



Learn about crazy winter clothing in the center spread.

Tuesday, December 22, 2009

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Photo by Jen Friedberg/NCT



Is Palin's new autobiography, *Going Rogue*, pure fiction or is it accurate?

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Photo by Sonia Garakvaraghi



How do students feel about fine arts being cut from county schools?

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Photo by Peter Coffey



Find out about the wrestling team and their recent wins.

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Photo by Michaela Accardi



Several people have become addicted to Facebook. Are you addicted?

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Photo by Kimberley French/NCT



Many students went crazy for the recent movie *New Moon*.

People 10 11 12

Photos by Sonia Garakvaraghi



Read about a Maggie and a Madeline that go to our school.

Beeby's coaching career ends after 25 years



Photo Courtesy of Sue Murphy

Coach Donald Beeby looked out at the lake and reflected on his past coaching years. Many of his former athletes feel that Beeby has had a positive impact on their life.

PETER COFFEY
SPORTS EDITOR

History teacher Donald Beeby formally retired from his position as the track and field coach that he held for 25 years at the Fall Sports Banquet on November 17. This had long been known to the students since they were notified during part of indoor and outdoor track and field and cross country. He retired at the end of the fall cross country season and many students feel that the impact Beeby had made on their lives deserves much recognition. "There is no doubt that Beeby has had a life changing affect on every athlete that he encounters. He definitely should be recognized for building the best athletic program in the history of West Potomac," said senior Wesley Stephens, an athlete coached by Beeby for six seasons.

Beeby first began coaching in 1982, when he began to coach the Alpha Sigma Alpha sorority, while in college at James Madison University (JMU) and was successful, influencing him to continue coaching. When he completed college, he was inspired to coach high school teams. In 1986, Beeby began coaching our school's girls' cross country team, and "from then on, I [he] was hooked," said Beeby.

Over the years, Beeby has accumulated an expansive

resume. He has coached over 50 district championship cross country and track teams. At the regional level, he has led 12 regional titles and 20 regional runner-up teams. He has coached two girls' cross-country teams to state titles, in two consecutive years. He has finished second in the state five times and third three times with his cross country teams. Three of his teams have been ranked in the nation's top 25, and his girls' cross-country team in 1989 finished the season ranked sixth in the United States.

While the moments of winning championships lasted only a few days, the impact he has made on his athletes will last a life time. "I'm still running and every time before a race I think of him," said JD Rojas, a 2006 graduate, who has continued to run in college because of Beeby's influence. "Not only is he a coach, but a lifelong friend and someone who motivates you to be a winner in life," said Amy Goode, a 1990 graduate. She was a part of the 1989 state champion team. When asked about what he will miss the most from coaching he responded, "The camaraderie of the team, watching athletes progress from shy freshmen to confident seniors, [and] watching athletes graduate and continue to run in college." Due to Beeby's coaching, our school has graduated many very successful track and cross country athletes who have

See Beeby on page 4

All students given home-access to laptops

NIA COPELAND
PHOTOGRAPHER

Some students had suffered with school work because they were without computers.

In part of a new program, Principal Cliff Hardison has arranged for laptops and net-books to be made available to students without computer access at home. "I couldn't imagine doing my homework without the use of my laptop. That's why I feel that it is very considerate that Mr. Hardison is doing this for the students," said junior Lauren Pak. "This will make it a lot easier for students to have access to a computer since they will no longer have to spend long hours at the library."

According to Hardison, students can temporarily use the equipment provided daily by visiting the library and signing a laptop or net-book out after school. He envisions students using the library or the various hard-wired labs or cart labs during the school day. "I see loaning computers the same as loaning books. They provide opportunity and access to resources. Hopefully, being able to check out a computer will enable all students' access to technology and learning how to use technology," said Hardison.

All laptops and net-books will be equipped with Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Excel and Publisher so that students are able to complete projects and homework using the same tools that many students that have access to computers at home. "At this point, I believe we have put all the Microsoft packages on them. Additional software can be installed if students or teachers alert of us of need. So far, we have several laptops. I believe we have four laptops in-house and ten Notebooks on order. The laptops are ready to use and if we have need, we will order more," said Hardison.

Adrianna Meeks, the head librarian, is excited for the arrival of the laptops and looks forward to loaning them out so that students have access to a computer at home. According to Meeks, before a student can remove a piece of equipment from the school, an "Equipment Loaned to Students" form must be signed by the student's parent or guardian. Equipment cannot be borrowed without a form on file with the library staff. The forms are available from the library so students can pick-up a form first, and then the equipment.

Meeks feels that this plan is a great opportunity for all students. Since all students are eligible to borrow, she knows that everyone will be able to benefit. "The library has a limited number of laptops/net-books that are loaners. Students should try their best to get their work done on a timely basis, so that everyone can profit from this wonderful opportunity," said Meeks.

Students and parents or guardians assume full responsibility for

See Laptops on page 4

H-Project plans on helping out the community during the holidays

SHIRINE LOGHMANIAN
REPORTER

With the country's growing number of unemployed due to the economic recession, the holiday season is a stressful time for the community and nation.

According to News One, over 49 million Americans have to deal with a lack of food this winter and about 31 million people had to take part in America's food stamp programs last October. With the growing amount of people in need this holiday season, the H Project, the Love Alliance, the National Honors Society, and the Key Club, are helping out this winter.

The H Project, a club focused on helping the hungry and homeless, took part in a canned food drive to help alleviate holiday stress for families struggling to purchase food. They have already taken part in a number of various activities

to help the homeless, such as the November Fannie Mae Walkathon. A member of the H Project, sophomore Sarah Woodward said, "The H Project has really helped raise awareness and get the community involved."

The food drive was completed in an effort to raise awareness in the community. Woodward said, "We thought it would be a good idea to have a canned food drive because of the growing number of hungry people in the U.S." The H Project worked with the United Community Ministry (UCM) for this food drive. UCM is a community based social service agency that helps assist families and individuals. They are located off of Route 1 and take donations of anything from clothes to food.

UCM helps families recover and function in today's society socially, economically, and emotionally. Woodward said, "The donations will give struggling families hope and ensure a better holiday for all."



Photo courtesy of Laina Schneider

H Project members have participated in many activities to help the homeless, including a walk to benefit the homeless.

Believe it or not, students have rights

Each year, students receive a Students' Responsibilities and Rights (SR&R) manual, and most arbitrarily sign it without first reading it. When the administration finally gets around to explaining the SR&R manual to students, they forget to inform students that they do have rights, and instead spend the time explaining to students all of the things that they cannot do - their responsibilities.

According to the SR&R, students have the right to complain to any staff or administration member, freedom of expression, and right to a safe learning environment, just to name a few. The question is: how many students at our school are aware of the fact that they have rights in a school setting dominated by teachers and administration? Several students state that they have been told they do not have any rights in school by staff members. Junior Callan Memmo said, "In one of my classes, the teacher and my class had a discussion about the school policies. The teacher said that the school gets what it wants over what the student wants."

Although students have the right to complain, they should do it respectfully. According to the SR&R, "students who believe that actions or inactions of the school administration are not in their best interests may present complaints to teachers, counselors, or school administrators, who shall make themselves available or schedule appointments to hear these complaints." This means that if students see any action by the school that they do not feel is in their best interests, they have the right to address the issue. If a student is not satisfied in these regards, he or she may ask to have a meeting with the principal, for which there are specific guidelines including the possible request that a parent may be present, and the fact that the principal must report the meeting to the director of the Office

of Equity and Compliance. So, if one has something to say and can do it in a polite manner, it is within the rights that are granted to students.

Secondly, an important right of students is their freedom of expression - within the guidelines of the SR&R handbook. According to the handbook, "Students may exercise the right to freedom of expression through speech, assembly, petition, and other lawful means and have the right to advocate change of any law, policy, or regulation." There is an exception however, if the form of expression disrupts school activities, endangers students, is libelous or slanderous, advocates a criminal act, and/or is obscene, a student cannot exercise this freedom of expression.

Lastly, an important right of students, is their right to equal opportunity. The SR&R handbook states, "No student in Fairfax County Public Schools shall, on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, or disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity." This means that students have the freedom of expression, the right to complain, and the right to an education, and all of these are protected regardless of the above. If students feel that they are not being treated in a fair way, they must know this is their right and they should consult a school official.

The rights explained are two of which students use most often in the school environment. However, many other responsibilities and rights are outlined in the SR&R handbook and whenever one is in question they should consult this manual. Junior Lizzie Persekian said, "A vast majority of students don't know their rights and I think it's important that they know what they are."

RANTS and Raves

A **RANT** for administrative detentions actually being handed out.

A **RAVE** for the holiday break.

A **RANT** for our recent cold, rainy weather.

A **RAVE** for College Bowl games.

A **RANT** for alumni from our school trying to join Al-Qaeda

A **RAVE** for a great start to West Potomac Basketball.

Student disagrees with last issue's "Large and in Charge" article

Dear Editor,

I totally agree that racism goes both ways but this article goes far out on a limb and it is a poorly researched. First, Grambling State University is a historically black college, so naturally they will have a higher percentage of African Americans than all other minorities. Also, minorities apply to schools such as UVA or Duke that tend to be predominantly white, but white students rarely apply to HBCU's or even know what they are, and the statement that said that Grambling State University caters to African American students, this statement is false and ignorant. Any student that attends HBCU's will get the same treatment, regardless of race. For example, Hampton University, an HBCU, just had their first white home coming queen. Another false point in the article discusses the Black Panthers where it says the connotation of those outfits is the racism of the movement. But if this is true, then students that dress like hippies should be forced to change because the connotation of those outfits deals with sex and drugs. Also, the Black Panthers were much more than violence and they weren't attempting to kill an entire race of people. As for the final statement talking about a "White Cultural Alliance" is completely ignorant and you should research what the club actually does before you make such a comment.

Wesley Stephens, senior

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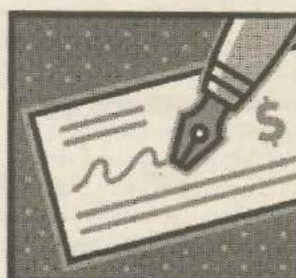
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Corrections

- On page 9 of the November Issue, in the article "Winter sports teams enter the season with high hopes," wrestlers Everett Lorenzen and Louis Litchford are incorrectly listed as seniors, when they are both sophomores.
- In the same article, girls' basketball player Melanie Boykin is referred to as a varsity player, but is actually on the junior varsity team.
- On page 9, in the "Off the bench" article, the volleyball team was listed as finishing the season 8-8, when it should have been referring to the varsity field hockey team.

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

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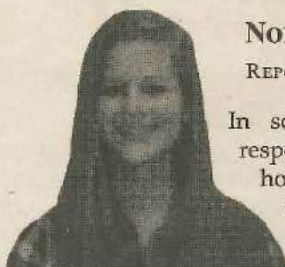
BUSINESS MANAGER

Maggie Grady

ENTERTAINMENT

The Wire is a publication whose aim is to inform, educate, and entertain the student body. *The Wire* will not print any material that is libelous or obscene, or that will invade any person's right to privacy. The ideas expressed in unsigned editorials reflect the opinions of the newspaper staff; however, Letters to the Editor do not. *The Wire* is an open forum for discussion which is printed by Silver Communications.

Sarah Palin's lies have gone too far



NORRIS BROOKS
REPORTER

In school, we are taught to be respectful and tell the truth. If this is how we should behave, then why do politicians—the leaders of our country—do the opposite? They lie, they cheat, and they throw each other under the

bus if it serves to benefit them. One politician that has taken this to new heights in recent days is Sarah Palin. When she talks about *Going Rogue*, the title of her new autobiography, she is not kidding.

Now, this is not the typical book you would expect from someone who just ran for Vice President of the United States. It is not about her positions on the issues. It is not about her aspirations. This book is about getting even. What is hard to figure out is why she lies about almost everything.

Let us start with the small stuff. Why is she acting as though she is bussing from stop to stop on her book tour when she is actually flying? Why does she pretend to be a huntress when her daughter's ex-fiancé, Levi Johnston, said she barely knows how to shoot a gun? Why did she say in her book and in an interview with Sean Hannity that she took a family vote about whether she should run for

“Perhaps the biggest lie is her promise to bring ethics and values into government.”

vice president and then told a completely different story on the Oprah Winfrey Show? And, of course, there is the on-going brouhaha between her and the staffers of the John McCain campaign regarding her wardrobe. Did she want those thousand-dollar suits, or were they forced on her? Of course, while these discrepancies are entertaining, they are unimportant. But, Palin does not stop there. She has told a couple of doozies... and they do matter.

One of the biggest lies Palin has told is that she said “Thanks, but no thanks” to federal money for the Bridge To Nowhere, a bridge being constructed in Alaska. The truth is, she supported it when she ran for office, only changing her mind after McCain voiced strong opposition, and then kept the money anyway. In fact, for a woman who says she wants to cut back on government spending, she did not seem to have a problem when Alaskans received more money from the federal government than

any other Americans while she was governor. Perhaps the biggest lie is her promise to bring ethics and values into government. While she was governor, she was brought up on several ethics violations from abuse of power to misuse of state funds.

Despite all of this, people are lining up by the hundreds to see Sarah Palin on her book tour. The question is: Do we really want this type of woman running our country? The answer is simple: “Thanks, but no thanks.”

nbrooks@wpwire.com

Government censoring steals rights

MARIO FLORES
SPECIAL TO THE WIRE

Censorship exists to some extent in all modern countries, including the U.S.A., the U.K., Germany, France, Singapore, and Australia. Although it is worse in certain countries than others some governments choose to censor information to “protect” their societies. Censoring important information for government interest can cause a sort of ignorance among its people. The government may choose not to publicize information such as terrorism or sudden military attacks to prevent a state of panic or hysteria and prevent criticism and bad media attention of the government.

Although the idea seems logical, it is not a choice that the people get to make; the government hides information without the consent of its people. If censored information were to be revealed to the population, it could cause people to feel betrayed and therefore lose their loyalty to the government. Many feel that censoring information is stealing their right to information.

Some organizations have urged governments, institutions, and private individuals to support freedom of expression.

I strongly believe that the freedom of thought should be protected. It is an inalienable right from birth. To be able to think for one's self allows one to express who one is and one's opposition toward different matters. If one's thought process was eliminated, controlled, and limited by an outside person,

“To be able to think for one's self allows you to express who you are and your opposition toward different matters.”

all individuality could be lost with all personal expression of emotions. Hand in hand with the freedom of thought comes the freedom of choice. To think for oneself allows one to make decisions and choose between the many different choices that are presented throughout life.

Just as there are many pros to thinking for oneself, there are many cons. When a person is allowed to think for him or herself the choices they make might not

always be the best. If one person were to control the thoughts and therefore the choices of a person or many people he or she, in theory, would be able to create a perfect society without treason, crime, conspiracy, lying, or cheating. A conflict may be who decides for everyone, but who decides what is right?

LARGE AND IN CHARGE

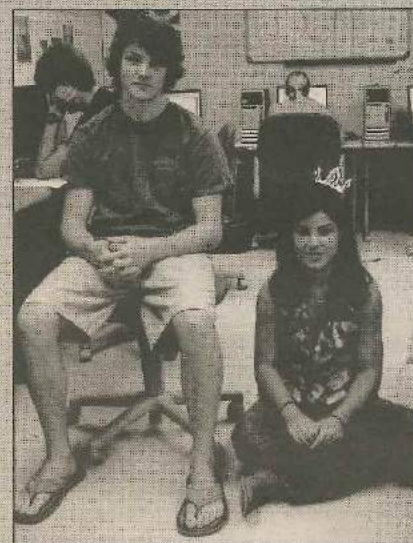


Photo by Megan Haley

LUCAS ALEXANDER
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Laughing and joking around with Cesar Chavez is all good and fun, except when nothing gets done.

Over the past 11 months or so, President Barack Obama has taken a completely different approach to foreign policy than presidents past by making an effort to better relationships with some of the nation's rivals.

The summary of what Obama has done with his time can be seen in one picture, which consists of Obama bowing to the emperor of Japan, or again to the king of Saudi Arabia. This shows submission, and no president of the United States should be submitting to any other country.

When Obama first came into the forefront of the Democratic primaries, I thought that maybe change he could have a positive effect on the country in some way. As a staunch Republican, I strongly oppose most of his policies and disagree with him on numerous issues, but with the country in the piehole, I figured, why not give it a shot? John McCain will probably be dead of old age within four years anyway, and we would be stuck with Sarah Palin, not such a great choice, as the face of our country.

“However, with all the hype, and all of the hope, what has Obama really accomplished? Absolutely nothing.”

However, with all the hype, and all of the hope, what has Obama really accomplished? Absolutely nothing. He has worked on his healthcare bill for far too long, and in reality he is not making progress. His most recent policy decision is to send 30,000 troops to Afghanistan, and have troops out within 18 months.

The irony of this is you cannot put a deadline on a war when you have no idea what is going to be happening in that time period.

Again, this is the wrong attitude to have. You need to go into a war with the mentality that you are going to win, not that you will try and then give up after a certain time limit. Without this, the war is doomed from the beginning.

This war in Afghanistan is necessary to protect America and find Al-Qaeda. However, Obama is handling the situation in the wrong way. People thought that when he said he would pull troops out of Iraq, it would mean the end of the war on terror.

However, he forgot to mention that he would increase efforts in Afghanistan. While I still agree with the decision, it is obvious how some people feel betrayed by his decision and until he starts backing up his promises, his popularity is going to plummet.

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Music programs may come to a halt

EMILY GRIFFIN
NEWS EDITOR

"This will be a bad idea," said junior Veronica Clark.

According to fcps.edu, the FY 2011 budget cuts plan to cut many activities in various schools, including elementary, middle, and high schools in our area. One of the proposed suggestions is to cut the fine arts in Fairfax County public elementary schools. This would include the band programs.

Many of the high school music teachers do not like the idea of having the music programs cut. Band teacher Steve Rice thinks "The idea of cutting elementary band and strings is a terribly short sighted idea. If we stop teaching young instrumentalists in elementary school and students have to start in middle school, then those students are two years behind their peers in other parts of the commonwealth and the nation."

Rice also stated, "It is not fair to economically disadvantaged students. Folks with money will be able to pay for private lessons. Those kids on free or reduced lunch who currently have an instrument provided for their use will not be able to take band. It's just not fair in general. Of all the cuts on the list, instrumental music is the only one that is totally wiped out. All the others curtail programs not eliminate them altogether." Orchestra teacher Mary Wilkerson has many opinions about this "hot topic" issue. She stated, "I think everyone deserves a quality fine arts education [starting in any grade]."

This would not only affect the elementary schools, but this could affect the music program at all high schools in Fairfax County. Rice commented, "The effect next year is unclear. If older elementary band and string teachers are displaced, then they would take the place of teachers who have not been employed by the county for as long. No one knows how much seniority one would need to be unaffected, but the quality of instruction would be greatly affected. All instrumental music teachers have the same endorsement: Instrumental Music K-12. That being said, we all specialize in different areas. Chances are an elementary strings teacher would not do a great job of teaching Mr. Foreman's indoor drum line." Similarly, Wilkerson believes "in four years there would be a sizable drop in the number of students participating in the instrumental programs and there would be a decrease in the level of proficiency."

Orchestra student junior Sarah Slichter believes, "This proposal is a travesty for many reasons. I was in orchestra as an elementary schooler, and really learned a lot from the experience: self-discipline, teamwork, the importance of

practice, etc. No one should have an opportunity to learn so much taken away from them."

Many students agree with Rice and Wilkerson that the students that will enroll in the fine arts in high school will be short of skill. Slichter continued, "If the elementary school programs are eliminated, there will be a clear carryover to lack of musical expertise in the middle and high school programs. West Potomac is a blue ribbon school because its students are talented, and they're talented because they started early. And how long will it be before the middle school program is cut, and then the program entirely? The whole thing is hard for me, and many others to swallow and I don't know of anyone who doesn't oppose it."

Rice is not the only one who is worried about the band program and who is outraged by the idea of having the musical art diminished from elementary schools. Band students such as Clark predicted that "the bands would slowly dwindle in size and Fairfax County bands would eventually lose the prestige they have." Sophomore Andrew Nowak believes "People will be a lot worse when they come in [to a high school band] if they do not have elementary school to teach the fundamentals. Middle school is supposed to introduce more advanced techniques, but without the fundamentals, you cannot do that."



Photo by Sonia Garakharagh
The music program may suffer if the fine arts are cut from elementary schools.

Students hope for concerns to be heard

MICHAELA ACCARDI
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

"I feel that there are numerous changes going on in this school that students, especially seniors, are upset about," said senior Wesley Stephens. The first semester has seen mixed opinions regarding the new administration, differing between teachers, faculty, parents and students. Students, however, have voiced their opinion the most.

The student opinion has been seen most clearly with both a student-body protest and painting of the rock by seniors, stating "The 'X' wants FLEX" (the "X" representing the class of 2010 with the roman numeral). A large portion of the student body is unhappy with recent changes made by the new administration under Principal Cliff Hardison, but is not united on one issue. "It seems to me like most students feel as though they have not been included in the decision making process and that they have not had the opportunity of an open discourse with the administration," said senior Aidan Mosley. Several students are unhappy with the removal of FLEX and its replacement by "B" periods, as well as the policy to lock the school doors at 7:20 a.m. in an effort to reduce tardies. "The traffic [before school] is awful and it seems like the principal doesn't realize how bad it is and how long it takes," said sophomore Meredith Gilmore. In addition, the number of lunches has been reduced from four to three, which some students claim make lunches crowded and difficult to buy food. "If you don't get to lunch within a few minutes after the bell has rung you're usually out of luck and can't sit with your friends," said senior Lamea Markson. The student body has yet to make another effort to enact change, but is generally unhappy with recent changes.

Opinions may differ on the recent changes being made

by the administration, but no changes have been made as a result of student's actions. An unplanned senior class meeting was called after school November 18, the day of the student-body protest against the new tardy policy. While there, students were able to give Hardison feedback on the changes made under his administration. Stephens is also a member of the Student Government Association (SGA) and attended the meeting. He said, "I feel that the meeting [with the seniors] was a step in the right direction, but I think there will be no follow through, as all the issues brought up by seniors were also brought up by the student leaders of SGA. The meeting was a way to appease the angry feelings felt by the senior class."

"Some students' complaints and opinions have been quite effective as the school leadership attempts to address student concerns. I think any student that voices their opinion in a respectful manner will be listened to especially if they have alternate solutions and not just complaints. When students protest or complain

without backing up their actions or opinions with facts or solutions, they run the risk of not being taken seriously or weakening their message. I know the new administration has been meeting with students, parents, and teachers as they try to make changes and fix problems here," said history teacher Salvatore Olivo. Regardless, students feel that their opinion is not being taken into consideration. Senior Jeffrey Toth said, "Even with all the effort students have made, I don't think they're being taken seriously." Many students ask themselves if their opinion will make a difference, and in response, sophomore Emily Hauptle said, "the administration made the effort to ask for the opinion of students, but then chose to ignore it, which is not the way it should have been handled."



Photo by Bryan Jacobs
Students rush into the main office to voice their concerns.

Laptops will be lent to students

Continued from page 1

equipment if lost, stolen, or abused so it is important that students treat the loaner package with care and are responsible while using all pieces of equipment. The loaner package includes a laptop, carrying case, mouse, flash drive, power cord and internet card, so that students have all of the necessary supplies to complete their work at home. Students must save all their work to the flash drive and then transfer the work to their H-drive when they return to school. Students will not have access to the H-drive from home and all work will be deleted when students log off. Laptops must be returned to the library the following morning before classes begin on the first day that we return from a weekend or break. Meeks, the library staff, and administration take the computer loans very seriously and all rules that are enforced and taught to students at school will apply to the laptops so it is imperative that students are responsible when using loaner equipment. "Students must follow all TFC policies and regulations when using loaner equipment. Equipment is to be used for school work only," continued Meeks.

Unfortunately, unless the student has internet access at home, the Internet and Blackboard will not be available via the laptop. However, students who do not have Internet at home will still be able to use other very useful tools that are loaded in the computers such as programs and software that can be used for many projects and homework assignments. "I feel that this will be great for students," said Pak. "Hopefully students will take advantage of the opportunity and use the equipment as much as possible."

Beeby influenced athletes

Continued from page 1

gone on to compete at the collegiate, professional and even at the Olympic level.

2008 athlete, basketball player, and coach, who was a member of the U.S. Olympic team, said that regardless of who is replaced, and what may be his success and level of influence in the sport will be irreplaceable.

School calendar

Wednesday, December 23:

Students are released at 12:05 p.m.

Thursday, December 24 to

Sunday, January 3:

Winter break. Enjoy your time off and the holidays!

Friday, December 25:

Christmas Day

Saturday, December 26:

Kwanzaa begins

Friday, January 1:

Time to welcome in 2010. New Year's Day is here.

Tuesday, January 5:

The AP Scholar Awards in the library from 7-9 p.m.

Thursday, January 7:

PSAT Interpretation/Spring Test Prep Program from 7-8:30 p.m. in the cafeteria. If you are interested in registering for the 19-week program, both parent/guardian and student must attend this introductory session.

Friday, January 15:

Students are dismissed early at 12:30 p.m.

Monday, January 18:

School holiday. It is Martin Luther King day.

Tuesday, January 19 to

Friday, January 22:

Electives Fair in the cafeteria

Monday, January 25 to

Thursday, January 28:

Rising senior registration

Blackboard: D.C.'s most popular Google search

CAMILLE DIFOLCO
REPORTER

As the New Year approaches, many students look back on the year 2009 and recall its major events. Students can consult Google's Year-End Zeitgeist lists to determine what defined 2009 on the Internet. This year, top-searched-for terms for Washington D.C. include "Nationals Baseball," "NOVA Community College," and "National Harbor," according to www.dclist.org. The most searched-for term was actually "FCPS Blackboard," the online system used by Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) parents, students, and teachers to keep in touch and do school work.



Photo by Michaela Accardi

The home page of Blackboard, pictured above, is what comes up after "googling" FCPS Blackboard. From this screen, students, teachers, and parents are able to sign into their accounts. Fairfax County pays for every student and teacher to have individual accounts and even parents (if they so desire).

This evidently popular website largely serves as an online communication network between the school and the home and can be reached by anyone with internet access. Teachers can post assignments and links, parents can keep up with FCPS news and events, and students can access databases and other research links through this resource.

English teacher Kim Thompson uses the blog tool as "a replacement for journals so [students] can do journal entries online. [It works well for] responses that are more reflective than analytical...and it gives students the opportunity to read one another's replies and respond [to them]." The effective use of FCPS Blackboard also reaches the fine arts department. Chorus director Ernest Johnson records and posts musical clips online so that his students can practice at home with piano accompaniment, which junior Jeyna Diallo said she found "very useful."

Once students, parents, and teachers are able to grasp all of its features, Blackboard quickly becomes a staple website for many students. Being able to access assignments, other online tools, and post work is very helpful for students. "On a typical week, I visit Blackboard daily," said sophomore Emily Key. Parents, too, are frequenters of the Blackboard site so they can monitor their child's courses and keep in touch with teachers. Teachers also frequently use the "blog" feature on Blackboard for homework assignments.

History teacher Emily Millians summed up the website with the statement: "I think Blackboard is a useful repository of information both when you miss class or [lose] a handout. It is also a way to give students some additional resources like the textbook websites which have practice quizzes. For me, its primary use is to serve as a place for online information and resources." The regular use of this site by parents, teachers, and students clearly illustrates its importance within the school system, as well as how "FCPS Blackboard" rose to dominate the D.C. area Google Zeitgeist list.

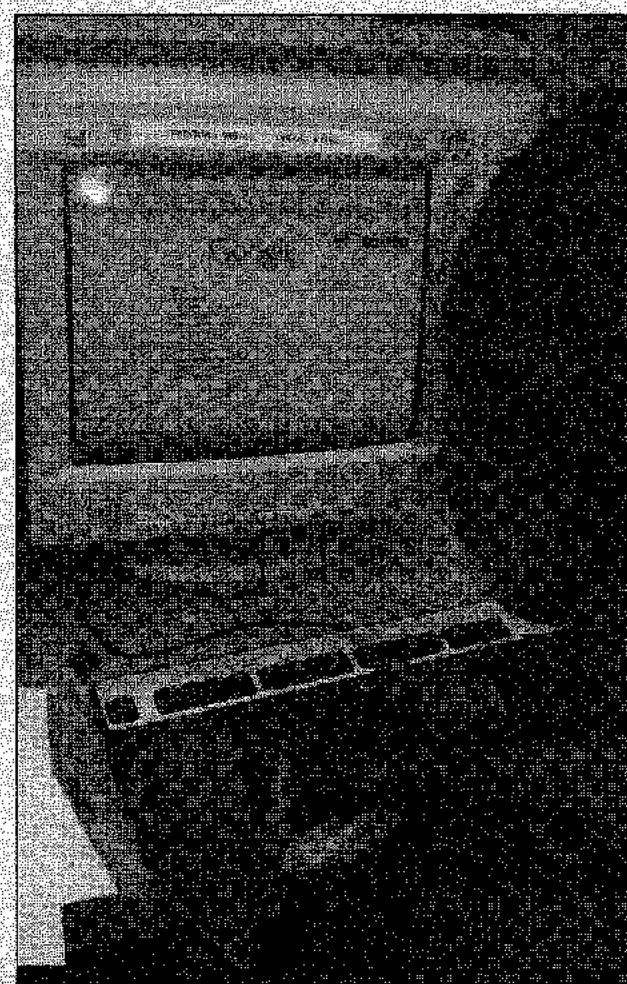


Photo Courtesy of Sonia Garakvaraghi

Freshman Grace Ennin "googles" Fairfax County Public Schools to access her Blackboard account. Students and teachers are able to use Blackboard in a variety of ways to keep on top of work. Parents, as well, are able to stay informed about their children's school work using this online tool.

Debate team shines in meet



Photo Courtesy of Sonia Garakvaraghi

Debate team participants play cards and look over notes while waiting to compete in one of their meets. They have done very well as a group and individually and hope to continue this success, with the help of teacher and coach Julian Dotson.

MAGGIE GRADY
BUSINESS MANAGER/ASST. FOCUS EDITOR

After the Debate and Forensics Team's debate on November 12, they had several top place winners that include Solace Enyomam, Christopher Pei, Ibrahim Elmi, Michael Brandt, Justine Read, Aisha Mujaid, Danny Flores, and Patrick Commons. These students have been working with the debate coach and English teacher Julian Dotson to get ready for the meets.

In these debates, there are two different categories in which debaters can compete. The first is forensics, which is similar to improvising and acting than traditional debate between two different people or teams of people. Forensics itself has many other specific categories within it including impromptu, dramatic, and humorous interpretation, and duo. The second category debaters can compete in is traditional-style

debate. Like forensics, there are also separate categories for debate as well. There is policy, which is two-on-two debating, similar to the original form of debating and public-forum, which is a two-on-two debate where students debate topics mainly focused on the economy and the government.

In addition, there is also Lincoln-Douglas style of debating where two people debate back and forth, usually on moral issues and topics. Sophomore Justine Read is one of our school's top-debaters for the Lincoln-Douglas division. Read tied for first in the Lincoln-Douglas division at their home meet on November 12. Seniors Ibrahim Elmi and Michael Brandt also placed second in policy, senior Julia

Pei placed first in humorous interpretation, freshman Kristina Karlson placed fifth in impromptu, and senior Patrick Commons placed first in Congress.

"We had a ton of kids compete in practically every category at the meet. Across the board everyone did pretty well too," said Read. In addition to preparing for their meet on November 12th, the team also had to prepare for their next debate, which took place on December 16. "Everybody was staying after school every week writing cases, debating each other, practicing their parts, and drilling each other in order to prepare," said Read. "Many of the freshmen that have joined this year are after school every single week and put in a ton of time at home as well. All the effort definitely shows when they throw down at competitions!"

The Debate and Forensics team has put a lot of effort into preparing for their meets and continue to receive top marks at their competitions.

News Briefs

TOMMY FRIEDERICH
ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

Tiger Woods Scandal Shocks Fans

Rumors have been flying after Tiger Woods crashed his car the day after Thanksgiving at 2 a.m. and was heard to be drunk. This startling event led to further research into Woods's personal life and allegations of affairs with multiple women. Although many are speculations, Woods has been linked to somewhere around ten women. His wife, Elin Nordegren, has moved out of their house and is living alone.

Student Fires Gun at NOVA

On Tuesday, December 8, a student at NOVA College in Woodbridge opened fire in a classroom. Jason Hamilton, the 20-year old suspect, is in police custody. He entered a math classroom and began shooting at his female professor and shouting, "I'm about to make history!" Luckily, no one was hurt, although students were evacuated and several shots were fired before Hamilton could be controlled.

Miley Cyrus Doll Worries Parents

A Jacksonville, Florida mother became upset with the makers of a singing Miley Cyrus doll after finding out that some of the lyrics can be mistaken for profanity. Brandy Westberry's three-year-old daughter began repeating the "f" word and pointed to her Miley Cyrus when asked where she had learned the word. After analyzing the lyrics, many are concerned about a possible mix up of lyrics that could result in their children learning curse words. There is no word yet on whether the toys will be refunded or recalled.

D.C. Council Passes Same-Sex Marriage

The Washington City Council has voted to legalize same-sex marriage in the capital. Although this alone would not guarantee that it becomes a law, Mayor Adrian Fenty has agreed to sign the bill as well, which will fully legitimize it. The only way that it can be blocked now is if Congress were to vote against it in the next 30 days, which is unlikely with the Democratic majority.

when the weather frightful

winter wonderland

NIA COPELAND
PHOTOGRAPHER

With winter coming, perhaps it is time to update our wardrobes a bit. That is right, summer and fall are over! So put away those flip-flops and light sweaters and break out the winter coats and boots. As the weather gets colder and colder, it is important to stay layered up. Layers are the most effective way to battle the cold weather so try to select clothing that is comfortable and warm. Gloves, hats, scarves and boots keep bodies warm and limit exposure to the crisp, cold winter weather. During the school day, classrooms seem as cold inside as it is outside so it is also important to wear clothes that will keep you warm while on campus. Obviously, students are not allowed to wear hats and gloves during the school day, so find jackets and shoes that are properly insulated in order to protect the body from the chilly temperatures that students face both in and outside of school.

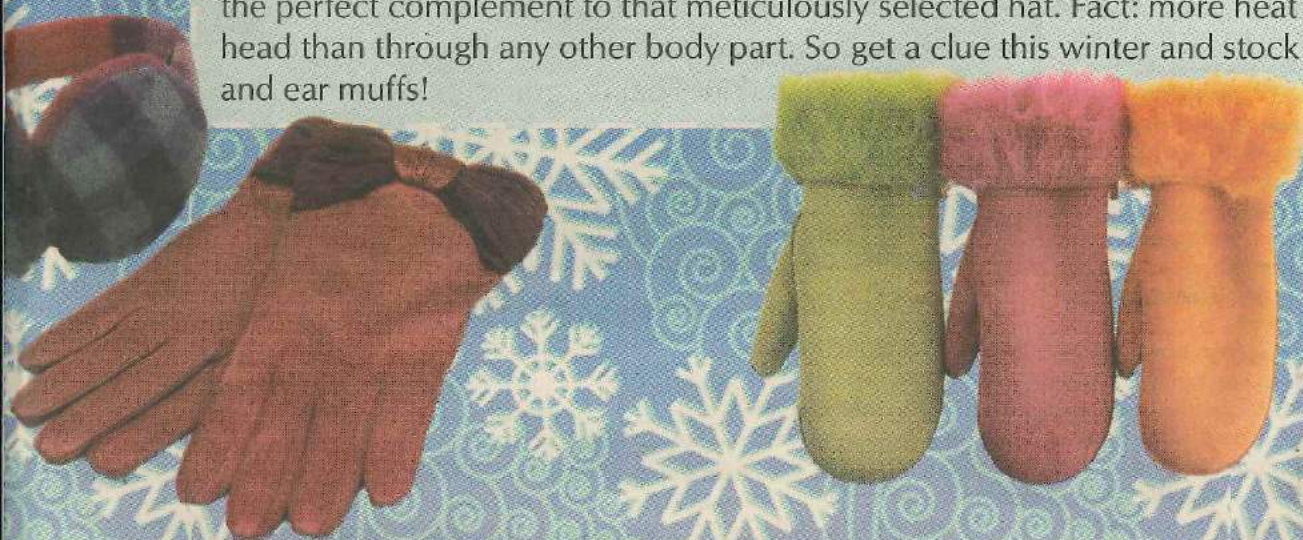


her outside is

CAMILLE DiFOLCO
REPORTER

Winter. The very word conjures up images of cozy fires and feathered ice patterns on windowpanes. The crisp, chilly weather that ranges from sleeting rain to white-out blizzards provides another distinctive opportunity for expression: hats. Whether the choice is a colorful beanie, a cable-knit earflap hat, an enveloping ski mask, or an eccentric Russian fur hunting hat, it is sure to be stylish and practical. Other popular headgear includes patterned knit headbands and the always elegant ear muffs. Scarves in a variety of fabrics and colors are sure to be seen as the perfect complement to that meticulously selected hat. Fact: more heat escapes through the head than through any other body part. So get a clue this winter and stock up on hats, scarves, and ear muffs!

head,



shoulders,

ANNA DREYFUSS
REPORTER

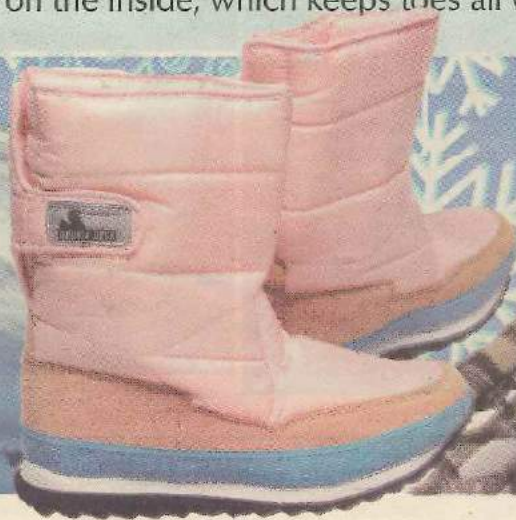
Winter is already here! So it is time to dig out those cozy jackets and vests. The most popular jackets would definitely be North Faces. Although they come in a variety of colors, students are apt to see at least three other people wearing the same jacket as they walk the halls, causing loaded glances and steely glares. Puffy vests are another favorite. They are easy to wear during the school day and students do not have to lug them around school. Sweater dresses are also very popular, especially when paired with leggings. Recently, spandex has become the new pants. And what better way to curl up next to the fire than with a leopard print Snuggie?



[knees and] toes

SONIA GARAKYRAGHI
PHOTOGRAPHER

During the winter, people's feet tend to suffer from the cold weather. Every body part has its own clothing. The one that usually always is freezing are people's feet, but luckily there is footwear to keep it warm. Whether it is the old Native American snowshoes, toe socks, or fashionable high-heeled boots, they all are meant to keep extremities warm but also are stylish to wear. Since the early 2000's, Ugg boots have been a favorite. They are made from sheepskin and are lined with wool on the inside, which keeps toes all warm and cozy.



Coffey Talk



Photo by Peter Coffey/Mac

PETER COFFEY
SPORTS EDITOR

[Posted November 27th 2:25am]

When you think of the most influential athlete of all time, none compare to golf legend Tiger Woods. Woods had been in the spotlight since the age of three and has not ceased to amaze us yet. He has broken down barriers in a sport that people thought could never be broken, becoming the first African-American to win the Masters. He also has been attributed to golf's ever increasing popularity. Ever since his first appearance in the "pro," he has drawn new sponsors and audiences. What he has done on the course is impressive, what he has done off the course is even more impressive.

He established the Tiger Woods Foundation, that hosts golf clinics for disadvantaged children and even distributes college scholarships. He founded the Tiger Woods Learning Center in 2006 that is used by several thousand students each year from grades four to 12. But it is his performances in golf that really inspire us all. In 1997, Woods became the youngest man and first African American to ever win the Masters after an exciting four-day tournament at Augusta. In 2006, Woods' father died after a long battle with prostate cancer. In this emotional time period, Woods played in the British Open. He dedicated his play to his father's memory and cried in his wife's arms after he won. In 2008, he won one of the most exciting matches of all times at the U.S. Open. Woods, who, at the time, was in great need of surgery on his ACL, still played and won, winning in sudden death over Rocco Mediate. The joy on his face after he won is indescribable. When you look at Tiger, you see a man who is proud of everything he has done to the game of golf and you can tell that he is not even close to being finished. There is clearly nothing this man cannot do, and will not stop amazing us until the day he puts his clubs away.

[Posted December 15th 2:29am]

Tiger Woods made a mistake, a big mistake (of infidelity), but does that mean we should just forget about all the good he has done? For the past 13 years, we have looked up to Woods and now that he has let us down, we do not know how to react. The gossip magazines over the past few weeks have torn Woods apart, throwing his reputation to the wind. But before you draw any conclusions about this recent scandal, ask yourself why you should even care. Woods has done more for golf over the past 13 years than golf has done for its self in the past 600 years of its existence. All of his championships are feeble compared to what he has done for the sports world. He made golf a popular feat thought impossible until he rolled through the Masters in 1996 with his red Nike polo. Before you judge Woods, judge yourself, because even with Woods' missteps in life, he is still one of the most accomplished people in the world, and he is only 33-years-old. So just wait, he will make a comeback!

Have a better idea for a story?
Email Peter Coffey at
pcoffey@wpwire.com

Cunningham to play football for James Madison

STEPHEN HOWELL
REPORTER

Wolverines, what is Matt Cunningham's profession? Future offensive lineman for James Madison University.

Senior football sensation Mathew Cunningham has verbally committed to JMU, after receiving a full scholarship offer.

At 6'4 and 269 pounds, Cunningham was one of the largest players on our football team. However, it was his rigorous offseason weight training regimen that helped him dominate on the squad. "Lifting everyday was a big part of my life and it definitely helped me roar people," said Cunningham. His average offseason day started early in the morning, with a plyometrics workout before the sun came up. After an active rest period that included video games, such as FIFA 2010, he attended a weight training session with his teammates. Some of his workouts clocked in at over three hours. "He was in [the weight room] everyday, and he would never slack. He worked harder than anyone else, including me," said fellow offensive lineman, senior Silas Agyeman. Cunningham's diet consisted of 6 meals a day, he has been known to drink up to five protein shakes a day.

When the season came around, Cunningham made himself known early in the team's grueling two-a-day practice schedule. His vocal leadership earned him a spot as one of the captains, along with Colin McConville. During the season, Cunningham continued his intensity, and made sure to heighten it during games. "I play with a blatant disregard for my, and my opponents, health. If you line up across from me, I will do whatever I can, legally or not, to hurt you make sure you do not get a tackle," said Cunningham. He led the team in "pancakes" and gave up few sacks the entire season. His performance earned him the coveted award of second team all district.

The offensive lineman's tenacity transcends to the classroom.



Photo Courtesy of Steve Howell

Cunningham uses his strength and size to block the defender from getting in the way of the running back.

setting. He can often be found engaging in riveting classroom discussions, as well as helping others who do not grasp complex subject-matters as well as he does. "Matt will do well in the future. I know how hard he works," said Cunningham's computer science teacher Margaret Cross.

He is very excited about attending JMU. "I have a moral obligation to achieve the highest degree of education possible and JMU is the place to do that," said Cunningham. Others excited about his opportunities as well. "I have followed Matt throughout the season, and we got the chance to know each other quite well. He's really big and should do well in college," said freshman Casey Freeman.

Wrestling team shows signs of improvement

TOMMY FRIEDERICH
ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

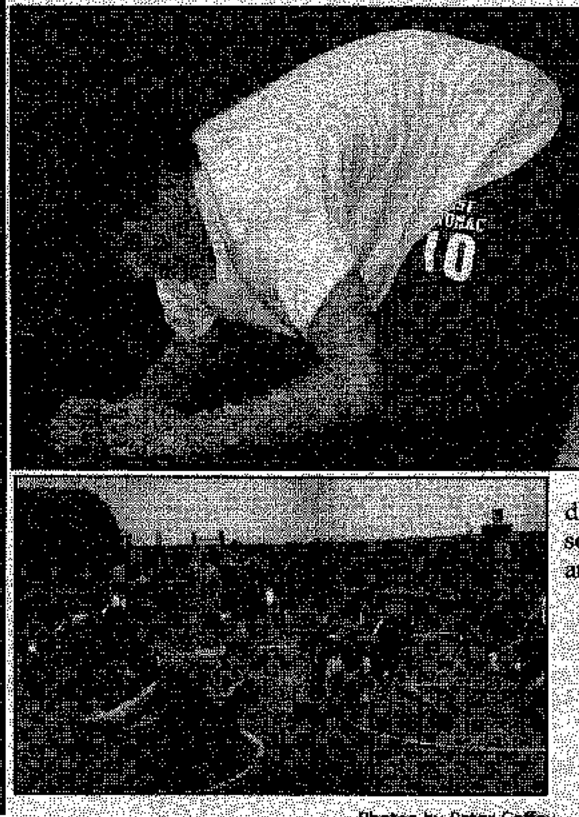
It is not the most attractive sport-- three hours of grueling running, hitting, and trying to pin another person to the ground. The West Potomac wrestling program has reached new heights as of late. It is time for the wrestling team to be brought from under the shadows of our school's winter teams, and into the lights.

Not only has the wrestling team acquired new wrestlers, but a new level of competition. "It comes along with the business, the more people going out for wrestling adds to the amount of talent we

have on the team," said Casey Hagan. This shows to be true, sophomore Casey Hagan placed third in his weight class at districts last year, and senior Stephen Howell won his weight class. The wrestling team is held on the shoulders of the 2012 class, who make up ten members of the team. The class has rejuvenated the program it seems, and brought more talent to our school's team. Coach Casey Grubbs said, "The class has about eight to nine member that I expect a lot out of. They're very talented and I believe in about two years or less, we will be a team to be reckoned with within the district and even the region." The wrestling team also has additions from some girls such as Celest Coley who added, "It's tough being a girl wrestler, but I love wrestling so I had to do it."

Behind Grubbs, the wrestling team hopes to take on their tough district schedule and produce some very competitive wrestlers. "Coach Grubbs knows what he's talking about, if you listen to him you will progress," said sophomore Kyle Anderson. One can see that this shows to be true from success the team has had in the early part of the season, including a win in their last meet and a couple of district contenders, such as sophomores Nick Africano and Louis Litchford.

On the left: The wrestling team does a variety of grueling exercises to keep them in shape for their meets.



Photos by Peter Coffey

Facebook addiction on the rise in students and teachers

EMILY GRIFFIN
NEWS EDITOR

Many students and teachers use Facebook to create an online life, rather than a networking system to use in one's spare time.

Students and teachers sometimes constantly check their Facebook for notifications, messages, and various other things during the day. However, some people check their Facebook so many times during a day that it begins to interfere with their daily life. This includes ruined relationships, using Facebook as a way to escape from problems, and/or the constant thought of Facebook.

History and psychology teacher Cynthia Hawkins stated that she does consider herself addicted to Facebook because "[she] check it upwards of probably anywhere between five to ten times a day."

Facebook has also become a problem with some students, who tend to check their Facebook either multiple times or for long periods of time. Junior Alexander Tyson admitted to using Facebook "once or twice a day for about one hour usually."

Senior Shannon McCann said she only uses Facebook "about once a day for 30-45 minutes, sometimes every other day."

Some teachers like Latin teacher Robert Rigby think that Facebook is "a new generation thing [so it appeals more

to students than teachers]." Rigby continued "[Facebook] is fun and it can be a habit [that is why it is so addicting]. I go on Facebook about four to five times a week."

Many devices have made it easier for people to access Facebook, these devices include the Facebook application on both iPhones and iPod touches. Hawkins continued, "I did not check it as much until I got the iPhone application, which makes Facebook available all of the time."

It has also been studied that notifications, messages and invites via Facebook can give a person an unpredictable high that is similar to gambling, which can be dangerously addictive according to addictioninfo.org.

Many addicts considered Facebook to be a necessity, but for Hawkins "it is helpful but not a necessity." However, Tyson said that Facebook is a necessity "because I can stay in contact with friends who do not go to the same school as me or have moved away." The reason McCann thinks so many students are addicted to Facebook is because "students procrastinate by going on Facebook." Rob Bedi, a psychologist at the University of Victoria said on addictioninfo.org that "there is a difference between procrastination and addiction. If you are losing assignment time to Facebook it is a problem."

Bedi stated that he thinks the common factors that explain why people use Facebook so frequently is the easy Internet access, web-based assignments, and unstructured time.

"This is not something you can quit cold turkey," said Bedi, according to addictioninfo.org. "While a cocaine addict can put down his drug and an alcoholic his drink, you can't preach abstinence to a student society that functions on Internet usage. What you can do is practice control." Hawkins said she would not consider attending a Facebook anonymous meeting "because it is not a hindrance yet, it is not to a point where is affecting my life and relationships in a negative way."

Many Facebook anonymous groups have been created on Facebook and are trying to help people to with their addiction.



Photo Courtesy of Laura Zitnik

Many students feel the need to constantly check their Facebook accounts.

Students spend less during holidays

ANNA DREYFUSS
REPORTER

"I want an Official Red Ryder carbine-action two-hundred-shot range model air rifle!" said Ralphie in *A Christmas Story*. Unfortunately, fewer kids can get their dream presents because of the recession and the increasing homeless population. In fact, 41% of the homeless population is comprised of families.

Fortunately, there are a number of organizations that help give to homeless and low-income families, such as Headstart. The program gives 16 students to each school and is always full. This program gives three, four, and five-year-olds from low-income families a head start in academics. It also stresses English, since the program is heavily populated with Spanish-speaking kids. It also teaches children the importance of personal hygiene.

"A big part is personal hygiene, we teach the kids how important it is to keep clean and brush their teeth and wash their hands, especially during the winter season," said Ava Bergan, head teacher at Headstart.

The best part is during the holidays, teachers and faculty members "adopt a kid" from the program and have a list of presents for the child. "This year we have mostly clothes, like jackets and gloves, but they also get some toys," said Bergan.

After all of the toys are collected, they have a holiday party, where the parents are invited and bring home their freshly wrapped presents. "We also really emphasize culture. Most of the kids are Hispanic, but we celebrate a lot of other holidays, like the Chinese New Year," said Mimi Boyd, a Headstart teacher. "A way students not in the academy class can help is simply participating in the 'adopt a kid' program, giving

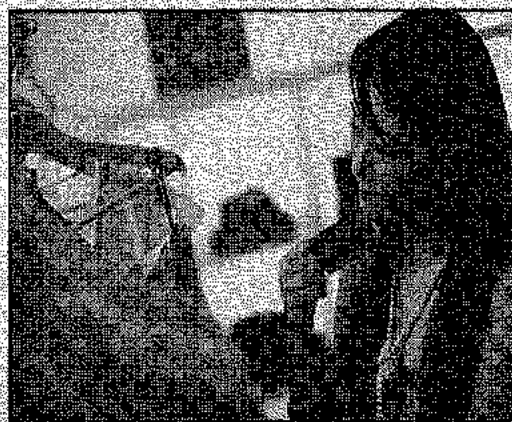


Photo Courtesy of MCT Campus

Retail stores are raising prices and hurting student buying power.

clothes or other needed items or even as little as coming in and reading a story to the children," said Bergan.

If students are looking for another way to help out, Christmas for Kids is a similar foundation for helping low-income families make Christmas a little more cheery.

For the past 20 years, the foundation has shopped for underprivileged children. "Most of these children do not have shoes that fit or a winter coat," said Bill Wilson, head of the foundation. The children are picked by their schools and are match with one or more volunteers who go shopping with them to get items from their "Wish List," that rarely include toys. Most of the items are essentials are actually clothing, especially for winter. The foundation happily takes donations, too.

Although it is hard for teenagers to care too much about the poor, there are many organizations to help them and even one at our school.

The five best thoughts of 2009



JACOB ALEXANDER
CO-OPINIONS EDITOR

In 2009, there was a grand variety of important inventions, many of which some people have never heard of, or did not know we had the technology to be able to create them. Technology in the modern times has come a long way. Inventions of the year include:

1. **The YikeBike**- An electric bicycle that folds and travels at a top speed of about 12 mph. It is steered by leaning and comes with electronic anti-skid brakes. The first 100 of these New Zealand bikes will be road ready there and in other European countries including the U.K. by mid 2010.

2. **The AIDS Vaccine**- Significant progress has been made this year in preventing AIDS. This vaccine is only about 31 percent effective and did not affect the level of the virus of people who already have the disease. This vaccine is not approved for use, and it may never be. Either way, whether this vaccine is used or a better one is created, it is going to be at least a few years before a vaccine is out for use. However, it is the first vaccine for AIDS, and there has to be a start for everything.

3. **Teleportation**- This year, data from an atom in one container was successfully teleported to another atom in a container one meter away at the University of Maryland. This is not like big time human transportation like in Star Trek, but it can help, especially with the speed of computers. It is

only atom-to-atom teleportation now, but soon this will be used to create secure, extremely fast computers. Unfortunately, there is no way of knowing exactly when computers that use this will be available, but hopefully it will be soon.

4. **Controller-Free Gaming**- A new gaming system in which the players' body movements and voice commands will be used in place of a controller has made significant progress. Rather than a controller and buttons to move a character, the player will, for example, move aside to make their character move aside. Usually new gaming systems take a few years to be ready for distribution, and this one is no exception. This system is being code-named project Natal.

5. **The Ten Million Dollar Light Bulb**- No, this one light bulb will not cost \$10 million to buy, but it is claiming federal purchase agreements worth about \$10 million. This light bulb uses less than ten watts as opposed to a standard 60-watt bulb, and also lasts about 25 times as long. If Philips, the company behind this invention, wins the U.S. Department of Energy's L prize, it is possible that there will not be a largely significant time before this light bulb comes out.

Overall, 2009 has been a very productive year. We have come a long way regarding technology, and that has lead to all of these important inventions. Significant progress has recently been made, and will continue to lead to new inventions that will greatly benefit everybody.

Holiday songs of mainstream popularity

SONIA GARAKYARAGHI
PHOTOGRAPHER

The holiday season is coming and Christmas is close. You hear many seasonal songs on the airwaves. Whether they are classic songs or songs by a modern artist, they all bring happiness.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. White Christmas
Bing Crosby | 6. Little Drummer Boy
Katherine K. Davis |
| 2. Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer
Johnny Marks | 7. Jingle Bell Rock
Joe Beal |
| 3. Jingle Bells
James Lord Pierpont | 8. I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus
Angie Rios |
| 4. Twelve Days of Christmas
James O. Halliwell | 9. Let It Snow
Sammy Cahn |
| 5. Carol of the Bells
Myela Dmytrovych Leontovych | 10. Frosty the Snowman
Walter "Jack" Rollins and Steve Nelson |

Australia's sense of humor becomes a huge success

ALEX BRITCLIFFE
ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

It seems like these days, all of the big time television stations are pumping out series after series, many of which tend to have poor ratings and eventually fall out of the public eye. For all those looking for a original, consistent show that incorporates a truly unique plot, *Summer Heights High* might be your cup of tea. The show takes place at an Australian Public School, which inhabits a number of very interesting characters. Jonah the rebellious Polynesian Islander, along with his gang of break dancing hooligans, terrorizes the school with their immaturity and bullying. Jonah clearly has major learning issues and could definitely be considered a teacher's ultimate nightmare. When he is not being obnoxious in class, he can almost always be found pulling some sort of prank that is far from appropriate in a school atmosphere. Next is Mr. G, the flamboyant homosexual drama teacher, who is over-the-top egotistical and has a flamboyant personality like poisoned honey. When he is not busy trying to get other teachers to cover his periods because of his unearned feeling of superiority, he is drawing up blueprints of what he wants the Summer Heights High Drama super complex to look like, which is a little bit out of budget, considering the current drama building is a beat-up wooden shed. Finally there is Jamie, the exchange student who wants more than anything to be accepted by the popular girls at school and chase all the boys. The humor is non-stop, seeing as Jamie is portrayed as a transvestite who amazingly is more girly than any girl should be. The show has a really unique quality to it and a very original sense of humor. So next time, when one is stuck running through a bunch of *Law and Order* episodes, check out HBO and see if a fabulous episode of one of the funniest shows on television is on.



A view of Summer Heights High, the location where all the hilarious immature action goes down.

Photo Courtesy of www.angelajulianalee.wordpress.com

Acting is nothing short of *Fantastick*

ANNA DREYFUSS
REPORTER

"There is a curious paradox that no one can explain: who understands the secrets of the reaping of the grain? Who understands why spring is born out of winter's laboring pain, or why we all must die a bit before we grow again?" said El Gallo (Sebastian La Cause) when he first entered the stage.

The world's longest running musical, *The Fantasticks*, first opened May 3, 1960 and played 17,162 performances before closing January 13, 2002. The Tony-winning musical staged in Rocky Point,

an abandoned amusement park in Rhode Island, tells the story of Matt and Luisa, two young adults who live next door to each other, and whose parents built a wall to separate them. Nevertheless, they meet and fall in love. Meanwhile, their parents are

secretly pleased Sebastian La Cause plays a convincing El Gallo in since they staged the Lincoln Theater's rendition of *The Fantasticks*, and performed the feud to ensure He sings the beautiful song, "Try to Remember" for their children's which this play is most famous.

eventual marriage, through reverse psychology.

The musical was held at the Lincoln Theatre in Southwest D.C. After being greeted by some clowns, magicians, and people on stilts, which made waiting out in the cold for a ticket a little more enjoyable, the inside of the theatre felt warm and inviting with Christmas lights hanging everywhere, even on the stage. It was a cozy atmosphere.

As the lights dimmed the narrator, El Gallo (Sebastian La Cause) walked on stage with The Mute (Nate Dendy) and performed some entertaining magic tricks, which happened frequently throughout the show. The magic offered a good distraction from the semi-confusing plot.

The second act especially made no sense. The dads were friends, but then they were not and the kids are not in love anymore and a new character comes in that does not really

relate to the story at all. It was all too much.

After the mini magic show and a small speech, El Gallo broke out into the melancholy "Try to Remember," the song that perhaps made this musical so famous.

Luisa (Addi McDaniel) is a very vibrant, excited, and unconventional 16-year-old. McDaniel portrayed a young romance-loving teenager very well, but her singing abilities were not as great. Her voice switched volumes and was somewhat screechy at the higher notes. Matt (Timothy Ware) is a poor, intelligent, but socially awkward 20-year-old. Ware portrays him well. His acting and singing skills were

about equal, but he disappointingly did not stand out among the rest, especially for the main character.

However, El Gallo was fantastic! Not only was his singing and acting far above the rest of the cast, but he played a major character, narrated the story, and performed a number of magic tricks.

Another character who was exceptional was The Mute. Although he was silent the entire performance, his expressions and body language were so believable that words were not necessary.

One of the only props was a half lit up "Rocky Point" sign across the stage and some stairs. Although there was barely a setting, the audience hardly noticed. Not only were the actors good at interacting with each other, but they acted with invisible objects also, which made it believable.

All in all, this musical would be a three out of five, five being the best. It was funny, witty, and the magic was entertaining, but something was missing.

The audience could not understand the plot half the time, but there was no real reaction from the audience afterward either. The musical did not really bring out any emotions in people, but made them laugh.



Photo Courtesy of www.arenastage.com

Arena Stage is privileged with a striking performance

CAMILLE DiFOLCO
REPORTER

Imagine a rock concert/musical theater hybrid: the excitement and energy of a live concert, interspersed with engaging scenes and a touching story. *Striking 12* is the result. Written by Brendan Milburn, Valerie Vigoda, and Rachel Sheinkin, *Striking 12* is a whimsical holiday tale performed by a cast of just three people who double as the actors as well the band. It has been subtitled "a rewired version of Hans Christian Andersen's 'The Little Match Girl,'" but is far more intricate and amusing than the famous fairytale.

The story centers on a dismal man (Milburn) who decides to skip out on New Year's Eve festivities and stay home with a book. His low-key evening is interrupted when he is visited by a glowing door-to-door salesgirl who promises to brighten up his winter blues with a string of super-bright lights. It is her belief that the man suffers from SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder), a type of depression that tends to manifest in the winter months, when sunlight is scarce. The salesgirl inspires the man to read "The Little Match Girl," and excerpts from the story are interspersed with witty interruptions by his friends, joyful singing both comical and moving, and plenty of breaking of the "fourth wall."

The "fourth wall" is the imaginary wall between the actors on stage and the audience, through which the story is performed and the illusion is maintained. When actors "break the fourth wall," either through directly addressing the audience or stepping out of character, they shatter the illusion of a separate reality.

In *Striking 12*, this method was used mainly for comedic purposes (Milburn pauses to clarify that he is not as depressed as the character he plays) or to lighten the mood (at "The Little Match Girl" climax, the drummer, Gene Lewin, interrupts to complain that he is stuck with voicing all the boring characters. The lively tune "Give the Drummer Some" erupts and effectively cheers the

audience up before the bittersweet resolution to the tale).

Music is the cornerstone of this production, and there is no shortage of witty lyrics woven into the rich melodies and textured harmonies. Vigoda's blazing electric violin provides a distinct and potent note to Lewin's chipper drums and Milburn's exuberant keyboard.

Surprisingly powerful voices complement the fantastic score, alive with elements of pop, jazz, blues, and rock. Vigoda in particular belts out impressive notes while shredding on her two-pronged violin, somehow making it all seem effortless. The lyrics, too, are surprisingly clever. Consider this excerpt from "Fine, Fine, Fine" wherein the grumpy man recollects an unpleasant New Year's Eve party experience. "Oh no, it's that annoying guy with really bad post-nasal drip/Maybe he'll never notice if I hide right here behind the dip/ (and have a chip)." Songs throughout this show abound with similar plays-on-words and amusing lines.

In addition to writing and performing this excellent show, Vigoda, Milburn, and Lewin all have impressive resumes. The three-piece band, GrooveLily (formed in 1994 as the Valerie Vigoda Band) has worked on many additional projects, including assisting in the creation of *Toy Story: The Musical* for Disney, *Sleeping Beauty Wakes* for Deaf West Theatre/Center Theatre Group, and a second concert-musical, *Long Story Short*.

Vigoda has toured with Cyndi Lauper, opened for Cher and Tina Turner, and even traveled with the Trans-Siberian Orchestra. Although both amusing and original, this show had opportunities for improvement. The lighting was not always logical, and far from smooth. More than once, the stage lights blacked out before a song had ended, and the spotlights were not focused until a couple bars into many of the solos.

Vigoda's microphone seemed to be turned up much louder than those of her fellow musicians as her violin overpowered the keyboard completely on most numbers.

This affected the balance of the music somewhat, but was not detrimental overall. In essence, the music and acting was fantastic, but lighting and sound should have been more polished, especially considering this all occurred on the second night of the show. However, if the standing ovation was any clue, the audience found the show captivating, and the clock struck 12 far too soon.



Photo Courtesy of www.arenastage.com

There were only three characters in this production. They played a vast array of characters as well as made up the members of the band, an impressive feat for any actor to do.

Precious is full of many spectacular gems

MAGGIE GRADY

BUSINESS MANAGER/ASST. FOCUS EDITOR

Precious, based on the novel *Push*, will take the viewer on an emotional journey.

The movie is directed by Lee Daniels, who has made masterpieces such as *Monsters Ball* and *The Woodsmen*, tells the story of a 16-year-old teenager growing up in an abusive home in Harlem, New York. Clareece "Precious" Jones, played by Gabourey Sidibe, is severely overweight, illiterate, and pregnant with her second child.

Precious grew up in an unstable environment and had to deal with her mother's disapproval while believing that she was worthless to the world and that nobody loved or cared about her. Her mother Mary, played by Mo'Nique (*Welcome Home, Roscoe Jenkins*, *Beerfest*) does nothing but sit around in their run-down apartment watching TV and eating food that she forces her daughter to make for her. She does not have a job, and lives off the welfare money that she receives for Precious and Precious' daughter.

However, Precious' daughter, who has Down syndrome, does not actually live with them; she lives with Precious' grandmother.

The only time that Precious is able to see her daughter is when her grandmother brings her over, but that only happens when a social worker comes to their apartment to make sure that they still need the welfare checks.

In addition, her father is not in the picture; however, he is the father of both of her children. Precious has to fight her way

through her life and learn to love herself and is finally able to do this when she is accepted into an alternative school called Each One, Teach One. Her teacher Blu Rain, actress Paula Patton (of *Mirrors*, *Swing Vote* fame), shows her how to read and write properly and Precious learns to express her thoughts and true feelings through a journal that Mrs. Rain gives to them.

The character Precious is Sidibe's breakout role and the casting directors could not have picked a better girl.

She has already been nominated for the highly acclaimed Independent Spirit Award for her performance in the movie. Even if Sidibe has not personally gone through any of the struggles that Precious has, her acting makes it seem as if she did.

Sidibe transforms this character and forces the audience to laugh and cry with her, as well open their eyes and realize how great their lives are and to be grateful for the love and caring relationships in their lives.

The actress Mo'Nique is usually known for playing the funny character, but Mary (whom she plays in the movie) is just the opposite. She is able to portray an abusive character in a flawless performance.

Mary is mean, rude, selfish, lazy, and only cares for herself. It also seems like she only tolerates her daughter because she knows that Precious is the only reason she still receives welfare money. Mo'Nique does a fantastic job of creating this character and bringing her to life.

Overall, this movie portrayed amazing acting skills from everyone in the cast. Lenny Kravitz and Mariah Carey were also in the movie and they played a nurse at the hospital and a social worker respectively.

Kravitz is perhaps best known for his roles in the movies *Being Mick* (2001) and *The Rugrats Movie* (2001). He manages to create a realistic character to whom others can relate. While Carey, who is best known for her singing career, has also appeared in many films including *Glitter* (2001), does an excellent job portraying her character.

However, there are many sad scenes and every time you think it cannot get worse for this girl, it does.

If you are in for a happy or funny movie, this is not the movie to see, but it does show a truly inspirational story about a girl learning to live up to her name and truly believing that she is precious.



Photo Courtesy of Jim Jones/MCT Campus

Gabourey Sidibe plays Precious in an adaptation that portrays living in the slums of New York.

New Moon howls at teen audiences

NORRIS BROOKS

REPORTER

Ever since Stephanie Meyer wrote the first novel of her intriguing series about vampires four years ago, there has been a national obsession with the saga. *New Moon* begins with Bella Swan, played by Kristen Stewart (of *Twilight*, *Adventureland*, *Into the Wild* fame), recovering from a vampire attack that almost killed her.

In an attempt to feel better, she plans to celebrate her birthday with her boyfriend Edward Cullen, played by Robert Pattinson (of *Twilight*, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, *Little Ashes* fame), and his family. When she accidentally cuts her finger on the wrapping paper of a present, it triggers a physical attraction in the Cullens.

Jasper, the newest vampire who has not yet mastered self-control, lunges forward, but Edward comes to Bella's rescue. After this incident, the Cullens decide to leave Forks, Washington, and despite the love Edward feels for Bella, he feels he must terminate the relationship to keep her safe. This leaves Bella heart-broken, causing her to fall into the arms of her friend Jacob Black, played by Taylor Lautner (of *Cheaper by the Dozen 2*, *Twilight*, *My Own Worst Enemy* fame).

The story idea is fascinating—there is no denying that. Who does not love reading a traumatic love story between a vampire and a human? Unfortunately, the series is extremely poorly written.

The narrative is repetitive, and the author inserts unnecessary material, as if she wants her books to be longer than they need to be. Despite this, fans are devouring the books (no pun intended) and flocking to the movies. Some have kept their heads on straight.

When asked what she thought of the upcoming movie, sophomore Sarah Woodward said, "I feel there has been too much hype about *New Moon*. Of course I will see it, but I am not counting down the days till it comes out. Although, I am looking forward to seeing Taylor Lautner as Jacob Black."

Sadly, *New Moon* does not live up to the hype. At least the first movie was entertaining. *New Moon* is long, cheesy, and boring. The make-up worn by Edward Cullen is so over done, it is hard to believe that his fellow classmates have not noticed that something is wrong with this guy.

His face is painted down white, and his lips are bright red as if he just ate a bowl of strawberries. The long straight locks worn by Jacob Black at the beginning of the movie are dreadful. They look like wet dog hair stuck to his scalp. If the make-up and hair were not bad enough, the relationships are worse.

The movie is filled with longing glances and emotional breaks ups. Sometimes this can be interesting, but in *New Moon* the scenes are not only repetitive, but every time one of them occurs, Bella reacts by writhing in her bed and squealing like a pig.

None of this is surprising, considering *New Moon* is the worst book of the series. Perhaps the most annoying aspect is that every time Lautner or Pattinson are bare chested, the audience erupts in screams.

The film does have some redeeming qualities. The special effects are amazing, especially the wolves.

They are frightening and portrayed exactly as they are in the book. The most interesting part of the movie is when Edward, Bella, and Alice are sent to meet the Volturi. The fighting scene between Edward and one of the guards is intense and keeps the audience on the edge of their seats.

The *Twilight* saga isn't over yet. There are two installments yet to come, and the future is bright.

New Moon had a huge opening weekend, raking in a grand total of \$142,839,137 at the box office, making it the third biggest opening in history behind *The Dark Knight* and *Spider-Man 3*.

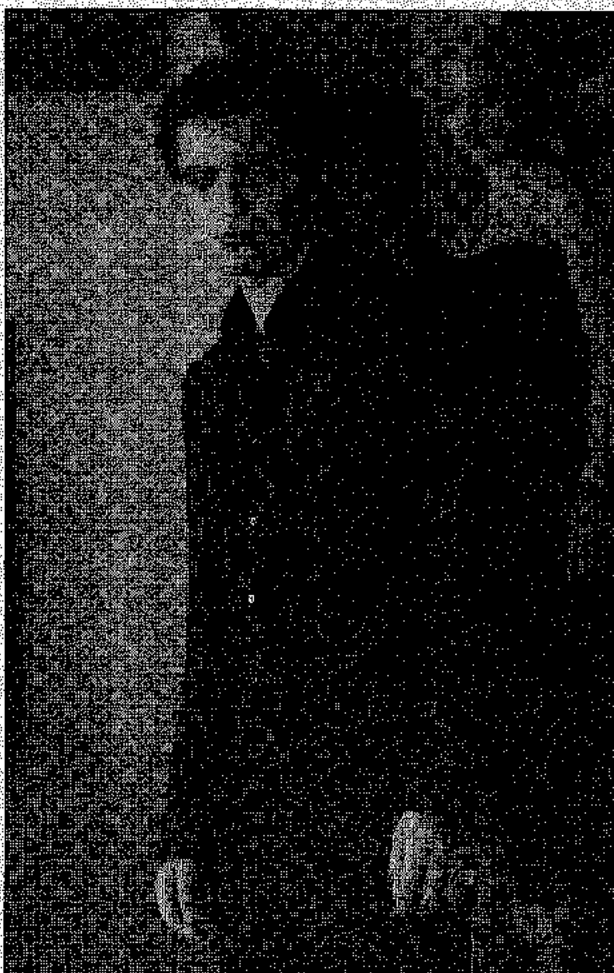


Photo Courtesy of Ben Dover/MCT Campus

New Moon surprised audiences by its action packed scenes and a love triangle between Edward Cullen, Bella Swan, and Jacob Black.



Photo Courtesy of MCT Campus

The Blind Side hits home

JOSH BELAND

ASSISTANT SENIORS EDITOR

Seven years ago, Michael Oher was homeless, his mom was addicted to cocaine, his father was dead, and he did not know where to go. On the other side of Memphis, the well-off Tuohy family was getting ready to celebrate holidays, not knowing that they were going to cross paths with somebody who was going to change their perfect world. *The Blind Side*, starring Sandra Bullock (*The Proposal* and *Miss Congeniality*) as Leigh Anne Tuohy, Tim McGraw (*Friday Night Lights*) playing the father, Sean T. McPhee, and Quinton Aaron as Michael. The movie is based on the best-selling book written by Michael Lewis and about this inspirational man and his journey from nothing to the NFL. After the Tuohy family adopts Michael, they encourage him to do well in school so he can play athletics, which was a big part in getting him into the best Christian School. There he was able to become one of the most dominant football prospects in the country, but it was not an easy task. Michael had to overcome the problems in his past and, with help from his new family, was able to achieve a scholarship to play college football and later get drafted by the Ravens.

The Blind Side is both funny and moving and will make laughter and tears. The movie does a great job of showing how the family came together with Michael and how he developed from a kid who could not read, to an intelligent offensive lineman for the Baltimore Ravens. Sandra Bullock also is electric with a great acting performance to portray the very energetic, caring Leigh Anne Tuohy. Michael's journey was a roller coaster that ended in success. *The Blind Side* is a must see for this holiday season.

Maggie Berrigan defines an A+ student

KATIE WOODWARD
REPORTER

Imagine if you were a varsity sport captain, editor of the school yearbook, an officer in four different clubs and societies, or a straight "A" student. Now imagine if you did all that, and you were one person. At our school, senior Maggie Berrigan is immediately identified as that individual.

On any given day, Berrigan can be found after school in the publications room editing pages for the school yearbook, or conducting a meeting for the National or Spanish Honor Society. On most days, these activities are followed by varsity golf or softball practice, if not practice with her travel softball team, the Tsunami. Her evenings are dominated not only by four AP classes' worth of homework, but by assisting the local cotillion and volunteering at the UCM.

This organized chaos is only preparation for the demands of life in medical school, where Berrigan figures she will spend the next ten years studying to be a surgeon. In regards to this many more years of late-night study sessions, she simply remarks, "It's kinda sad, but what's another decade of tests and essays?"

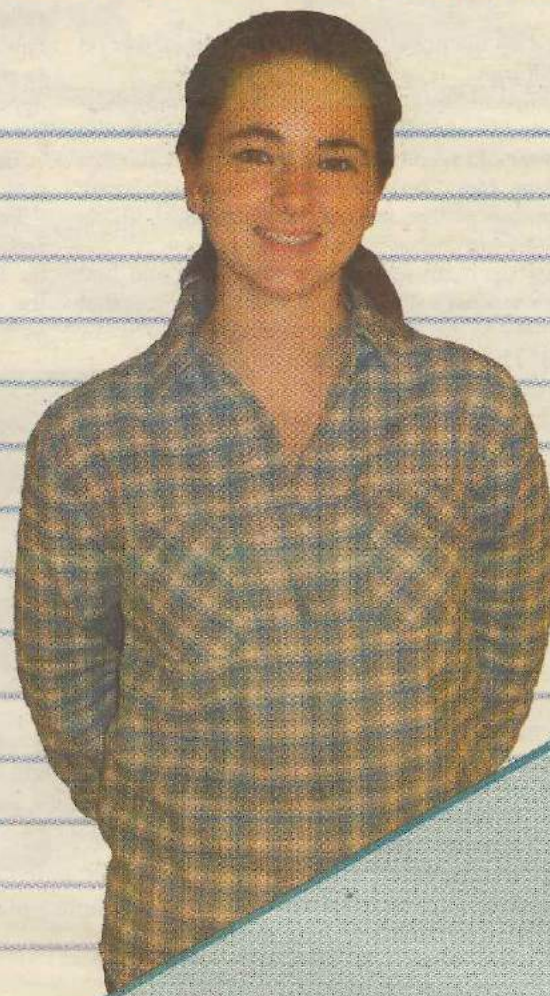
It is this work ethic which has allowed Berrigan to gain considerable respect among her peers and teachers as a stand-out student. In the last three years she has taken a total of nine AP's and received straight "5's" on each exam. These classes, which include feared courses such as BC Calculus and Spanish, have contributed to her 4.6 GPA, one of the highest in the school.

Additionally, Berrigan was recently honored as a National Merit Semi-Finalist for her standing as one of the highest scoring PSAT entrants in country. These accomplishments were recognized by her peers when she was voted "Most Likely to Succeed" in the class of 2010.

However, it takes more than a strong work ethic to deal with the stresses of so much responsibility. Like any over-achiever, Berrigan is very organized and says she "makes lots of lists" because "it feels good to be able to check things off." But she also eats a good therapeutic bag of pretzels with every meal, and when she finds the time to relax, watches shows such as "Criminal Minds." The only times she really gets stressed, actually, are when her family drags her to the top of the Empire State building on vacations, as she is terribly afraid of heights.

Berrigan is also quick to cite her softball teammates as her backbone, and after four years as catcher on the varsity team, she considers the other players as her family. She said, "I really don't know what high school would have been like without softball. It hasn't always been the best it could be - I'm going on four coaches in four years - but the people on the team have become my really good friends."

In case her medical career plans fail, Berrigan plans on studying cake decorating. "I want to make competition-level cakes" she said, "that would be the greatest job ever." But judging by her achievements in multi-tasking so far, there is no doubt that we may one day see Berrigan both saving lives in the operating room, and becoming the next "Ace of Cakes."



"I would love it if everyone with iPhones would download the 'I Am T-Pain' app and constantly auto tune their voices. I'd also like to see some bowties around here. Let's keep it classy, 2010."

- Maddie Dahl

Maddie Dahl shares her quirks

GWEN FISHEL
COPY EDITOR

Every year, senior Madeline Dahl buys her mother a roast beef sandwich on her [Dahl's] birthday.

According to Dahl, her mother went into labor with her while "she was in line at the deli waiting for her roast beef sandwich, and she ended up having to leave the deli without it to drive to the hospital." Thus, a tradition was born.

Dahl's quirky and friendly demeanor makes her a familiar face at West Potomac. Whether it is on the stage, or "chilling" in her new moccasins, she is sure to brighten up a room.

Dahl was born on October 26, 1992, in West Point, New York, which she says holds special meaning for her family. "West Point is a pretty meaningful location for [my] family. My grandfather and both of my parents attended West Point, my parents met at the Academy, and I was born at the hospital there." Both of her parents are still currently in the military; her dad is in the Army and her mom is a Blackhawk pilot. Because of her parents' jobs, she has moved ten times in the last seventeen years. She has lived here in Alexandria for four years - the longest that she has lived anywhere. She said that she "really enjoys moving around," because it helped to shape the person that she is today. "If I hadn't been forced into so many different situations, I would not be anything like the way I am now." She added, "I am very happy with my military upbringing and the way that it has shaped me [too]."

While in high school, she has spent time immersing

herself in many clubs and activities. She said she spends "most of her free time doing theatre and Thespians." However, she also participated in the American Sign Language program, and is a current officer of the H Project. She noted that she really want[s] to participate in the Conversation Club that Mrs. Heath organizes, but she has not had time to do that yet.

Dahl has enjoyed her time at our school. She said that it would be "impossible to answer" what her favorite class has been, let alone "narrow it down between foreign language and social studies classes." She said that she "loves the teachers at West Potomac; they really know how to provoke meaningful thought into their students beyond the classroom." However, she did say that "the teachers in upstairs Quander have been a constant and positive influence throughout high school."

Nonetheless, Dahl is much more than her academic career. She plays multiple instruments including the guitar, ukulele, and mandolin, and is currently learning how to play the piano. She listens to music constantly, and branches out to many genres. She said that she has been really into the big band and jazz lately and has a "Rat Pack CD in her disc drive; I just love that era."

After graduation, Dahl remarked that she would "really like a career that [she] can incorporate service and language into, so [she] is looking nursing and foreign affairs as [her] ideal majors in college." She is currently more inclined to becoming a nurse, because she could see herself working at a hospital and she "respects the work that medical professionals do."

