reggae world.

Their uniquely recognizable sound is produced by members Nick and Will

See Passafire, page 4

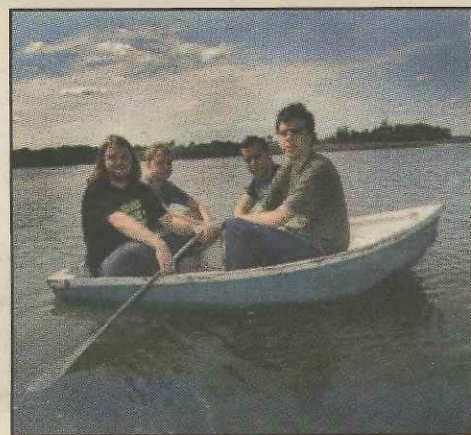


Photo Courtesy of Jolene Mattison/Fair Use

Passafire band members, Adam Willis, Ted Bowne and brothers Nick and Will Kubley pose for a photo as their fame grows.

Inside This Issue:



Photo Courtesy of Jolene Mattison/Fair Use

Could one student's brother's band be on the verge of making it big?



Photo by Alex Fabrizio

How good was this year's *Romeo and Juliet* play?

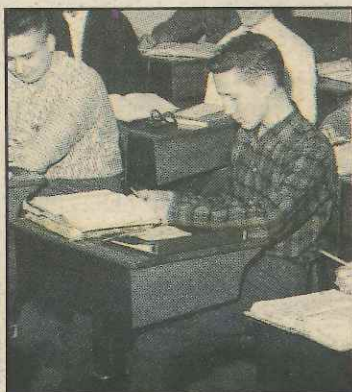


Photo Courtesy of William Dobson

See what a day in the life of math teacher, William Dobson, is like.



Photo by Peter Sorel

What did viewers actually think of the new teen movie *Twilight*?

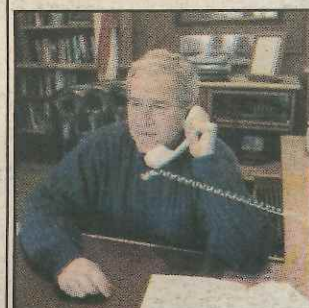


Photo Courtesy of Eric Draper/MCT

Is President Bush responsible for our economic hardships?



## Face It, We All Know It Happened

STAFF EDITORIAL

With the end of the presidential election, the public, including Democrats, has finally come to admit that some media publications and outlets gave unfair and biased coverage of the candidates who ran for president.

The media consistently picked sides and in this case had a huge affect on the future of our nation and whether the public views it as positive or negative is irrelevant.

This brings up the issue of whether or not the media, which includes newspapers, magazines and television outlets, should endorse a specific candidate. Or, when looking at the bigger picture, should the media, especially newspapers, show a liberal or conservative bias?

As taught in journalism class, newspapers should present all sides of every story – in other words, newspapers should be objective. This allows readers to form their own opinions, especially adolescents who are at the ripe age of being exposed to a lot of things and choosing a stance on their own.

The basics of journalism entail that a news story must strictly use verified facts and accurate quotes. Although it is difficult for any writer to achieve *complete* objectivity in any article because the word usage and presentation of

facts enforces one's writing style, it is something every journalist strives for. Or, at least, every journalist *should* strive for. This is not to confuse with opinions pieces; they are different. A journalist's best friend – the first amendment – entitles writers to express themselves and their opinions. But, in the case of presidential coverage, we find the endorsement of candidates very frustrating.

On Friday, October 17, *The Washington Post* officially announced its endorsement for Democratic candidate Barack Obama. This led to immediate conclusions that *Post's* coverage of the Election 2008 would be biased, and indeed it was. The November 5 issue disappeared from stands early that morning, as hundreds lined up to buy a piece of tangible history they can keep forever. The majority of that day's publication contained articles regarding Democratic victories.

As aspiring journalists, we believe the decision to endorse a presidential candidate was highly unethical and unprofessional. Not only did the *Post* lose many of its readers, it also proved to be partisan, instead of fair and balanced, making it easier for journalism to gain a negative reputation.

No wonder the media is looked down upon by the public.

Bias can also be seen in televised media, specifically news stations that are associated with political parties or companies. For example, *MSNBC* is known for its recent political bashing of Republicans and making little effort to hide its democratic views.

Money must be made in order to produce a publication and make a profit. However, this does not make the situation any more moral. Has our society really come down to only caring about the dollar? Many would say so, but society really needs to stop this before it gets out of control.

When the media starts involving young people in the corrupt world of politics, we, as teens, should be given the right to be presented with the whole truth and nothing but the truth, in order to make up OUR minds. Are young people now being manipulated to increase a candidate's votes? This is not to say young people are ignorant, but when given inaccurate information questioning the accuracy of their views. As a result, it is no secret the media swayed this election.

### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

I was approached by one of your students from *The Wire* about anything of my concern. I chose to write about the school's lunch [policy]. I personally believe that lunch is too short for the number of students that occupy the cafeteria during our scheduled lunch times. I know I am one student, but a petition of some sort or a vote on Blackboard should be done to see the overall view of my peers. Even if an administrator was present during lunch, it would be obvious how long the lines are. When the average student is sitting down with his/her tray, it's already time for them to go back to class. Two lunches for extended time periods instead of four should be considered. That's my personal opinion, [so] any consideration is highly appreciated.

-Senior, LeQuan Ponder

### RANTS and Raves

A **RANT** for possibly cutting some winter sports.

A **RANT** for the new season of 24. Ew.

A **RANT** for the Redskins and their recent struggles.

A **RANT** for having to come in on December 22 and 23.

A **rave** for early release tomorrow and a Wacky Wednesday yesterday.

A **rave** for Winter Break.

A **rave** for the BCS making college football more exciting.

A **rave** for Passafire.

### CORRECTIONS

On page 3 in Opinions, Grace Powell was not credited with the interim graphic.

On page 6 in Focus, Clip Art was not credited with a graphic of the director.

On page 8, Martez Redfearn's last name is spelled incorrectly in the article titled "Sports Warm Up."

On page 3 in Mariya Ilyas' column, the Hillary Clinton rally was actually held on Sunday, November 2, not Monday, November 3.

Also, in Ilyas' column, Benazir Bhutto was assassinated, not murdered.

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## Scarves Become More Than Fashion



**ASMA AHMAD**  
ONLINE EDITOR

"Free Palestine!" I exclaimed as I witnessed a familiar black and white checkered and fringed scarf wrapped around the neck of one of my classmates.

With a confused look in return, I quickly realized that what I had taken as political activism in support of Palestine was actually a new fashion trend, ready to take the industry by storm.

The *Keffiyeh* also known as a "shamagh" or "hathah" is actually a symbol of Palestinian nationalism, or at least it used to be until Rachel Ray, Lil Wayne, Chris Brown and the rest of the world decided they were cute and trendy scarves with little value.

Recall for a moment the headdress of Palestinian Prime Minister, Yasser Arafat. Not only did he wear the black and white keffiyeh, but he

made sure it was worn in a specific manner. The triangular shape of the scarf represents the shape of the Palestinian territory while the black and white checkered design symbolizes the Fatah party, a major faction of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). Throughout history, Middle Easterners have worn these headdresses to protect themselves from the dry weather and sweltering heat of the desert. Often made of cotton and wool, the keffiyehs dry easily for multiple uses. To clear up another major misconception, these triangular adornments are not affiliated with the Islamic faith in any way.

So, how did an article of clothing, originally meant to represent Palestinian struggle for freedom, suddenly become a chic new look for people across the world?

Palestinian-American senior Amal Fesisi sees the keffiyeh as a symbol of who she is and where she comes from, not to mention the overwhelming hardship the Palestinian people have faced over the past 60 years. "It saddens me that the world does not consider Palestine a country, but I wear the keffiyeh to represent my pride and my sympathy for the Palestinian cause," said Fesisi.

With the tremendous upheaval occurring constantly in the Middle East, it is nice to see that Arab-Americans have a way to show their support even though they are far from

their homeland. No one can dictate what others wear, but those who don the scarf without knowing what it means should at least take the time to educate themselves about the Palestinian struggle.

The fact that one can wear the keffiyeh as a giant bandana, a head scarf, or in some cases, an arm band proves it versatility. However, there have been many controversies linked to the harmless scarf, many of which have made incorrect accusations about its meaning. In an article on MSNBC.com about the contentious Dunkin' Donuts ad, Amahl Bishara, an anthropology lecturer at the University of Chicago said, "Keffiyehs are worn every day on the street by Palestinians and other people in the Middle East — by people going to work, going to school, taking care of their families, and just trying to keep warm." Senior Hope Thomas also sees the scarf as a modern fashion statement. "The scarf is a stylish accent to many of my outfits, though

I am not familiar with the Palestinian-Israeli topic," said Thomas.

Many fads and trends begin as meaningful articles of clothing that initially have a distinct statement they try to make. Remember the popular "Che" T-shirts? The silhouette of revolutionist Che Guevara represented the eminent struggle he faced as he tried to achieve freedom and equality for the Cuban people. Today, he is still widely remembered by Cubans.

However, in the United States, many people wore the shirt with little concern as to what their clothing actually stood for. Rather, the shirts quickly became a fashion icon while many Cubans could not even afford to wear the shirts themselves.

Like the "Che" T-shirts, the Palestinian keffiyeh's are not just black and white scarves, and they are not just warm bandanas to wear with any outfit; rather they mean something to those who realize the Palestinian struggle. It is wonderful to see people adorning their everyday outfits with the keffiyeh, but those who see no meaning to it, should at least take the time to recognize their privilege. Wearing a keffiyeh should show one's support the Palestinian struggle, not just add to one's collection of fashion friendly scarves.

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**"The Keffiyeh also known as a 'shamagh' or 'hathah' is actually a symbol of Palestinian nationalism, or at least it used to be..."**

”

## Who Is To Blame For the Current Economy?



**LUCAS ALEXANDER**  
OPINIONS EDITOR

"Rarely is the question asked: Are our children learning?"

Yes, this was a statement made by our widely loathed sitting duck president, George W. Bush. The media's love for his public mistakes has made Bush the topic of Saturday Night Live skits for the past eight years. They have evened coined the term "Bushisms," with hundreds of websites dedicated to ridiculing Bush.

Presidents and politicians make mistakes all the time, but they do not receive the same criticism as compared to that which Bush receives. Because of the current failing economy and the frequent mistakes by our president, people look at Bush as dim-witted and incompetent.

So what? Bush may speak differently and have frequent blunders, but such things happen to everyone. Some other famous slip-ups include "My Muslim Faith" by Barack Obama and "I did not have sexual relations with that woman," from Bill Clinton.

While the economy may not be the only issue people have with Bush, it is certainly the biggest. However, people must first understand the issues, before criticizing Bush for his decisions.

A common misconception many people have is that the war in Iraq is hurting the economy. The government spends billions of dollars every year in Iraq, and by borrowing money from other countries, particularly China, Japan and the UK, the United States government has fallen in debt. However, this does not affect the economy, because Bush has not raised taxes one time due to the war in Iraq, and our occupation in Iraq contributes to lowering gas prices.

The war also gives thousands of people jobs and incomes, which does nothing but help our economy.

Another exaggerated detail is the number of casualties in Iraq. More people die daily in Washington D.C. alone, than the number of people who die in Iraq. For every 100,000, 27.5 people die annually in Iraq. In Washington D.C., the rate is 45.9, Detroit 41.8, Baltimore 37.7, Atlanta 34.9, St. Louis 31.4, and a few other cities across the nation are also more dangerous to live in than Iraq. The fact that people are mad about the War on Terror and that soldiers

are dying, when more cities in America are more deserving of being called war-zones, is simply ridiculous.

The biggest issues with the struggling economy are the mortgage system and banks. These also directly lead to the recession on Wall Street. The problems with this can be directly attributed to not George W. Bush, but Bill Clinton. Clinton signed the repeal of the Glass-Steagall act, the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act, and NAFTA.

He also pressed Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac into expanding mortgage loans to moderate and low class income families, many of whom blatantly could not afford them. Because of this the companies were forced to loosen their requirements and are now going bankrupt because of it. When companies go bankrupt like this their stock on Wall Street drops causing everyone to sell and pull their money out of banks. This causes banks to go bankrupt and many people to lose money. These problems can be attributed to the policies of Bill Clinton and not George W. Bush.

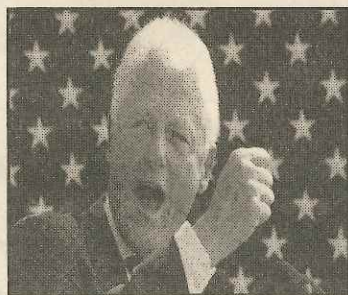


Photo Courtesy of Joe Burbank/MCT

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## HANGING OUT WITH THE HEAD HONCHO

It is not that much to ask.



Photo by Lucas Alexander

**MARIYA ILYAS**  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Dear School Administration,

Speaking on behalf of 468 students as Senior Class President, I am very disappointed with the privileges we were given.

After the Senior Town Hall meeting on October 15, an extensive list of all seniors' ideas was compiled and given to you. Out of the hundreds of proposals listed, you approved only two, one of which is not even classified as a "privilege." With all due respect, that seems like a wasted three.

Our only privilege is that starting tomorrow, Friday, December 5, seniors are allowed to leave five minutes early every Friday. Realistically speaking, this privilege can only be enjoyed by only a few. Seniors with cars can race to the parking lot in hopes of leaving school grounds a wee bit early before the buses, but with the jam that results, that seems more of a mere impossibility. A great majority of seniors ride the bus home or are picked up. What are they to do with their five extra minutes?

To me, just five minutes from a tiresome, stressed, overworked week does not fair well enough. Please know that through the democratic process, I am working closely with other class officers to get a petition signed by teachers that do not object to seniors leaving five minutes early every day, not just Fridays.

The second 'privilege' you approved is flexing out to the College & Career Center with prearranged passes. To my understanding, every student in the building can do that. How does that set the seniors apart from the rest? How does that classify as a privilege? Many seniors utilize the resources in the College & Career Center during lunch or make appointments with Ms. Barbara Conner anyway.

I am not complaining about the two privileges you approved; in fact, I am thanking you. However, I believe we can work together to please both your concerns and our wishes. There are lots of ideas that are plausible, and my job is to plead for them.

I understand that some of the ideas that were proposed were outrageous, and some were just plain wishful thinking. As much as we would love off-campus lunches, I do realize the risk issues involved and I completely see where you are coming from. To accommodate for that, we proposed food vendors to come in every Friday, which you also rejected.

Your justification that this competes with school lunches is not strong enough. I do not think school lunch sales will be impacted gravely because the cafeteria manager will be notified ahead of time to make fewer lunches, eliminating the concern about wasting food or losing money. This is an ideal win-win situation, and seniors should have this privilege.

In previous years, seniors received a free lunch line. Your argument against this privilege was that many seniors did not carry their ID's and it was not effectively policed. We want this privilege back. Seniors that purchase school lunch should be served first, especially with some of the more demanding food items on the menu, that were added as a result of an investigation by *The Wire* last year.

Being at the top of the school student hierarchy should mean something. Seniors should be awarded for their hard work during past three years. With stress from classes and college applications as is, it is not too much to ask for some cooperation, especially when we are willing to be reasonable.

Besides, privileges can be taken away, so why not take the chance?

Sincerely,  
**Mariya Ilyas**  
President, Class of 2009

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## Group Aims to Change FCPS Policy

*Continued from page 1*

by their high school to all of the colleges and universities to which they have applied."

"I don't believe that all colleges take the time to recalculate the GPAs," said Lutz.

FAIRGRADE also argued that with the county's tougher grading scale (94-100 being an A), students are at a disadvantage during the college admissions process. "Grade distribution is also important because when FCPS students are compared to applicants from top performing schools, FCPS students could look like underachiever," stated FAIRGRADE.

Because FCPS does not and is not required to provide class rank, the grade distributions provide colleges and universities a better picture of a student's performance by showing if a student's GPA falls into the top 5%, top 10%, 20% etc. of their class.

Since 1962, Fairfax County implemented the 6-point grading scale in hopes of challenging its students by setting high expectations. The county is known for having one of the best educational systems in the nation.

In 2006, FCPS officially removed the ranking system. This is why grade distributions provide colleges and universities a better picture of a student's performance. They show how a student compares to his classmates on the GPA percentile scale.

Surrounding counties, such as Montgomery County, use a 90 percent standard grading scale and award students half a point for Honors classes and a full point for Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate classes. Fairfax County only awards half points for AP or IB classes.

FAIRGRADE is taking many initiatives to advance their arguments.

On Thursday, November 20, FCPS officials gave FAIRGRADE a draft of its 100+ page staff report. FAIRGRADE met with Assistant Superintendent Patrick Murphy and other FCPS staff on December 2 to discuss the staff's draft. Whether FCPS accepted FAIRGRADE's suggested changes is not yet known.

FCPS staff expects to present the final report to Superintendent Jack D. Dale next week. Superintendent Dale is expected to publicize his recommendations at as FCPS School Board work session on Monday, January 12, 2009.

With its donations, FAIRGRADE delivered press kits to eight Cluster Assistant Superintendents, eight

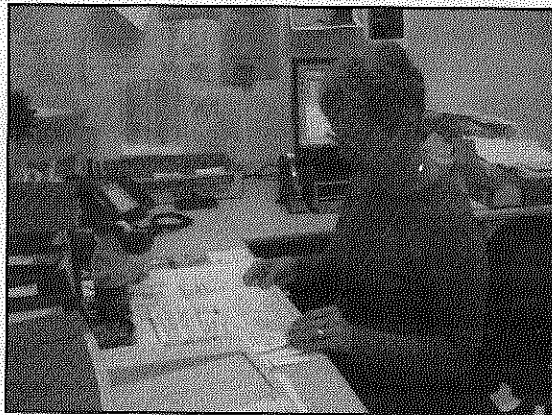


Photo by Erin Parker  
Ms. Gail Lindley sends out grade distribution reports along with seniors' transcripts and our school's profile, as Tim Boyd confirmed.

cluster directors, all School Board members, all high school and middle school principals, all directors of high school student services and selected other FCPS assistant superintendents. These substantial press kits include copies of all press clips about the FAIRGRADE issue, FAIRGRADE research materials, and fact sheets and information about our leadership team and support network.

"We must be careful not to believe we are the center of the universe," said Risa Sanders of McLean in an editorial *Sun Gazette* dated September 18. Her article was one of the many included in the kit.

In his editorial dated September 15, in the *Post*, Matthews said, "The solution seems simple: Change the Fairfax rules, and all will be well."

*Continued from page 1*

### Passafire

Kubley, Adam Willis and Ted Bowne. The Kubley brothers combine Nick's firm and multitasking drumming with Will's ground-breaking bass to create a background for the powerful, expressive vocals and guitar of Ted Bowne. In addition, the keys played by Willis bring a unique, antique sound to their music. "Every member is awesome at every instrument. All of their music is unique, and all the songs are so different from the other. It's not your normal Reggae band," said Andreas.

From his brother's ever-expanding music career, Andreas has enjoyed many unforgettable experiences including a total of seven concerts, two of which with close friends, seniors Michael Condon, Michael Vaughan and Matthew White. At a Richmond show, one of Andreas' greatest memories "was the story of Billy Boyo and the Kid". In addition, Andreas has been able to spend time backstage with Passafire, Pepper and The Expendables.

"My favorite thing about Passafire is their unique way of expressing a story, or event that happened to them using reggae songs. The way their keyboardist, Adam Willis,

described his journey leaving northern Virginia to progress to his life in Georgia, in "95 South" is my favorite. "They got mad swag," said Vaughan.

However, Passafire is not only popular among Andreas and his friends, sophomore Savannah Jackson said, "I like Passafire because they're different from other bands and they're really good."

Students such as Jackson and Vaughan are also fans of Slightly Stoopid, The Expendables, Wilco and Pepper, and "As Pepper says, 'Passafire is your favorite band's favorite band,'" according to Andreas. So if this list sounds like one's personal music taste, be sure to check the band out.

While pushing boundaries, the band's main priority remains bringing in more and more fans while maintaining a close relationship with them. Once again Andreas encourages the public to listen to Passafire; their music can be found at [www.passafiretheband.com](http://www.passafiretheband.com), [myspace.com](http://myspace.com) and on youtube.com channel TBowne (new songs are featured in their Fall 2008 Tour video) and "if you want to buy the lead singer, Ted Bowne's guitar pick, hit up Tyler Lord."

# GET RADICAL!

Feed the hungry

Clothe the naked

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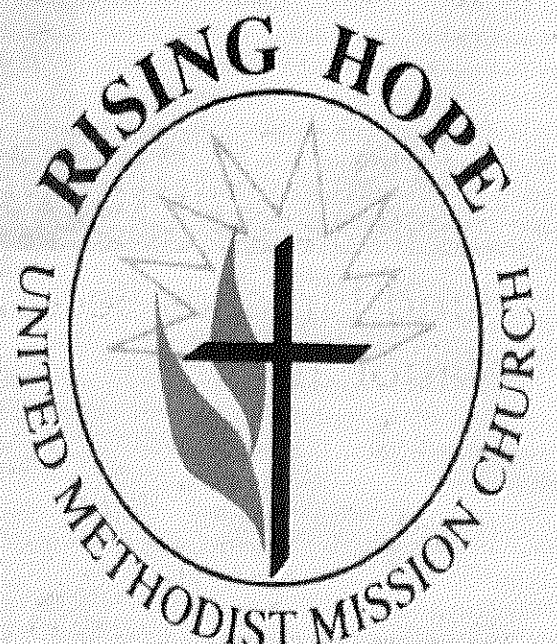
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# Mims Brings Fresh Ideas to New Position

Continued from page 1

and allow them to focus on the bigger issues.

This past summer, Vesilind along with Timothy Boyd, Director of Student Services, collected data and concluded that attendance was increasingly becoming an issue at our school.

Last year alone, there were 30,000 tardies total.

The main purpose of a dean is to work closely with the principal and deal with attendance, especially of students with chronic attendance issues. When describing his new position Mims said, "Our administration team is still working on finalizing my job duties specific to benefiting our school. My specific goals are currently being designed. However, the thing I must jump into is student attendance. I will be working with students on so many attendance concerns - chronic tardiness, chronic

absences, first block attendance and FLEX attendance. I will be involved in other tasks as decided by my leaders."

Before making the decision to have a dean at our school, Vesilind looked at other schools in Fairfax County, such as Annandale and JEB Stuart High Schools, who have comparable diversity to our school, and went through a similar attendance issue. Both of these schools had a Dean of Students to take care of the issue.

Vesilind revisited Mims idea of a dean, and after further research and deliberation, the job was offered to Mims.

After accepting the job, Mims did more research by shadowing the Dean of Students of Annandale High, Pam Gravitte. He studied their data that showed that with the addition of a dean to the administration, attendance became less of an issue.

Mims officially took on the position as Dean of Students after the Thanksgiving

break, on December 1.

His classes will be taught by Brett Dunlap who will serve as a long term substitute. Mims said that his students felt "betrayed" and were unhappy to hear about the news. Senior Erik Ferry felt Mims' departure "Would result in a long period of turbulence and chaos." This was also felt by senior John Rice who added, "There will be no order for about a month and now we'll get homework." Although he will no longer be in the classroom, Mims plans to remain involved with his classes and help Dunlap throughout the year.

Mims has always wanted to become an administrator. He never planned to stay in the classroom this long, but he has really enjoyed teaching. This does not mean that he will not return to the classroom. He plans to stay at our school for a while and if the position of dean does not get renewed, he will go back to teaching.

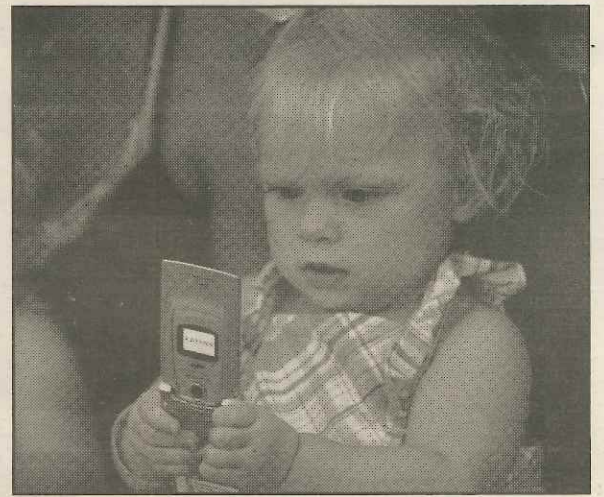


Photo Courtesy of Lew Stamp/MCT

A young girl plays with her mother's cell phone, and as a result could be a victim of diseases found on it, such as mobile phone dermatitis.

## Cell Phone Use Spreads Disease

EMILY GRIFFIN  
ASSISTANT STYLE EDITOR

Want a rash or a brain tumor from your cell phone?

The average teenager uses a cell phone for calling purposes about 2,600 minutes per month and text messages approximately 5,000 minutes per month, according to yourkidscellphone.com. There was an outbreak of skin rashes in London within the last few months, due to the consistent use of cell phones. 30 % of the people who have this rash frequently use their cell phones for work or other purposes, according to www.dailymail.com. The rash has been found around the ear and the cheek area of the face, which the cell phone touches most frequently. Scientists call this rash the "mobile phone dermatitis."

This rash, according to MSNBC, "affects people who develop an allergic reaction to the nickel surface on mobile phones after spending long periods of time on the devices." According to a London science journal, other causes of the rash are yet to be found. The rash can also appear on other parts of a person's skin depending on where the electronic device was touched. Scientists said that one can spread the rash simply by touching other parts of the body after using the phone.

According to the Mayo Clinic in the United States, "Nickel is a metal found in products, ranging from mobile phones to jewelry to belt buckles and is one of the most common causes of allergic contact dermatitis." Since nickel is found in at least 80% of electronic devices, according to MSNBC, many people are at risk of getting this rash.

Nickel is not found in every cell phone. Researchers at Brown University tested a total of 22 cell phones, and 10 of them contained nickel. "Cell phones intended for rugged use ... often have rubber coating and no surface nickel. Those with more fashionable designs often have metallic accents and are more likely to contain free nickel in their casings," said dermatologist Lionel Bercovitch, MD, of Brown's Warren Alpert Medical School.

In addition to have a 30% chance of getting this rash, according to dailymail.com, there is a chance that a frequent cell phone user could get a brain tumor. The research on this specific topic has mostly taken place in Finland, where the International Journal of Cancer and Anna Lahkola of the Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority in Finland. The International Journal of Cancer stated that people who use their cell phones frequently have an increasing risk of developing a brain tumor on the side of the head that the cell phone touches the most.

Lahkola presented further research and said that there is a raise in developing the brain tumor called glioma from 40% to 270% within the last year. There was a study that was held within the last year stating that 1,521 out of 4,822 frequent cell phone users developed glioma, according to studies conducted by various universities and scientists. Also, it is a known fact that the people at the highest risk of receiving either the mobile phone dermatitis or glioma are teenagers. The foodconsumer.org assures people that "the study results should not make people assume that ten years of cell phone use will correlate to an immediate tumor, but that the tumor will show up later than that."

# Obama Hopes to Bring Change

Continued from page 1

on November 7. Within days after his election, Obama chose Rahm Emanuel former adviser to President Bill Clinton, as his new chief-of-staff. Emanuel was described as a "no-nonsense, fast-talking politician... larger than life," by Obama in a 2006 interview with *The Washington Post*. More recently, Obama choice Hillary Clinton, previous political rival, as Secretary of State.

Obama's agenda includes reversal of the stem-cell research orders issued by Bush. "I think across the board, on stem cell research... you see the Bush administration even today moving aggressively to do things that I think are probably not in the interest of the country," said John Podesta, Obama's transition chief, in a broadcast interview. While Bush severely limited federal funding of stem-cell research, Obama considers stem-cell research vital to find cures and help for those with Alzheimer's.

Obama will inherit a nation in economic crisis. "We are facing the greatest economic challenge of our lifetime and we're going to have to act swiftly to resolve it," Obama said in his post election news conference. Obama's plans include a stimulus package of \$75 billion in tax cuts to seniors, the unemployed, homeowners, and, especially, the middle class. There will also be \$45 billion put aside in case the economy continues its downward spiral.

Regarding the War in Iraq, Obama plans to speed up the troop withdrawal. The U.S. has poured over \$20 billion dollars into the Iraqi government for, and the Iraqis still depend on the help of the U.S. for military and police training. Although 42,000 officers are now in the Iraqi national police force, the goal of 100,000 looks nearly impossible. With Obama's plans to withdraw all U.S. troops within a 16-month time period, Iraqis have a slim chance of protecting themselves from internal and external forces.

During his campaign, Obama guaranteed an "army of new teachers," and more funding for public schools. Also, Obama said he would make college more affordable. The Department of Education announced plans to expand the purchases of

backed loans. This is just one of the many steps intended to improve public school and higher education.

However, even with Obama's decidedly liberal view of politics, President George W. Bush has faith in the president-elect. On November 21, President Bush described Obama as having a "very effective campaign." "I really do wish him all the best. It's going to be very important that he be given a good start, and that's what we're going to do," said Bush.

After eight years under a Republican president, the country's transition will be swift and possibly drastic. None can deny that the U.S. is in need of change, and Barack Obama has already started. Until January 20, 2009, however, people can only guess how drastic this change will be.

## >>>Fast Facts

1/20/2009

>Obama will become president on January 20, 2009.

52.3%

>Obama recieved 52.3% of all popular votes.

68,000

>Obama plans to add 68,000 officers to the national police force.

16

>Obama plans to withdraw troops in sixteen months.

365

>The number of electoral votes Obama recieved in the election.

## News Briefs

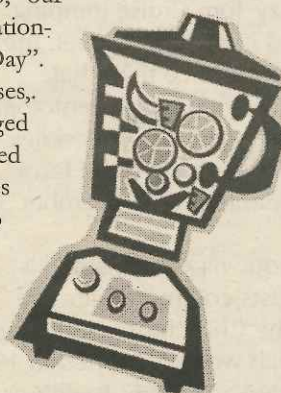
### Band Finishes Second at Nationals

Our schools marching band, directed by Steve Rice, finished off the season with a strong second place finish at Nationals. Not only did the band come in second, they received superior ratings at Nationals. Nationals was also the last of six competitions that the band competed in this season where they received superior ratings.



### Lunch Is Scrambled Up

On November 13, 2008, our school participated in the nation-wide event, "Mix It-Up Day". Led by Leadership classes, Students were encouraged to sit at tables associated with their birthdays. Tables had taped questions to encourage conversation among students as well as balloons, other festive decorations and leadership students.



Graphics by Clip Art

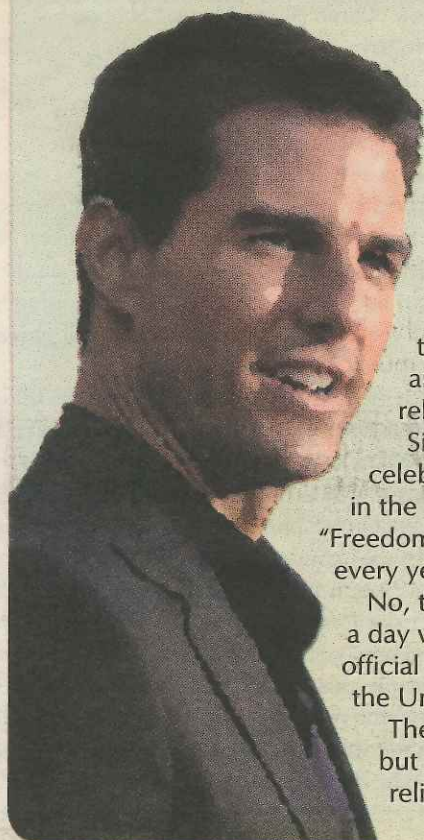




*Four winter holidays that are not very well known.*

Photo illustrations by Alex Fabrizio, MCT/Michelle Kumata  
Photos by alchemywebsite.com, MCT/Handout, MCT/Lionel Hahn, ClipArt

freedom  
day



**LUCAS ALEXANDER**  
OPINIONS EDITOR

When most people think of Scientology, they think of crazy Tom Cruise jumping around on Oprah's couch. However, the religion has more substance than that.

Similar to Christians and Jews, Scientologists celebrate an important aspect of their religion in the winter. Scientologists coined the term "Freedom Day" to be celebrated on December 30<sup>th</sup> every year.

No, this is not a patriotic day, but instead is a day when Scientologists commemorate the official recognition of the Church of Scientology in the United States, which was established in 1974.

They do not celebrate any major traditions, but rather just take the day off in honor of their religion.



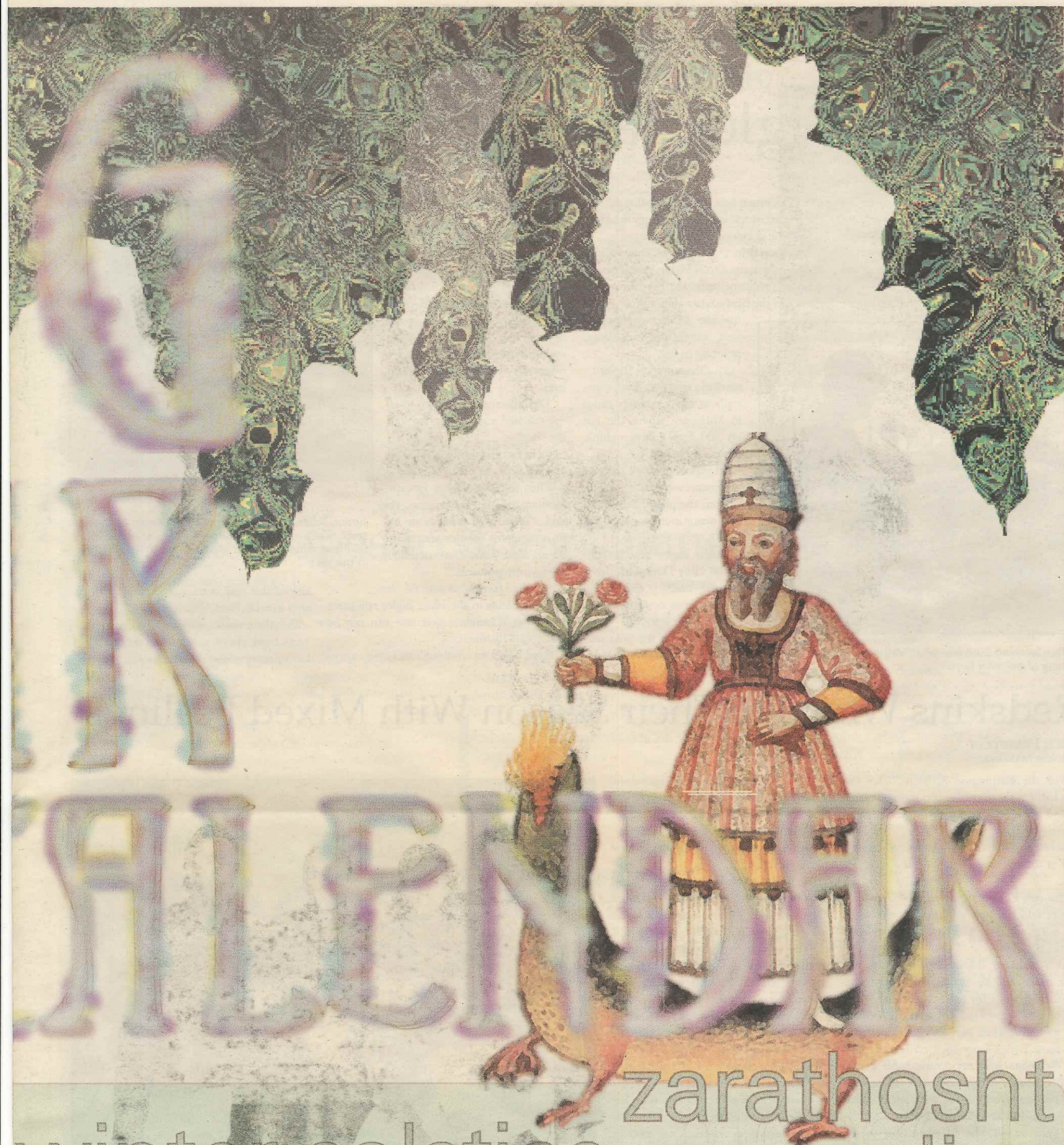
**JESSICA TAYLOR**  
REPORTER

Festivus was first introduced into popular American culture via a December 1997 *Seinfeld* episode, *The Strike*. Festivus is an alternate holiday protest against the over commercialization of the winter holiday season.

The holiday was originally developed by one of the scriptwriters' father, and was adapted to suit the *Seinfeld* episode. The format of Festivus is simple and begins with the 'Airing of Grievances' where celebrants have the opportunity to complain about anyone and everything that has disappointed them in the previous year. An unadorned aluminium pole, the Festivus Pole, replaces the elaborately decorated Christmas tree. The holiday's celebrations do not end until the head of the household has been pinned down in a wrestling match during the 'Feats of Strength'.

But do people actually celebrate this? Do they actually take it seriously? "What is Festivus?" inquired junior Jacob Lawlor when asked whether he would ever be interested in celebrating it. Others, however, are more enthusiastic about the holiday. "I'd definitely love the opportunity to go to a Festivus party sometime," declared senior Victoria Borges. "I think I would dominate the Feats of Strength." "Festivus is better than Christmas, Hanukkah, and Kwanzaa all combined!" agreed senior Andrew Nielsen.





# zarathosht

## winter solstice

## diso

**ASMA AHMAD**  
ONLINE EDITOR

During the winter holiday season, followers of the Pagan or Wiccan faith celebrate Yule, also known as the Winter Solstice, as a day to commemorate the rebirth of light. The celebration is closely related to Christian holiday of Christmas. The date, December 25, was chosen by the Emperor Aurelian as the day to celebrate Christmas because it corresponded with the pagan rituals of Winter Solstice, or Return of the Sun. Ever wonder where the Christmas tree tradition came from? Well, it also originated from the Pagan Yule holiday. Even before the emergence of Christianity, Pagan families would place a tree in their home to help keep the wood spirits warm and happy during the winter season.

Today, many Western-Europeans refer to the Winter Solstice as Christmas because many of the traditions associated with the holiday are interwoven with Christian mythology. The concept of birth, death, and rebirth became associated with the winter solstice as a result of aboriginal practices to detect the solstice.

Many people across the world will be celebrating Christmas this winter but it is important to remember the origins of this widely celebrated holiday—The Winter Solstice, or Yule.



**GWEN FISHEL**  
COPY EDITOR

Remember learning about Persian culture in World History? After all of these years, Zoroastrianism still remains somewhat popular.

While Zoroastrianism was formed by the "prophet" Zoroaster somewhere between 1200-1600 B.C.E., there are still constituents that practice the religion and live their lives by the goals outlined in the original thoughts of Zoroaster.

For example, there is a hierarchy that exists (presently in Bombay, India) and followers must comply with the regulations that are dictated in the Holy Scriptures, the Avestas, which date back to the ancient written language of Sanskrit.

While many students in our school may be celebrating the New Year on December 31 and January 1, people who practice Zoroastrianism celebrate their new year, or No Ruz, in the spring on March 21 with a ceremony called the Spring Equinox.

As Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ on December 25, Zoroastrians celebrate Zarathosht Diso on December 26, which commemorates the day that Zoroaster died. This day is a day to express devotion through prayer and discussion, all in memory of their prophet Zoroaster.



## Athlete Of the Month

# Julianne Bigler Takes 10th In The State

PETER COFFEY  
REPORTER

It is very clear that the athlete of the fall sports season is Julianne Bigler.

Julianne Bigler exceeded all expectations this past cross country season by not only making it to states, but then medaling and placing 10th.

This season did not come undeserved, how-

ever. Freshmen year, she was a stellar athlete, competing at the state level in both the cross country and indoor track seasons.

Unfortunately, at the end of the outdoor season, she started to have hip problems.

These problems restricted her from competing to the best of her ability through the majority of her sophomore year, which was very disappointing to her.

Over the summer, Bigler worked extremely hard, especially at cross country camp in Michigan, where she ran up 300 foot dunes multiple times.

All this hard work did not come unrewarded.

Later, she placed 9th in the first major invitational of the year.

Later, Bigler placed 10th in the Gloy Day's Grill Invitational, which is one of the biggest cross country invitations in the state.

Once she hit the post season, she did not slow down.

She placed third at the Patriot District meet and then the next week placed 12th in the Northern Region meet.

Placing 12th meant she qualified for "states" (the top 15 qualify) and at "states," she would compete against high school power houses like Thomas Jefferson and Midlothian, which both have extremely talented distance athletes.

Did Julianne back down to all the talented runners throughout the state?

No, in fact she ran all over them, placing 10th out of 228 people.

When asked what her favorite moment of the season was, she said, "When our team made human pyramids for our teammates during their races was definitely my favorite moment."

Even after placing as one of the fastest athletes in the state, Bigler still cares about her teammates and that can not be said about all athletes.

Bigler hopes to continue exceeding expect-

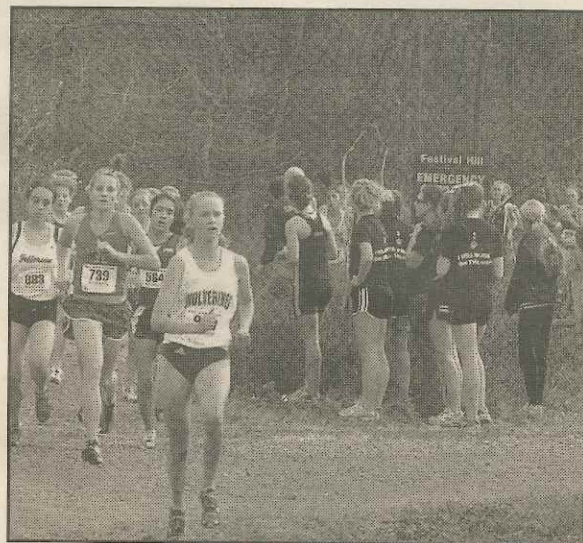


Photo Courtesy of the Cooksey Family

Junior, Julianne Bigler sprints to the finish at the state meet where she competed against many other talented athletes. Bigler would come to finish 10th in the race.

tations this year in track, and earn a scholarship to a Division One school.

With the attitude, speed, and willingness to work hard, she is sure to accomplish all of her running goals and aspirations.

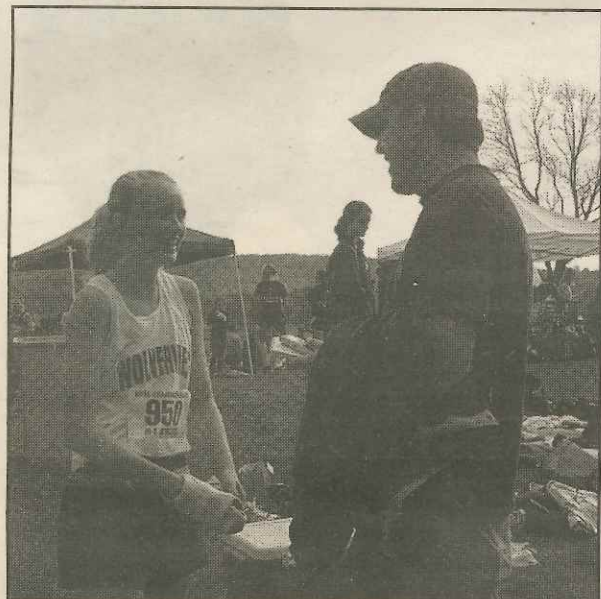


Photo Courtesy of the Cooksey Family

After finishing 10th overall in Virginia, Julianne talks to many of her new fans.

## Redskins Wrap Up Their Season With Mixed Feelings

ZACH FEINSTEIN  
BUSINESS MANAGER

With the Washington Redskins' 2008 season halfway through, our pro football team's record has greatly improved, under first year coach Jim Zorn.

Last season, the team's final record was 9-7 and at the bye week this year, the record is 6-3.

Through Zorn's improved coaching techniques and the new additions to the team, the burgundy and gold have their sights set on the playoffs.

As a result of the increased success this year, more students at our school are showing their support for our home team.

The new season did not start off well for the Redskins, when they lost their opener to the New York Giants 16-7. After that loss, the Redskins won two consecutive games against weaker competition and then pulled out two more impressive wins against division rivals Philadelphia and Dallas.

Then at 4-1, the Redskins lost to the Saint Louis Rams, who at the time were the worst team in the National Football League (NFL).

The team bounced back the following weeks and defeated the Cleveland Browns and the Detroit Lions.

All of the success before the bye week was somewhat dimmed by the crushing loss the Redskins received from the Pittsburgh Steelers, as they were defeated 23-6.

Right after the bye week, the Redskins were handed another defeat at the hands of the Dallas Cowboys with a score of 14-10.

Considering the semi-successful teams Joe Gibbs presided over during his second time as coach, this start by the Redskins under Zorn is more impressive than many people would have thought.

On what he thinks the team's success can be contributed to, senior Matthew Seyoum said, "Better coaches and the running game."

The success of Redskins, so far, has many fans at our school excited, as more students are seen wearing Redskins jerseys than ever before.

Besides Coach Zorn, players such as quarterback Jason Campbell, running back Clinton Portis, and wide receiver Santana Moss have all contributed to the Redskins' success this year.

Campbell, in particular this year, has improved dramatically, since he was made starting quarterback in 2006 by former head coach Gibbs.

This season, Campbell has consistently had more than 130 yards throwing and his completion record has always been high for such a young quarterback.

Many fans across the Washington D.C. area and in our school are hoping that this is the year that the Redskins can have Super Bowl success.

With their dismissal record over the last couple of years in the playoffs, many are hoping that this year's good start will lead to more successes.

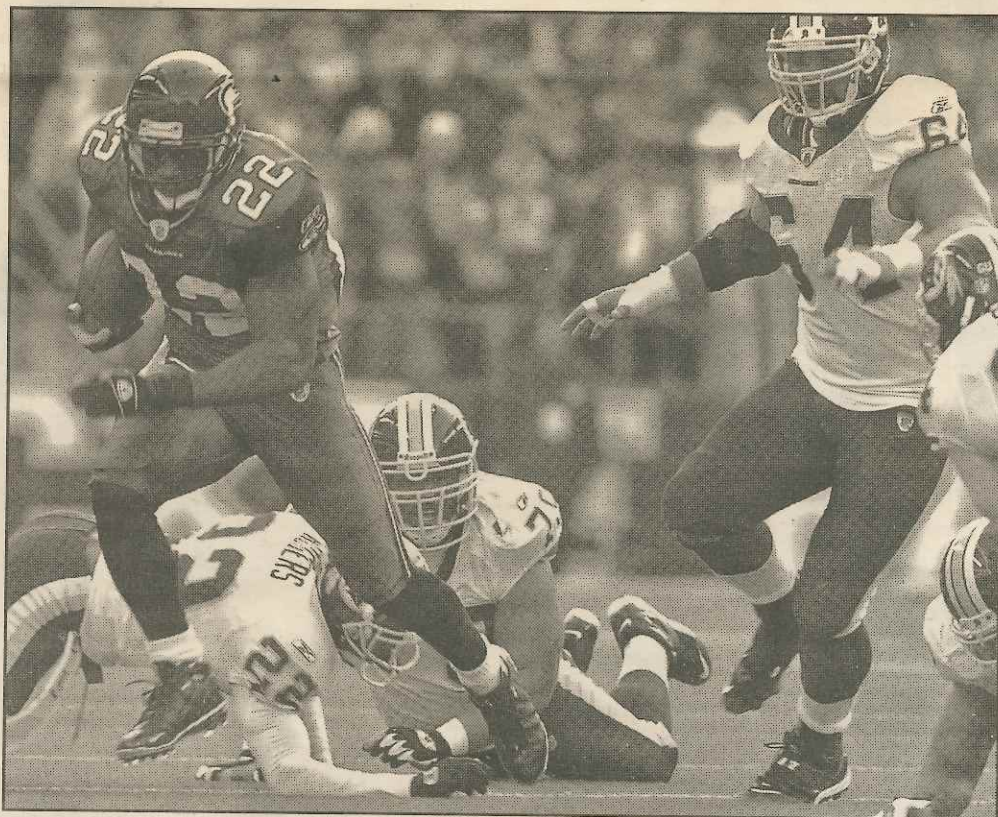


Photo Courtesy of Peter Haley/MCT

Seattle Seahawks' Julius Jones finds a break past the Washington Redskin's defense at Qwest Field.

Currently, the Redskins are second on the NFC East standings only behind the defending Super Bowl champion New York Giants.

On the prospect of the Redskins actually being competitive in this year's playoffs and

even having a chance to make it to the Super Bowl in Tampa Bay, senior Derek Marsh said, "If they keep winning, they might make it to the Super Bowl." Hopefully the Redskins will be able to do so.



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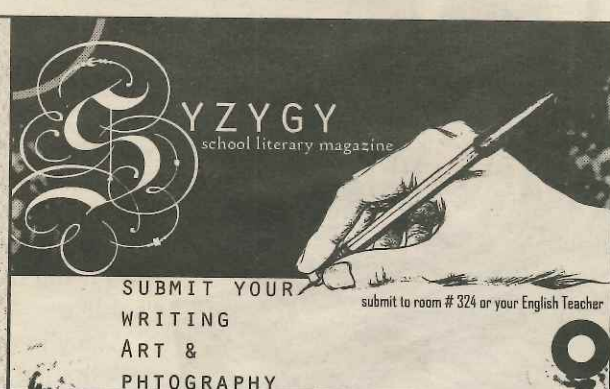
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## New Album Flies Out of the Park

**GWEN FISHEL**  
COPY EDITOR

Ryan Adams fronts The Cardinals on their fourth official release together, *Cardinology*, which is one of the strongest albums Adams has released in recent years. With deep melodies and thought provoking lyrics, this album makes the grade, as Adams returns to his grassroots and takes new directions.

Starting his musical career as a 20 year old singer-songwriter in an alt-country band Whiskeytown, *Cardinology* is proof of how, at age 34, Adams has grown into a wonderful musician with distinctive song writing abilities. This album is comparable in sound and scope to the work of other greats, like Kris Kristofferson, Bob Dylan, and Neil Young. However, Adams delivers a more mainstream and modern message, which is more applicable to today's listeners.

As an artist criticized for his erratic ways, the tunefulness of the album suggests that Adams has finally reached a mature state in both life and music. This is perhaps aided by the foundation set by his backing band, the Cardinals. Adams started his solo career in 2000 with a more folk-rock sound, but since those early days, his music has haphazardly morphed into all types of music from rock n' roll to country to gospel and everything in between.

The title of this new album is quite fitting as the focus is on the band, rather than Adams. As a songwriter, though, *Cardinology* captures Adams' ability to make music much more than a verse and a combination of notes. His careful perfection is especially seen in slower songs, such as "Evergreen." The songs themselves are

a mix of all the different types of music that Adams has made with the Cardinals over the years, such as "Fix It," which has the feeling of an old fashioned Grateful Dead song, but with the poignancy that has become Adams' and the Cardinals' trademark.

However, when one considers tracks like "Cobwebs" and "Magick," some of the more radio-friendly songs on the album, they seem to return to the styles of past Adams records, such as *Rock N' Roll*. "Cobwebs" has a dreamy feel with a droning melody that builds as the song goes on, and lyrics that are a portrait of the artist.

The track also features an outstanding vocal performance, especially at the end, as Adams' voice reaches to hit high notes with authenticity. "Magick," meanwhile, is a simpler "turn the radio up" kind of rock song that is sure to please audiences.

Other notable tracks include "Crossed Out Name" and "Born into a Light," both of which have an inherent sadness about them, a theme that Adams has tackled throughout his career. Each of these songs talks about the prospect of loneliness after love, the fullness of regret, and how to cope. While the music of these songs may not sound like Adams' earlier albums like *Heartbreaker* or *Gold*, they are very similar in message.

Throughout his career, Adams has always marked his album with songs that embody his life, and this album is no different. However, *Cardinology* is not just an embodiment of the artist, but an album worthy of praise that is sure to impress Ryan Adams fans, new and old alike. No matter what type of music one likes, Ryan Adams and the Cardinals are sure to please.

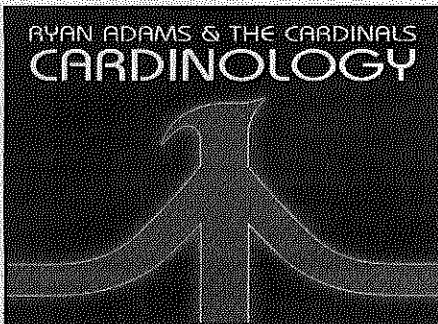


Photo Courtesy of Fairuse

Singer Ryan Adams' newest album, *Cardinology*, is carefully crafted and pleasing.

**Reviewer's Grade:** ☆☆☆☆☆

## An Updated Tragedy

**ALEX FABRIZIO**  
FOCUS EDITOR

*Romeo & Juliet* is a tragedy written by William Shakespeare, the Bard himself.

Our school's theater department performed their interpretation of the tragedy this past month on the 20, 21, and 22.

Sadly, the production itself was a tragedy. Directed by theater teacher, Melissa Christensen, the interpretation was set in modern time, with current costumes, including Converse Chuck Taylor shoes.

This aspect, along with the set and the props, were strangely reminiscent of Baz Luhrmann's 1996 film version of the play, but they were not tragic.

The set was well-constructed and looked very neat and professional. The costumes were well thought out for the most part, except for moments like when Lady Capulet (Kathleen McDowell) appeared out on the balcony in lacy, silky, and rather revealing pajamas. The props were as believable as possible, under the county wide restrictions. Also, the sound and lighting were spot-on.

The acting, however, was a mixed bag of success. Actors with experience in the department included Juliet (Maddie Dahl), Prince (Catherine Ramos), Nurse (Gloria Powell), Benvolio (Jacob Lawlor), and Sister Lawrence (Kat Brewster). These

students executed their roles with conviction and kept good flow and diction.

Other actors including Romeo (Christian Huley) and Capulet (Andrew Nielsen) did not play their part as seamlessly as the others. Stumbling over lines is understandable, but the necessity to be convincing in their roles is irrefutable.

While some of the actors did not act quite enough, others overacted a little too much. Mercutio (Derek Marsh) is supposed to be a wacky character but he was played a little too wildly and was presented a little too wildly because of his multicolored dyed hair and eye makeup.

As a whole, the cast did a rather remarkable job. For instance they had to perform an involved and embarrassing choreography to "Come Alive" by Kevin Rudolph featuring Lil Wayne, during the party that Romeo and Juliet first meet.

The whole production may not have been the best that our school has done, but it was not the worst play either.

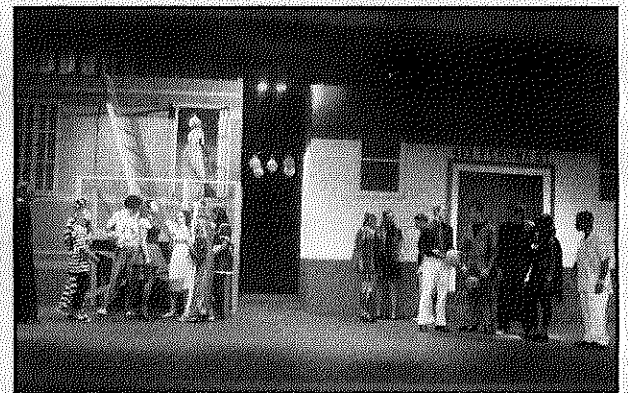


Photo by Alex Fabrizio

The drama department at our school recently produced a modern interpretation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* which was not well received by all.

**Reviewer's Grade:** ☆☆☆

## Twilight Leaves the Audience Looking Confused

**EMILY GRIFFIN**  
ASSISTANT STYLE EDITOR

"Did I dazzle you?"

The infamous line spoken by Edward Cullen in Stephanie Meyer's book, *Twilight*, failed to make it into the movie.

The movie, *Twilight*, was predicted by many fans to be an epic love story about a human and a vampire. Sadly, the movie lacked information about the characters and the main background of the book, leaving the viewers who did not read the books completely baffled.

*Twilight* starts out with Isabella Swan (Kirsten Stewart), who is better known as Bella, leaving Phoenix, Arizona, to live with her dad in Forks, Washington. On the first day at her new high school in Forks, Bella spots Edward Cullen (Robert Pattinson) across the cafeteria. The attraction between them is almost too sudden. When Bella is almost hit by a car in the student parking lot and Edward saves her, she continues to try to be friends with him for a small part of the movie.

When they finally become friends, Bella gets in the middle of a hunt, led by a human killing obsessed vampire named James (Cam Gigandet), in which Edward must take Bella south to make her safe. A huge, intense action scene takes place where James and Edward fight in Bella's old ballet classroom, as Bella lays on the floor, dying. After saving

her life, Edward takes Bella to prom, where everything goes wrong once again.

The movie and the book are not close to each other at all. The book was a passionate, dramatic love story between Bella and Edward that made the readers' hearts wrench. The movie

went off on many tangents of its own, showing almost no relation to the book.

There were very few similar scenes to the book. They included the baseball scene with the Cullen Family and a fight scene between James and Edward.

The movie was rated PG-13 because of some fight scenes and an intimate scene that featured Bella and Edward on a bed together. The movie was more of a comedy than a dramatic love story, because it seemed like all of the scenes were taken lightly by the actors. The scenes should have been much more dramatic.

Sophomore Charlotte Strudgeon, who went to see the movie at 12:01 a.m. on November 21, said her favorite line from the movie was when Edward said to Bella, "You are my own personal brand of heroine."

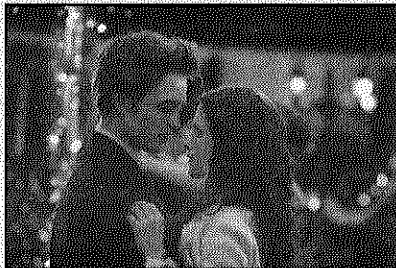


Photo Courtesy of KRT Handout

Kirsten Stewart and Robert Pattinson, who play the lead characters in the movie, miss the mark on their characters' personalities.

This quote was well placed in the movie and was the only good sentence throughout the whole film.

The acting in the movie was neither horrendous, nor memorable. Stewart, who portrayed Bella, looked like she was about to cry or freeze to death in every scene, due to her pale skin and breathlessness throughout the whole movie. She either showed too little emotion or too much emotion in each scene.

Pattinson, on the other hand, completely missed Edwards' personality, portraying him more mean than cocky, which is what the readers fell in love with by reading the books. The rest of the Cullen clan had outstanding actors, hitting the personality of the characters head on.

However, Billy Burke, who played Bella's dad, Charlie Swan, put too much pep into his character at times. In the books, Charlie is supposed to be mild mannered with a horrible sense of humor, but in the movie, Charlie was actually given a sense of humor and was too involved in Bella's life most of the time.

The movie is directed by Catherine

Hardwicke, who had directed the infamous movie *Thirteen* (2003), and failed to meet the high expectations of her previous movies. The screen play writers, Melissa Rosenberg and Stephanie Meyer, did not stick to the book. Rosenberg had written the screenplay for the popular movie in 2006, *Step Up*.

The tagline for the movie, "When you can live forever what do you live for?" was considered a failed attempt to captivate the fans to see the movie.

However, *Twilight* still received much publicity from the media and the crazed fans. Pattinson made it on the cover of the most recent issue of *Entertainment Weekly*, where they named him the sexiest vampire.

All in all, the movie was fine to watch, but definitely not worth the wait and the 10 dollar ticket. Although it had really good animation and a fitting soundtrack, it lacked the substance that was found in the book.

The *Twilight* Saga has a large fan base which definitely contributed much to the publicity and the success of the movie and is most likely the main reason most of the fans went to see the movie in the first place. However, not even a large of number of fans could change what the movie lacked.



Photo Courtesy of KRT Handout

**Reviewer's Grade:** ☆☆☆



## The Magic of Black and White Films

GRACE POWELL  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Black and white movies used to terrify me. But then again, I saw some pretty rough ones.

Like Bette Davis in *The Nanny* drowning a boy in a bathtub, birds pecking out eyeballs in Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds*. Something about the eerie grays and bone wrenching screams in those films, the sudden rise of violins and cymbals—it was all very well...dramatic. Yet, the same movies, that once sent me running to turn on all the lights in the house, have me now convinced that they are the last remnants of true art in this day and age.

"Acting should be bigger than life. Scripts should be bigger than life. It should all be bigger than life," Bette Davis, the actress who epitomized lifetime performances, once said. *She* understood acting; she *was* an actress and not just a singer-turned-actress like we see so often in the box office these days. Davis dominated the screen like a Toreador, swaying the viewers with her cape of emotion, commanding respect. Whenever

I enter the video store, it is not the new releases or comedies that I am first drawn to, but the "classics" with actors like Davis.

Not to say that 21<sup>st</sup> century films completely lack substance, some of these movies exceed the realm of entertainment and are not just a film, but a work of art. Movies, like *Gladiator* and *Hotel Rwanda*, and countless actors and actresses have all won their awards and deserved them. Still, there is still something more magical about an old black and white film. These movies did not need special effects or color, only light, a scene, and actors that knew how to tell a story.

Math teacher Margie Cross remembers watching the black and whites as a child. "I just think that they were wonderful," she said. Cross and her family used to watch the late night western shows. By the time she was old enough to go to the movies, they were already in color, but she remains a fan of the black and whites. "I just think that the old movies did not rely on special effects, they allowed your mind to work, which I

don't think a lot of modern movies do."

But this is not just about color. Nearly all of the classic films have something that current movies do not: discretion. Everything is fast food-ish, including movies. We are served an ear load of cursing, buckets of blood and gore and a platter of sexuality. We consume movie after movie without thinking, "Hey, maybe I have had enough. Maybe, this is not really good for me. Maybe, this will make my stomach hurt." A good film in the 40s did not need any of that to "sell" itself. Patty McCormack, as seven year old Rhoda Penmark in *The Bad Seed*, terrified viewers not by any explicit behavior, but by her subtle cruelty, and how she skillfully masqueraded her own evilness. This was scary; *this* was entertaining.

I am often surprised at the things I find within an old classic film and I wonder whether they will still be around another century from now.



## Time to Spill the Beans

BRYAN JACOBS  
SPORTS EDITOR

It is hard to come upon a new, spunky, and enjoyable place to drink coffee other than Starbucks and the Old Towne favorite Misha's. However, that has all changed.

Located close to our school area, Spill The Beans is the new and very local coffee shop, on Elkin Street just off Fort Hunt Road in Alexandria. Its closeness is very convenient for many students at our school, and is definitely a good candidate for a place to hang out and drink coffee with friends. Since it has opened its doors in late September, it has already become a favorite among the locals and to many students.

The owner of this new coffee shop is Donna Memmo, who has been a local of Alexandria for six years. The honor of naming the store was a task fulfilled by her brother who created the interesting name of Spill The Beans.

Memmo is very excited with the opening of her new store and hopes it all the best. She remarked that, "We are a coffee shop that offers some organic options in coffees, teas, and foods. We have a kiddy corner with toys and host some mom/kid-friendly events. We also are planning to host young musicians [of high school age] on Saturday nights in the near future."

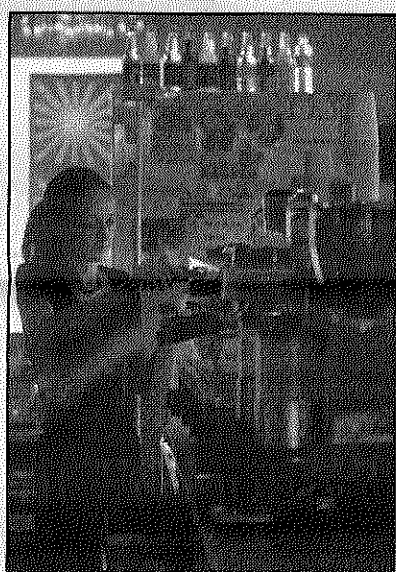


Photo Courtesy of MCT Campus

A woman at the coffee shop carefully pours the right amount into the cup.

The most exciting feature of this opening is that the owner's daughter goes to our school. Callan Memmo, a sophomore, is very happy with the opening of her mom's coffee shop. She said, "I am looking forward to opening more coffee shops, when the business is ready to expand."

However, opening this coffee shop has caused some hardships for the family, according to Callan. Memmo explains, "My mom is usually frazzled, but now with the business... it is even worse, and it is tough not being able to hang out with her as much."

She then goes on to talk about the insane hours that are required for new entrepreneurs Memmo explained, "I look forward to the day when she can take a day off of her twelve hour work day." Mostly, Callan focuses on the positive aspects of her mom's new business. She looks forward to the local bands playing at this soon to be "chill" place and when asked what her favorite drink was, she replied, "The C3, a combination of a frappuccino, Irish cream, and peppermint. It is great!"

## Sea a New Attraction

JESSICA TAYLOR  
REPORTER

It has been up there for a while now, looming on the other side of the Potomac River, but has anyone really checked it out?

National Harbor, located in Prince George's County, is a waterfront attraction that houses chic stores, hotels, condos, dining facilities, and a marina. National Harbor is designed to be an upscale waterfront area with attractions such as the Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center, a hotel and convention center owned by Gaylord Hotels. It has shops and restaurants ranging from commonplace ones, such as AMERICA! and Potbelly, to luxury attractions such as Ann Taylor Loft, Dolce, and Enoteca e Ristorante.

The Harbor has a variety of other attractions including The Awakening, the statue of a giant struggling to free himself from the Earth, originally located in Hains Point, which has been relocated to National Harbor. Cirque du Soleil, the popular avant-garde circus, is also performing at National Harbor until December 14.

Students' views on National Harbor are mixed. "National Harbor already seems to be bringing in a lot of

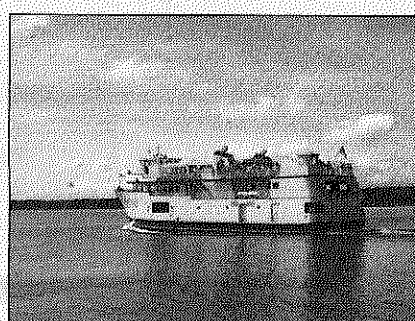


Photo Courtesy of MCT Campus

A water taxi carries visitors to and from National Harbor.

business," said senior Ashley Irastorza. "I've been over there two or three times and it's the only time I think I'm glad for intense development." Senior Cynthia Scheuremann, however, feels that, "National Harbor doesn't fit in with the Washington feel. It's too randomly placed."

Similar to Baltimore's waterfront and likely modeled off it, National Harbor is a nice, pedestrian friendly area, though it does not have nearly as much as the waterfront in Baltimore. The Harbor seeks to bring the same feel as Baltimore's waterfront to the D.C. area. Though it feels rather meager in comparison now, when the over \$2 billion project is completed, National Harbor should really be something to see.

## Papa Bryan's Cooking Corner

BRYAN JACOBS  
SPORTS EDITOR

### CLASSIC MOCHA CAKE

This holiday season, the family is coming into town, meaning many appetites to satisfy. A great way to satisfy the family at the dinner table is to make and enjoy a classic mocha cake. This rich blend of chocolate and coffee topped with a sugary white frosting is a delicious

dessert for the holidays. When the cake is sampled, one can taste the rich blend of the chocolate with a flavorful burst of coffee as an aftertaste. Whether you are celebrating Christmas, Hanukkah, Eid, or Kwanza, it is a great way to end a delicious meal.



1/2 cup Crisco  
1 1/2 cups of brown sugar  
1 egg  
a pinch of salt  
3 T cocoa  
2/3 cup cold coffee  
2 cups flour  
1/2 T baking powder  
1/2 cup sour milk  
1 teaspoon baking soda  
1 teaspoon vanilla

### Instructions:

1. Turn oven to 350 degrees F.
2. Mix dry ingredients in a bowl.
3. Add wet ingredients.
4. Pour in a greased round pan.
5. Keep cake in the oven for 18-20 minutes or until golden brown on top.

\*Serves around 15 people.

Drawing by Brendan Murphy



*In Loving Memory of*  
♥ ♥ ♥  
*Annie Malinchak McCann*



Words cannot express the depth of our gratitude for the outpouring of love and support from the West Potomac community on the loss of our Annie. So many students, teachers, parents, and staff touched our hearts, and our souls! You have helped ease our terrible grief.

In time, we will be able to celebrate Annie's life fully, and delight in the joy and the laughter she brought to us, and to so many people. We hope that the West Potomac family can join in that celebration, with each other and with us.

Go Yankees!

Go West Potomac!

Go Annie!

*With Gratitude and Love,*

*Mary Jane, Dan, and Sam McCann*



# Carlos Menjivar Pranks Us All

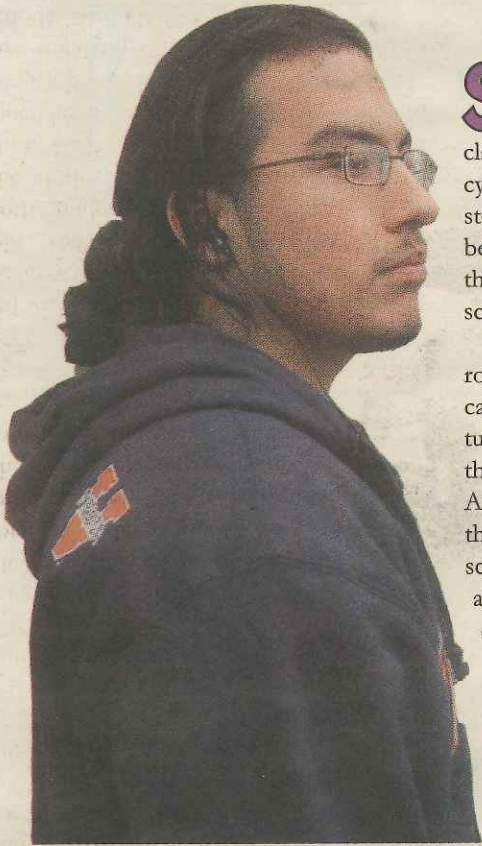


Photo Courtesy of Carlos Menjivar

Carlos Menjivar, a self proclaimed "prankster," tends to deviate from the norm.

Sitting in a neat row on a shelf in a science class are a dozen or so plastic graduated cylinders. Each tube has a removable rubber stopper and base. For most, this wouldn't be noticed. But, for senior Carlos Menjivar, this was a perfect opportunity to "prank" his science teacher. And he did.

While the teacher was in front of the room going over notes, a rubber stopper came out of nowhere, striking one of the tubes. Like dominos, they all cascaded to the ground, pieces shattering everywhere. As the surprised class erupted in laughter, the teacher looked around, confused at the scene. While not all the students were sure about what just happened, there was no doubt about who was behind it.

Sitting in a UVA hoodie, jeans, and glasses, Carlos stares into the distance and recalls that science class freshmen year. "The teacher starting yelling at everyone but we were all too busy laughing. Everyone knew it was me," Carlos recalled with a slight smirk. Like most of his pranks, he was never caught. He is a self described prankster, and as he plans the ultimate senior prank, he could be an administrator's worst nightmare. "I'm the type of person that can

get away with anything, but no one would suspect," Carlos says. In class, he is usually quiet but sometimes he jokes with friends.

What may surprise people about the mischievous Carlos is that he likes school and wants to work for the government in the future. His favorite classes are his history and government ones and he plans to study public policy or another government course in college at either UVA at Wise or VCU, his top two choices. Carlos seems well-fitted to be a politician. He is friendly, outgoing, and of course- deceptive. "I'm Christian, but I don't go to church as much as I should," Carlos said of his religious views. His character is also entertaining but complex. "Basically I could be a normal 17-year-old who stays at home," he says, emphasizing the word 'could.'

Like most of the normal seventeen year olds he could be, Carlos enjoys watching NCAA football and television shows like *Family Guy*, *Sportscenter*, *Futurama*, and *The Simpsons*. Carlos has used his pranking skills to master the art of watching these shows past his bedtime. He often stays up to 1 a.m. watching television by folding a towel under the crack of his bedroom door so his parents don't see the glow of the T.V. and he also uses headphones so they won't hear the sounds.

A typical day for Carlos begins little more than five hours later after his late night T.V. binges. He wakes up at 6:15, but not to eat breakfast or catch the early news. Instead, he takes thirty minute showers. This is not something one would expect from his unruly black hair and unshaven face- but this is another of Carlos's deceptions. "Half the time, I'm leaning against the wall, just sleeping. It's very relaxing," Carlos says of the showers, and recommends it to others. These extended showers frequently make Carlos late for school, but, again, his parents don't know. "If I'm late I try to sneak out as fast as I can and find a way to get to school. If they catch me they drive me to school and yell at me the whole time," Carlos says.

After school Carlos returns home, where he lives with his mom and dad along with an "annoying" thirteen-year-old sister. He usually naps, does homework, and surfs all the internet's popular websites, including YouTube.com and MySpace.com. Sometimes, he practices his instrument, which he plays in our school's symphonic band.

On weekends he goes out with friends or plays basketball in his neighborhood. He has many close friends but can easily make new friends. As the easygoing Carlos puts it, "Whoever I find I can chill with." Except those he pranks.

## A Day in the Life of...Mr. William Dobson

Mr. Dobson shares his love of math and expansive mathematical knowledge

EMILY SMITH  
MANAGING EDITOR

"I never wanted to spend life in a factory," said William Dobson, a math teacher at our school.

Dobson has been teaching at our school for 14 years, and loves every minute of it. However, teaching was not Dobson's first career. Growing up in Bridgeport, Connecticut, a factory town, Dobson was determined at a young age to not work in a factory. However, earning the education needed to succeed was not easy. The school system in Bridgeport left little to be desired. The local elementary school's third floor gymnasium was condemned, and the building had received few repairs since its construction in 1889. His high school was poor and overcrowded with so many students that the school had to split their upperclassmen and ninth graders into two sessions. The ninth graders went to school from 12:45 to 5:15, while the upperclassmen took the early shift from 7:30 to 12:30. "We didn't have a cafeteria, and there were no lunch periods," said Dobson.

Dobson made the best of his school, eventually becoming the Captain of the chess club. "I played first table in the chess team," he said, meaning that he was considered the best player in his school, and often played against the best chess students of other schools during competitions. How would Dobson describe himself as a high-schooler? "A nerd, without a doubt," he said. Dobson's high school years were also filled with hard work. He worked at his

family's business about 20 hours a week to earn extra money.

After graduating from his poor and run-down high school, he enrolled in Bridgeport University "to stay out of the military during the Vietnam War." However, after college, the military is where he ended up, and stayed for 22 years. While stationed in Germany, he married his wife, Doris, and had two daughters.

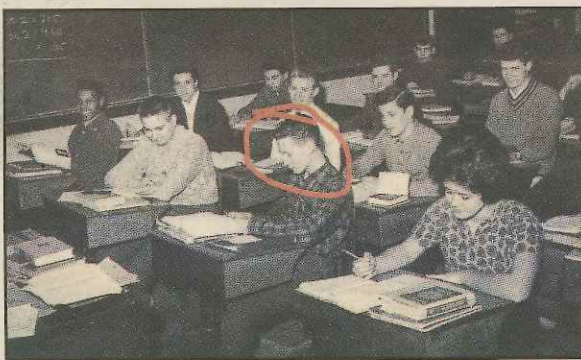


Photo Courtesy of William Dobson

Math teacher William Dobson's status as a gifted mathematician began in junior high at the age of 15.

When Dobson decided to become a teacher, it was not a very big transition for him. "I [had] been teaching in high school, college, and the military for over 36 years. I decided it was a neat thing to do." He earned his teaching certificate at George Mason University, but his schooling did not stop there. Dobson was determined to be prepared for his classes, and took courses at Howard University, University of Virginia, University of Maryland, and Virginia State, all to become more knowledgeable in his teaching subjects. He earned his Masters

degree at Websters University, and retook several math classes at NOVA Community College.

While many students at our school associate Dobson with math, he has taught history, English, administration, leadership, and interpersonal relationships. However, math is the area he is most comfortable in teaching. "Math," he said, "is an obvious fit."

Dobson started out at Salt Lakes High School in 1994, but taught there for only one year. The county was facing economic problems, and had to lay off the last hundred teachers hired, and "I was let go." Thankfully, Dobson had

a friend at our school who put in a good word for him, and he started at our school. He has been here ever since and plans to stay for "at least another seven to eight years. Or until I drop dead," he said.

After fourteen years, does Dobson ever feel a need for change? No, Dobson likes our school's "realistic mix of kids" and "richness." Not to say that he loves everything about today's students. "I think there is a sense of entitlement in terms of grades, as well as more pressure to get good grades without the application or level to work [need to] earn them," he said.

Regardless, Dobson arrives early to school, and leaves late every day, making sure he is available to all students who need his help and "are willing to take the challenge to acquire these gifts of learning."

"I have very little time for family with

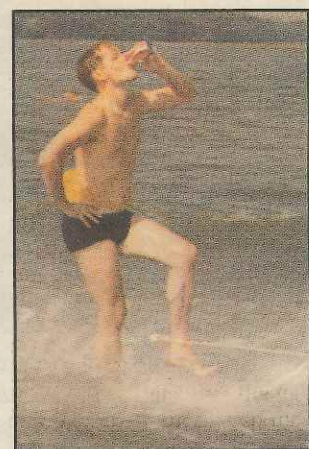


Photo Courtesy of William Dobson

Aside from his mathematical prowess, Dobson enjoyed water-skiing in the ocean while drinking Coca-Cola.

helping these guys," he said of the math students at our school. "It's a personal sacrifice to [my] family."

Every morning, Dobson leaves his wife, a Fairfax High School Special Education teacher, their rescue dog, and their rescue cat at home in Clifton, Virginia, some 21 miles away. Their house has a country setting and is placed on five acres of land. By 4:30, he is in the car on the way to work and does not make the long drive

home until about 5:30 in the evening. When he arrives back at his house in the evening, he spends a lot of time preparing for his classes. "The remainder of my 'free time' is devoted to maintaining my property," such as chopping fire wood and cutting grass. "Sometimes I just like to look out my window and watch the birds feed at the feeder in my front garden," he said.

"I wound up in a factory after all," said Dobson, "and what a neat kind of factory." Teachers have the unique opportunity to "mold the [students] into something beautiful." The students at our school have a "sense of political awareness and political action, which are healthy things," and the teachers are "dedicated to learning." After 14 years of learning, Dobson is sure that he has made a difference. "My contribution will last forever."