

**To my favorite girl,  
you know who you  
are, have an  
amazing  
Valentine's Day  
sweetheart!  
Love, Frankie**

**Battle of Sexes  
Pages 8 - 9**

**Happy Valentine's Day!  
-from someone special**



Karen Ballard/KRT

Young children tried to mimic Saddam Hussein's death.

## Kids Hung Up on Saddam's Death

Angie Palma

Business Manager

On December 30, Saddam Hussein was hung in front of a large audience. The image of his death will stay with the witnesses for a long time. With the expansiveness of the Internet, that image will also remain in the minds of people all over the world.

One man who was witness to the hanging used the video camera feature on his cell phone to record the event and the footage has now made its way to numerous websites that can be seen from any computer in any location. The video is difficult to view on some websites because they require the viewer to sign in to the website as an eighteen-year-old. However, many search engines conjure up hundreds of results, all offering the video clip. Senior Meagan Kirby said, "I probably won't watch the video. Websites should eliminate the videos because children can lie and log in as an eighteen-year-old."

Parents all over the world are angry their children have such access to such a dramatic video. So far, there are seven reports across the world of children who have seen the footage and later died in hanging-related accidents. A father in Turkey told authorities that his ten-year-old son had no psychological problems prior to viewing the video. After watching it, the young boy was consumed by questions, and when he tried to reenact what he had seen, he ended up losing his own life. The parents of the other six children have described similar circumstances. "We have no idea how susceptible children are to media, and if we are able to see seven deaths so soon after [the hanging] happened, we need to be more responsible about what can be seen [on the Internet]. Freedom of speech is one thing, but we need to protect our children," said child development teacher Barbara Yancey.

A second recording has now been uncovered. Fox News has stated that in the short, twenty-seven-second video, Hussein's body is being taken away on a gurney and that there is a

See Saddam, page 5

# Helping Each Other Succeed

Devon Cain

Wire Reporter

"It all started when Ms. Vesilind showed us our school's SOL scores. She pointed out that black males were not doing as well as males in other racial groups. We needed a 70% passing rate and we are just not there," said William Ramsey, one of the seniors chosen by Principal Rima Vesilind to lead Brothers Achieving More (BAM).

BAM is a new student-led organization with the goal of raising SOL scores for black males at our school. It is inspired by a mentoring program at a school in Ohio, and is led by eight seniors who hope to be role models for other students that are not passing classes. These leaders all have good math scores, high GPAs and most are athletes, representing track, football, soccer, basketball and lacrosse teams at our school. They will help tutor students during Flex period, and will also see their "potential scholars" every day to check on them and encourage them.



Photo by Lakeisha Langley



Photo by Lakeisha Langley

Principal Rima Vesilind implemented a new program, Brothers Achieving More (BAM), in which high-achieving athletes help underclassmen succeed in math.

Senior Rashan Colbert said, "Right now we are focusing on the math SOLs, because that is where the biggest problems lie." Most recently, just 65% of black students passed the SOL math tests in the 2005-2006 school year. This is lower than the school passing rate as a whole (79), and lower than students identified as white (89), Hispanic (77), learning to speak English (67) or "poor" (67).

When BAM was in its planning stages, school administrators and the eight leaders got together and called the parents of students who were failing their classes. Parents and students were invited to an after school meeting where the program was discussed. However, the

parental and student turnout to this meeting was less than satisfactory. Although the parents contacted by phone had been enthusiastic about the program, many are single and work multiple jobs, which made it difficult to attend. Leaders of BAM were not discouraged. With the help of several teachers and members of the administration, who Colbert said, "[have been] very supportive and helpful about what we are doing," BAM organized its first Flex period meeting.

After watching a video about the mentoring program in Ohio, the seniors broke spoke to twenty-seven Algebra I students into small

See BAM, page 7

## The Evolution of the Gateway Drug in Teens

Kate O'Connor

News Editor

While statistics in a recent national survey (backed by the National Institute on Drug Abuse) show a general decline in drug use over the past decade, they also show an increase in the abuse of substances including cough syrup, prescription painkillers and inhalants.

For the first time, teenage abuse of cold medicine was documented, and the survey revealed that it was widespread. According to the study, there is a steady decline in teen use of alcohol and marijuana and a fifty-percent decline in use of crack cocaine. In a press conference on December 21st, the White House director of National Drug Control Policy, John P. Walters, said that these statistics show progress and that, thanks to campaigns to inform youth about the dangers of drug use, drugs are becoming not cool.

"We aren't winning the fight against drugs. It's just evolving," countered Cynthia Hawkins, an AP Psychology teacher who has worked with and taught teens for over seven years. "As long as there are drugs and teens, teens will use drugs," she said. Hawkins explained the psychological opinion that adolescent drug abuse is brought about by the desire to challenge authority and find a sense of self. "When it comes to cough medicine, I'm not surprised [by the statistics]," Hawkins continued. "Is Suzy Average

going to experiment with cold medicine or crack? We aren't witnessing drugs going away. We're seeing the gateway drug changing."

"The first time I did a Whippit was during the summer in another state with a guy that I had only met the night before," recalled one junior girl at our school. A Whippit is a concoction made with an empty whipped cream container and a nitrous oxide cartridge, commonly used to shoot paint ball guns. DARE, the anti-drug organization, warns on its website that sniffing highly concentrated amounts of the chemicals in solvents or aerosol sprays can directly induce heart failure or death from suffocation.

"That night, I wanted to impress [a guy]," said the junior mentioned earlier. "One of his friends offered it to me and I did it, but not because I was forced into it or anything. I wanted to. I felt dizzy and happy, and then afterwards lazy." Over the course of the night, she and the group of older boys went through half a case of nitrous oxide cartridges, roughly twenty-one huffs each. After several hours, she was disoriented and when she tried to walk, she wobbled, and then fell over a rock.

"I regret it but I was caught up in the moment," she recalled. "I knew about the risk of brain damage, but

I did it anyway. I made many horrible decisions that night that I have to live with." She later found out that the boys she met while on vacation were involved in much harder drugs as well. They frequently skipped school to snort Ritalin, a prescription drug for Attention Deficit Disorder, among other things.

See Drug, page 7



Jaime Oppenheimer/KRT

Study shows abuse of cough syrup, prescription painkillers, and inhalants.

**INSIDE  
THIS  
ISSUE**

News: Page 5

**"I want to help people  
who will appreciate  
what I give them."**

**OPRAH'S "ANTI-AMERICAN"  
STATEMENT**

Opinions: Page 3



Photo by Mariya Ilyos

**THE HEAT ON MINI-  
MUM WAGE**

Sports: Page 10



KRT Campus

**WHO IS GOING TO WIN  
SUPER BOWL XLII?**

Style: Page 13



Photo by Drew Smith

**THE ROAD TO ONE  
ACT DISTRICTS**



### No Smoking: D.C. and Virginia Are Not Joking

With the recent arrivals of the public smoking bans in the state of California and Washington, D.C., the question on every Virginian's mind should be, "Are we next?"

There is a rise in the number of people concerned that public smoking is a serious health crisis in the commonwealth of Virginia. Virginia is in need of a law that prohibits smoking in public facilities. "There should be a ban on smoking in public places because smoking is bad for other people and not just the people who smoke," said senior Allison The.

According to PotomacNews.com, seventy-one percent of registered voters are in favor of a ban that prohibits smoking in public facilities including hotels, restaurants, theaters, stores, and other public locations. During an interview with

the Potomac News, Delegate Algic T. Howell (D-Norfolk) stated, "It is simply unacceptable for any Virginian to be exposed to secondhand smoke."

It has been proven many times in recent studies that secondhand smoke can be just as unhealthy as actually smoking and can cause lung cancer, severe breathing disorders, and asthma. These health risks are why many states are considering banning smoking in public places.

Alongside Delegate Howell on the smoking ban issue are Dels. Harvey B. Morgan (R-Middlesex) and Vincent F. Callahan Jr. (R-Fairfax). There are a few Virginians who are for the ban, but believe that it will not be passed in the Virginia. "I'm all for a law preventing smoking in public

facilities, but tobacco is a huge source of income in state," said government teacher Herbert Daniels. For the to be passed, it would have to be approved by the House Delegates, the Committee System and the Senate.

Indeed, most Virginians are for the ban, but there are a factors that may kill the ban in the middle of the lawmaking process. Still, there are people for the bill and there people who wish to elect delegates and other officials w are for the ban. The facts are undeniable and the result m ultimately be inevitable. A ban is very likely to be placed smoking in public facilities, so let us be in support of t ban. After all, we are not taking away smoking completely we are taking it away from public places.

### RANTS and RAVES



**A RANT FOR A 2 HOUR DELAY INSTEAD OF CLOSING SCHOOL.**

**A RANT FOR MR. HALTEM'S LIES.**

**A RANT FOR SATURDAY SCHOOL.**



**A Rave for half the school year over!**

**A Rave for Patrick Langan for winning the county DECA competition!**

**A Rave for Mr. Hubbard's performance on the bass at the NHS Coffee House!**

#### Corrections From Last Issue

Senior bowling was actually 11:00PM-1:00A.M., not 11:00PM-4:00A.M.

On page 13, Gloria Powell was mistakenly called Gloria Howell.

If you have a correction for *The Wire*, please submit it to room 418 or e-mail it to kelcy.pierre@fcps.edu

### THE WEST POTOMAC WIRE

West Potomac High School  
6500 Quander Road  
Alexandria, VA 22307  
Friday, February 2, 2007  
Volume #22 Issue 6

Alex Keckeisen	Editor-in-Chief	Zach Feinstein	Online Editor
Adele Hampton	Editor-in-Chief	Lara Davidson	Poll Editor
Taylor Dankmyer	Managing Editor	Erin Burke	Reporter
Sandy Slippin	Copy Editor	Devon Cain	Reporter
Emily Kubbach	Asst. Copy Editor	Evan Fritz	Reporter
Anum Jaffri	News Editor	Tidae Johnson	Reporter
Kate O'Connor	News Editor	Kyle Rosenkrantz	Reporter
Mariya Ilyas	News Editor	Jayne Seward	Reporter
Ken Llewellyn	Opinions Editor	Katherine Sigery	Reporter
Grace Powell	Opinions Editor	Sydney Smith	Reporter
Jocelyn Finfrock	Style Editor	Angie Palma	Business Manager
Sara Mathewson	Style Editor	Colin Chaddock	Asst. Business Manager
Caroline Staples	Focus Editor	Emmanuel Koduah	Asst. Business Manager
Kelly Wood	Features Editor	Lakeisha Langley	Photograph Editor
Jon Yoo	Sports Editor	Brittany Catina	Photographer
Hooft Cooksey	Sports Editor	Drew Smith	Photographer
Sam McCann	Asst. Sports Editor	Kelcy Pierre	Adviser

*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.

### Lack of Local Coverage

Dear Editor,

I was reading your sports section and found that your coverage of our track team was horrible. There was not a single article about us and even people like Gilbert Arenas and Alexander Ovechkin, who do not go to this school, got more coverage than us. All but one story was about stuff that had nothing to do with our school. The Redskins are not even playing right now so I do not understand why you have written about them and not the track team. Our track team is very good and I would like to see more of it in *The Wire*, along with other school sports coverage.

Senior, Patrick Hoffman

### Amnesty Club Controversy

Dear Editor,

I read with great distress the article in this January's issue of *The Wire* concerning Principal Vesilind's decision not to allow the club to view *Outlawed*, the film concerning U.S. government-sanctioned torture. Mrs. Vesilind is quoted as saying that she decided not to let the club view the film on the grounds that it was "un-American." I am personally against, but am willing to accept, censorship of language and violence or sexual content. But for political reasons? Such an action is inherently undemocratic.

With American flags displayed in every classroom, military recruiters frequenting the cafeteria, and mandatory, daily observance of the Pledge of Allegiance, it is unreasonable to state that screening this film would be biased and one-sided. Besides, isn't government-sanctioned torture the real offense against American ideals? Only if patriotism means loyalty to the American people rather than unconditional support to the government. With all due respect, Mrs. Vesilind is wrong. Viewing this video is not un-American. Not allowing it to be shown is.

Junior, Calvin Hentges

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: kelcypierre@fcps.edu. All submissions become property of *The Wire*.

### Cartoon Corner

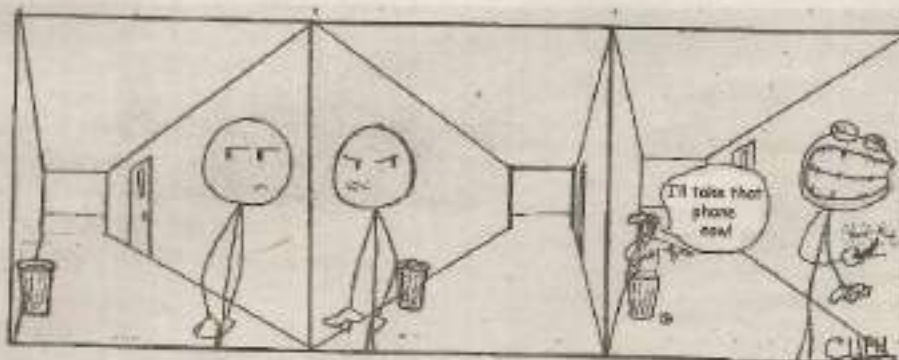


Illustration by Cliff Baker

Have a cartoon for *The Wire*? Submit it to room 418. All submissions become property of *The Wire*.



## Bush Signs Away

### With Presidential Signing Statements, Who Needs the Veto?

Evan Fritz

Wise Reporter

The Constitution is one of our most fundamental documents that lays down the essential blueprints for our government, yet is it open to interpretation? Our president certainly thinks so. Through the issuance of signing statements attached to hundreds of enacted bills, President Bush has, in a very discrete manner, granted himself the authority to withhold execution of any law that he deems unconstitutional throughout his six years in office.

Wait...hold on. A president above the law? While this is not our current situation, the truth may morph into something resembling such a scenario. All thanks to a sentence or two attached to a bill, Bush can offer an interpretation that effectively destroys the meaning of a law based upon a presidential, rather than a congressional, definition of a "terrorist threat" or "national emergency." These signing statements are usually used to clarify or reconcile problems within a bill and usually do not change it to a significant degree. However, what President Bush is doing is giving himself the power to override any law he wishes when he deems necessary.

An example of such a signing statement is the one issued in the middle of last year which was a response to the bill requiring Justice Department officials to deliver reports to Congress by specific dates. These reports catalogue how the FBI is utilizing the USA Patriot Act to secretly search homes and seize papers. According to boston.com,

Bush's signing statement said, "The president can order Justice Department officials to withhold any information from Congress if he decides it could impair national security or executive branch operations."

Such signing statements are not used sparingly by Bush. On the contrary, with a statement count higher than 750, he has issued more signing statements than all previous presidents combined, which was a figure less than 600 statements. These statements cover everything from military regulations and torture to affirmative action provisions and the domestic spying program.

So how has his administration been able to issue so many signing statements with little or no media scrutiny? To clarify, the general public never sees President Bush write these signing statements during the signing ceremonies. All they see him do is greet a group of smiling lawmakers with firm handshakes, sit down at a desk with cameras flashing, and simply sign the piece of paper before him with a flourish. However, when all the media has left, along with the lawmakers, Bush issues a signing statement recorded in the Federal Register. And there's the diabolical cunning of it all.

To most citizens, President Bush is seen as the man who will gladly work with our Congress, signing the bill in front of him with no delay. And while he maintains this image, he can yet again create another signing statement

to enhance his executive power. This is why he has only officially vetoed one bill, the one concerning stem cell research legalization. If he vetoes a bill, Congress could still pass it over that veto, but if he establishes a signing statement making the bill null and void, Congress does not have any recourse.

President Bush is going too far. He has taken his interpretation of the Constitution and the use of the signing statement to such an extreme that he has essentially rewritten the bills brought before him. This threat grows greater with the opposition party, the Democrats, having the majority and with it a mandate to initiate legislation at cross-purposes to the president's agenda. One of the most vital parts of our country that pumps life throughout our governmental system is the concept of checks and balances, where no specific branch or area of the government can rise above the others in terms of power.

If our president is able to ignore the bills set forth by the Congress, then he has rendered its purpose almost useless, therefore throwing the checks and balances concept out the window in the process. This is a very serious issue that our nation needs to understand and something must be done to restore the balance of powers our forefathers wrote into the Constitution.



Tina Hager/White House/KRT



Photo by Brittany Colina

## Teen Drivers, Feel Free to Relax

Sandy Slippen

Copy Editor

If one were to ask the average teenager what is causing them so much internal stress around the age of fourteen or fifteen, they might respond by complaining, "I cannot drive!" Clearly, the ability to drive is a, if not the, foremost authority for teenagers. Once they finally get this newly-acquired freedom, many take advantage of it as much as possible, and even abuse it in some cases. However, I have noticed an unfortunate trend among many new drivers. Although these drivers get their licenses and maintain the rules of the road to ensure they are good drivers, many do not take nearly enough advantage of the great big world in front of them. Many teen drivers are simply not being at all adventurous in their driving, and I believe this is hurting many of them in their growth and maturity development.

Despite the number of teenage drivers growing every day, many choose not to venture out and explore our area with their new abilities, often for several reasons. A prominent reason many teens do not do things like explore Washington D.C., take a trip into Baltimore, or just experience the thrill of going way too fast down 95 (assuming there is no traffic), is actually not even their own fault. Many parents are far too overprotective regarding their driving offspring.

To be fair, some of these parents have a reason to be freakishly overprotective. Statistics show that a teen driver is involved in a vehicle crash every nine seconds and accidents involving teen drivers and alcohol occur every fifteen minutes. Like I have said previously, some teens are abusing their driving privileges and driving while intoxicated. By 2007, this has regrettably become a common reality and likely will not change any time in the near future. However, not every teenage driver acts like this. Essentially, although some

parents' fears are justified, not all of them are, so it seems unfair to limit the distance and time a burgeoning teen driver can show off their new skills.

A concern many individual teenage drivers have is a fear of the road ahead of them. I know a great deal of recent drivers who have not even once ventured out onto the highway, despite having their licenses. This is typically a result of young drivers being nervous about the unfamiliar. All many teenagers can think about when they think of driving on the highway are the difficulties of switching lanes, bumper-to-bumper traffic, and high accident rates. Although these factors can indeed be intimidating, I feel teenage drivers will never grow to be comfortable in their "driving skin" unless they can master the art of being more adventurous drivers. Although it might seem scary at first, exploration is a key to growth and maturity.

I speak from personal experience on the issue of being an audacious driver. One of my best friends moved from this area to Vienna, about five or so minutes from the Tysons Corner shopping area. It was always fairly difficult when my friend and I were in elementary school to spend time together. We would have to arrange back-and-forth transportation with one or both of our parents, make sure we could go at a time convenient for them, avoid traffic in the mornings, and a heap of other nonsensical problems. However, once my friend and I got our licenses, a world of opportunity opened up. Since both of us were fortunate enough to receive driving privileges just about whenever we wanted, we took advantage of it and began to "commute" to each other's houses.

Through this, I learned to overcome my fear of driving to the unfamiliar by making this trip repeatedly. Now, driving thirty or forty minutes on the Beltway is no problem at all for me. Essentially, I am trying to speak to the explorer in every teenage driver. Take advantage of the road ahead of you, and your world will quite literally expand.



Photo by Brittany Colina

"A concern many individual teenage drivers have is a fear of the road ahead of them."

Sandy Slippen

## Adele's A-B-C's

Getting Through Your Life One Letter At a Time



Photo by Lashelle Langley

Adele Hampton

Editor-in-Chief

Day after day, we come in, sit, and take orders in the pursuit of one day growing up to be rocket scientists, bestselling novelists, and presidents of small nations. But while we are in the pursuit of doing all of these great and prestigious things, the effects of school are overlooked.

Martini: semi-insane. Wake up: 6:00, school: 7:20-2:05, homework: 6:00 pm-3:00 am, wake up: 6:00...and do it all over again. Days blend together and after awhile we forget what the word 'sleep' means. By the time senior year rolls around, students are half-crazy. To prove this point, I will give you a glimpse into my life right now, as I am writing this column that you are now reading. The time is 11:30 pm and I am completely rockin' out to the *Forrest Gump* soundtrack. Yes, that is right. It is just me and my computer, and I am grooving to "California Dreamin'" by The Mamas and the Papas. This is what my life has been reduced to. Parthenic, I know. School has this effect on some people. With the combination of no sleep, large amounts of coffee, and the pressure of grades, students have to go a little crazy. If they do not, they might explode- it is as simple as that.

Now, teachers are not exempt from the states of insanity that school induces. They are merely better at hiding it. At the beginning of the year, teachers are bright-eyed, eager to become the spark that lights the fire of young, inquisitive minds. By second semester, right about now, the bright eyes of teachers have faded to a dull grey and they no longer are full of life at the beginning of class. No, this is not the teacher's fault. It is the student's fault.

Think about it, teachers are trapped in a classroom, often with no windows, with twenty teenagers. Day after day, they are subjected to out-of-whack hormones and unpredictable mood swings. Not to mention the little gifts that we leave them. You know, gum on chairs, the nice little messages of love written on the desks that read "\*\*\*\* you." It is amazing how anyone can survive.

Ninnyhammer: fool or simpleton. Now, I am not saying anyone is a fool or simpleton. The little facts that school forgets to teach us, or the little facts that we somehow fail to pick up on, make us seem like fools and simpletons.

Once again, let us peer into my life. Up until the seventh or eighth grade I never learned Rome was, in fact, the capital of Italy. So, when I went around authoritatively saying Rome was a country, I got a few weird looks.

Another thing school does not make a point of explaining is common sense. So, when I put a metal pot in the microwave, I was perplexed when the microwave blew up. Also, many students still do not know their left from right. While driving, one still must hold up their hands to make the "L" to figure out which way is actually left before a turn. This is nerve-racking to mostly the passenger, especially when the driver is unaware of the rather large truck heading towards them. It probably is not the school's fault for not teaching us common sense; we most likely just failed to pay attention.



# Maxing the Minimum Wage

## Raising the Minimum Wage Raises Values

Sydney Smith  
Wire Reporter

Now that the Democrats have taken over both houses of Congress, they plan to make many new reforms, including raising the minimum wage from the dismal \$5.15 an hour to the more substantial \$7.25 an hour.

After my freshman year, my parents told me that every summer until I graduate, I must hold a job. So, that summer, I got to work teaching small children how to swim. The pay was minimal, but the experience was fun. Over the past few summers, I gradually taught more and more kids in different age groups. I loved teaching the kids, but it was physically exhausting to stand in the hot summer sun for four hours everyday, plus all the meets and team activities I was obligated to do. Money was important in keeping me interested in my job.

Money is also important for the seniors who are getting prepared to go to college. Senior Erin Shumate has held a job in sales for the past year and a half. "My parents cannot afford to pay for it [college] by themselves, plus the cost of books is outrageous," she said. If the minimum wage stays the way it is, some students will have to start earlier in order to help their parents save up for college. If the minimum wage is raised, as students gradually become more responsible, they can ease into a job to pay for college.

It is crucial for students to learn how to manage their money. As part of the deal, my parents had me save half of every pay check I received. This taught me to save a little and spend a little. By doing this, I learned how to enjoy the benefits of saving and spending. AP Statistics teacher Dr. Amy Galitzer said, "It is not a matter of 'income control' as much as living within your means. If you do not make much money, be sure you do not spend too much! If you are spending more

than you make or more than you have, you are spending too much."

Despite the fact that men and women are supposed to be treated equally, some women receive lower salaries than men who have the same job responsibilities. Senior Sarah Aitchison said, "I made minimum wage at Alexandria Music [but] I was the only girl and all the guys made more [money than me]." Sometimes, an employer can tell their employees not to discuss their salaries to try to avoid resentment in the job. However,



Photo by Brittany Catina

teens tend to tell their friends everything, so when a trend appears showing that the boys are making more money than girls, gender discrimination may become apparent.

Some adults hold jobs that pay the minimum wage. That money has to be spread out to pay for

a home or apartment, living expenses, food, and transportation. Also, if an adult has a family to support, they have an even harder time trying to get ends to meet. Dr. Galitzer said, "[According to [www.nvc.vt.edu](http://www.nvc.vt.edu)] the average monthly rental unit is \$809... If someone makes \$7.25/hour for 40 hours a week times 52 weeks per year, they make \$15,080 per year. Then take off about 1/3 (taxes for both county and state), and they end up with \$837.78 per month. This does not include electricity, water, gas, or anything else one needs. That is not enough to live on." Raising the minimum wage would solve this problem.

The minimum wage should go up, however, unless equal opportunities are present for all people despite gender, race, or economic status, then the money increase will only help the people who already have it.

## The Minimum Wage Should Not Be Raised

Kate Sigety  
Wire Reporter

In pursuit of reducing poverty, the House of Representatives has approved a bill which will be passed to the Senate to raise the federal minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$7.25 an hour by 2009. For the 13 million people who qualify for this wage raise, the issue is where is all of this money going to come from and what will be the consequences on the nation's economy?

Businesses run on economics; the main principle is 'supply and demand.' Naturally, the supply of workers goes up as wages increase, but demand for workers by employers goes down as wages go up. This makes less job opportunities for lower-skilled jobs.

If an employer is forced to raise the wages of specific workers because of a change in a minimum wage law, they may have other staff pick up the duties of this person and not hire this person at all or simply fire them. Which is better, having a job and being paid the \$2.10 less or not having a job and not being paid at all?

Minimum wage jobs are typically positions that require little or no training, which can be filled by almost anyone. Many of these jobs are held by teenagers, college students, interns, and even part-time workers because they are willing to take them, especially for an educational purpose. Having a job teaches values such as discipline, hard work, and responsibility. Important skills, such as being able to communicate with others and being able to handle money financially are acquired by young workers. Not raising the minimum wage will motivate this group of people to pursue a further education; nobody wants to work a minimum wage job for the rest of their life. Raising the minimum wage could

raise the incentive for high school students to drop out and join the work force.

In job interviews, the most frequently asked question is the infamous "what experience do you have?" If businesses are able to pay smaller entry wages, then they are able to offer more opportunities to job seekers that have little or no experience, such as high school students. The business is able to bring in more workers, without hurting their own profits, giving these workers valuable experience which can be used later in life to get a higher paying job in the future.

When large factories are forced to pay workers more, they will look to find cheap labor. Jobs once held by Americans might



Photo by Brittany Catina

be handed to illegal immigrants and workers from other countries, because the work will get done for less. Since a minimum wage does not apply in other countries like China, products in other countries are being produced cheaper, and can be sold for less.

Minimum wage laws do not only apply to large companies and businesses, but also government and non-profit charitable organizations.

Charitable organizations, which provide extremely important services in our society, are among the many people who would suffer from a minimum wage increase. Many organizations, like shelters, work are needed to clean, collect donations, and monitor phone lines. Although volunteers come into play here, finding long-standing and dedicated volunteers is not always the easiest to find. Not all non-profit organizations are able to support a \$7 hourly wage.

Although raising the minimum wage is morally correct, what works in the social world does not always fit in a business perspective.

# Lack of Senior Participation is a Shame

Erin Burke  
Wire Reporter

It is finally 2007, the year that seniors have been dreaming about. We are excited, nervous, and proud to finally enter this school knowing our days are numbered. We smile and giggle on Fridays, when we get to leave five minutes early and anticipate our exclusive senior-only events. This is supposed to be the year we remember for the rest of our lives. There should be no reason that only a fraction of our class shows up to events planned and held in our honor.

On September 20, the senior class officers and advisors held a meeting open to all senior students interested in making suggestions for events and activities. The turnout was a diverse group of students, all excited to begin their final year of high school. However, the group was extremely small. At the Town Meeting in early October, it was obvious the class had a lot to say about the possibility of senior privileges and fun events. However, on Halloween weekend, less than one-sixth of seniors attended the class dinner. This has been a common theme among the class of 2007. The class advisor, Iris Cox, and the class officers are bombarded and even harassed by classmates, who are frustrated that they do not have enough events or that the events are not appealing to attend.

When asked for input, the seniors fail to participate. The officers are disheartened by the class' hypocrisy. Class Historian, senior Jenny Davenport said, "It is very disappointing to work so hard to plan these events, then no one, not even our friends, come to support us or the class.

If they do not want to participate, then that is fine, but they should not complain that our events are boring, or that we are low on funds. If they came to an event or two, I think they would be surprised."

Class Representative, senior Brittany Woods believes seniors are missing out when they choose to skip their activities. She said, "It is important to be active this year, since we will always remember it. It is important to make these lifelong memories with your friends and classmates."

Woods made a good point. We should be able to look back at our senior year and remember more than just a school day or a party. We should be able to say we laughed all night at the class dinner watching our friends play freeze-dance, or that bowling at midnight was the most random, fun thing we did as a class.

A lot of work goes into planning the events the seniors continue to ignore. Months of planning, hundreds and sometimes thousands of our own dollars from our senior dues, and countless hours of hard work are combined to put together an event that could be a lot of fun. That is, it could be, if anyone chose to show up. Cox said, "The lack of participation is frustrating because most people

do not understand the planning and commitment that goes into everything we do. We do not want to lose money, so our events are mainly paid for by the senior dues, and really do have a lot of fun at our events."

Obviously, the officers and advisors are aware of the deficiency of enthusiasm among the senior class. In response they have, as Woods, Davenport, and Cox all said, "We to advertise more and encourage our friends and classmates to come. We ask for ideas, but since we do not receive input, we try to come up with events that please everyone." Cox added, "Every class has their own unique personality, so we try to give our own twist to the more traditional events."

Do we really want our senior year to be a blank calendar? Is that what we will remember as we leave our friends and go on to bigger and better things? On graduation day, I know I will be able to look around my fellow graduates and reflect on the year with hilarious, random, fond memories of our different events, activities, and I will never regret participating in class events. I will regret the fact that we are

leaving our mark on the school and our underclassmen: most enthusiastic class to ever walk across that stage. Will they remember about the class of 2007? I believe they should all ask ourselves this question, and show our best answer they have ever seen.



Photo by Brittany Catina



# The Facts About One Acts

Kyle Rosenkranz

Wire Reporter

The school had been buzzing about this year's One Acts. Who directed what, who was playing whom, and which plays were going to be good were questions running rampant through the school. There was also a little curiosity about how ninety people could get together and come up with a play in one month on their own time.

"They were hilarious," said senior Jack Soule, with much excitement in his voice. To him, the plays were very good, especially senior Molly Weisblatt's play, "The Complete American History (Abridged)," which was well-received by the audience.

The whole process for making and directing a One Act can be very difficult and sometimes challenging. The directors have to very dedicated to their projects in order to make them successful.

The first requirement is to be a director. To be approved by the theater department head, Kathy McCormally, the aspiring director needs to be a Theater 3 or 4 student, or a Thespian. The second step of the process is to find or write your own story that can be used as a One Act, which McCormally then approves. Out of the nine plays only one was actually written by the director. That play was "Dunderhead," a very well-written comedy scripted by junior Sara Kepple.

The next part of the process is to draw out or explain to McCormally what you want your scene to look like. After that, the directors are free to begin casting. Once that process is complete, the directors plan rehearsal dates for their cast.

The whole process can be stressful for the directors. They have to account for other peoples' schedules, and sometimes schedules can delay the rehearsal process. Some of the actors thought the rehearsals went well. "They went really well, [Becca King] was very serious when she needed to be, but we



Photo by Drew Smith  
Juniors Matt Marinello and Hunter Link and senior Patrick Moniz act out Weisblatt's play.

still had fun," said Soule, who acted in King's play. However difficult the process was, the result was overall excellent and well worth the production woes.

## Students Work for Financial Perks

Caroline Staples

Focus Editor

On the weekend at a local Seven Eleven, a student reaches into her back pocket for her wallet, but disappointingly only finds a lousy one dollar bill. Suddenly, it strikes her that having a job will put the cash back in her hand.

For many students at our school, having a job allows them to have extra money they can get on their own, instead of having to go to their parents for it. One is junior Mohamed Chouat. "I'm tired of asking my parents for money," said Chouat, who currently works at Just Fresh in Mount Vernon Plaza. Having a job during the school year keeps Chouat sane and gives him the money he wants when he wants it, but at the same time keeps him from having enough sleep, time to do homework, and time with friends. While the job does not conflict with Chouat's grades, it does affect his social life. Besides lacking his parent's support for his job, not being with his friends cannot help the situation.

The cons of having a job during the school year are having less time to be with friends and losing weekend time for homework or to catch up on rigorous projects. Junior Brendan Kelly, who works at Starbucks,



Photo by Lakeisha Langley

Senior Traci Jennings compromises her time and works at Five Below to earn extra cash.

said, "I have no weekends and I cannot be with my friends." Although Kelly works a whopping fourteen hours a week (only on weekends), he does get tips from bonuses, free coffee, and was able to pay for his own computer.

While most working students do not have to worry about grades being affected, it is their friends that suffer. This is not true for junior Beth Dahlburg, though. Doing a sport every season and taking multiple AP and Honors classes is more than enough for her to manage without the routine of a job. "The pros are having money, but the cons are not having enough time for yourself," said Dahlburg.

Some parents will always encourage their children to get a job and to work hard to pay for something they want, like a car or to save up money to use when they are in college. Others do not have a choice and are forced by their circumstances to work and help bring in the bacon for the family. While working seems like something cool to brag to friends about since one is making money and the friends are not, some parents discourage such actions. Many parents believe school comes before work or other activities like sports.

Working and going to school at the same time can increase a student's stress level and decrease hours for study time. Unless enough time is given for a day's work, students should stick to graduating from school first before seeking work out in the real world.

## Oprah's Real Life Soap Opera

Winfrey's Anti-American Comment Has Students Buzzing



Nicolas Khayat and Evelyn Hockstein/KRT

"I want to help people who will appreciate what I give them," said Winfrey when questioned about why she helps African and not American schools.

Sydney Smith

Wire Reporter

Oprah Winfrey has lived her life trying to make the world a better place. Some students tune in to her talk show after school. Her most recent endeavor was building a school in Africa. Unfortunately, some Americans are angry with her for turning a cold shoulder on schools here that need help.

Winfrey's response to her critics was, "I want to help people who will appreciate what I give them." This anti-American comment has students talking. Senior Andrea Cudjoe sided with Winfrey and said, "Of course, there are some in America who do appreciate what they have, but as a whole, Americans do not appreciate what they have. It is proven by the things we waste and how greedy some people are."

The school is "a \$40 million project... [it] is one of the most recent and high-profile projects in a growing worldwide campaign to improve girls' education," according to abcnews.go.com.

AP English teacher Sandra Bobo said, "When my family and I had the opportunity to visit my country of Ghana, West Africa, we saw children (ages 5-18) walking miles to school everyday with their uniforms on. Education is so prevalent that the kids are excited about attending school. You do not hear anyone complaining that they are so tired and they do not want to go to school for the day."

Some think Americans are being un-American by asking for all the gifts that Winfrey has bestowed upon children in Africa. Senior Rebecca Vonada said, "We need to help people around us... You hear about celebrities who party and spend all their money on nothing, yet

no one comments on them."

Some students think these comments from critics have arisen from a decline in American values. Vonada said, "I think our biggest problem is that we are given everything we ask for. Parents want to give their children what they did not have. However, in doing so they have made their kids spoiled and expect everything." This statement is proven by the development of such television programs as MTV's *My Super Sweet 16*, where rich teens are given hundreds of thousands of dollars with which to plan their perfect sixteenth birthday parties.

"We can solve this problem with having our children support themselves. If we learn to support ourselves, then we can learn to appreciate what we have," said Vonada.

Saddam, from page 1

large bloody wound on his neck. Over ten official witnesses reported they saw, immediately after Hussein's body fell, the rope sliced through his neck, despite the black cloth that should have prevented any open wounds. "I don't know why anyone would want to put that on the Internet," said senior Greg Son.

In Hussein's culture, it is considered an honor to be able to watch a hanging. However, in other cultures, it is a gruesome and upsetting occurrence to see. The man who has been charged for recording the event on his phone told authorities he felt honored to be able to see such an event and that he wanted it on his phone to show other people. He claims he put it on the Internet so others could have the same privilege. Instead of being a privilege, this video has been viewed as disgrace world wide and yet it is still available on the Internet.

Hussein's execution is no longer being viewed in light of the brutal crimes that he committed against his own people, but will now forever be connected to the horrible image of Hussein's final moments.



Grace Rascati 703-922-7050

### SEWING SCHOOL

- × Summer Camps & After-School Classes For Kids
  - × Evening Classes For Adults
  - × Private Lessons For All Ages
- sewing\_101@hotmail.com 7695 Kingsbury Rd Alexandria, VA 22305







## School Welcomes the Return of the Morning News

Kate O'Connor

News Editor

After months of nothing but power point announcements, the Roar Report, our morning news program, finally returned to classroom televisions.

For the past three years, the TV production class was responsible for the Roar Report. The broadcast was delayed for several months this year because the class decided that instead of devoting their time to the morning news, they wanted to pursue individual projects. "Because it is an Academy class, some of the students in TV Production are from other schools. It wasn't fair to them to be doing a program for our school," said Principal Rima Vesilind.

This year, for the first time, the program will be run and produced by the leadership class. Thursday, January 11th was the broadcast debut of the Roar Report. The show got off to a shaky start, as anyone watching would have noticed. The transitions were smooth, the anchors were charming and the cameras were well positioned, but it hardly mattered because the entire show had no audio. By the second show all of the sound glitches were solved but, because Ms. Vesilind was not in school that day, no one was available to authorize an intercom announcement telling teachers to turn on their TVs. Very few students knew that there had been a second report, and even fewer saw it.

The leadership class is broadcasting from a small news room in the library, where the morning news has not been recorded since the first year that our school had a TV program. The first morning broadcast that our school ever saw was in the fall of 2001, after several years of renovation. During construction, two TV studios were installed; one in Springbank and the other in the library. A television studio class was offered that year that ran the morning news from the library studio. In the spring of 2002, the librarian who taught that class left the school and Zina Facemire, who at that time was a librarian, took over. The following year, TV production became an Academy class and they took on the morning broadcast.

Now, Facemire is the School-Based Instructional Technology Specialist (SBIT). At the beginning of second quarter, Vesilind went to Facemire to explain the lack of

a morning news show. "She offered to help the kids with the news. She was the natural choice to sponsor the show because of her experience," said Vesilind. Vesilind also went to the leadership teachers, who were at first hesitant about having their students running the Roar Report.

There are some drawbacks to the technology available for leadership to work with. Some of the equipment is dated. "It is an analog system, installed in 1999. It doesn't have a lot of professional extras. It does what it's supposed to, which is the morning announcements," said Facemire.

When the leadership class heard that they were going to be responsible for the announcements, they volunteered eagerly for positions in the newsroom. Jocelyn Garay volunteered to be a news anchor for the program. "I like being on camera and public speaking," she said, "but I don't know how effective we can be if the teachers don't take us seriously and turn on their TVs."

"The leadership class is a very creative group of kids and they absolutely rose to the challenge of making a morning news show," said Vesilind. She is confident in the program and optimistic about its future, hoping to at some point include field reporting.

Facemire is more concerned with producing a simple, smooth program. "We are going to start slow and work our way up," she said. "The first thing has to be to get the basics down and we'll see about bells and whistles later."



Photo By Kate O'Connor

Newsroom Director, Mohammed Chouat, talks to the crew before a run through of the morning news.

## News Briefs

Mariya Ilyas

News Editor

### Our Deepest Condolences

"Mr. Arnold Kreloff, our senior administrator, Ms. Nancy Kreloff's husband passed away January 29 in his home. He evidently had a heart attack or stroke, he just collapsed," said principal Rima Vesilind. For those hoping to convey personal condolences and would like to celebrate the life of Mr. Arnold, a memorial service will be held at their place of worship, the Mount Vernon Presbyterian Church, today at 3:30pm. If you would like to make a donation, Mrs. Kreloff has asked that they be made to either the SPCA of Northern Virginia (Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) or the Capital Hospice. From all the *Wire* staff, we wish Mrs. Kreloff all the best and our deepest condolences.

### Congrats Rose Alapati

ESOL teacher, Rose Alapati, was selected to be included in an instructional DVD produced by the U.S. State Department titled, "Shaping the Way We Teach English: Successful Practices Around the World." The DVD will be used for teacher training in several countries for the next ten years.

### Science Olympiad Competition: Feb 3

Our Science Olympiad team is participating in the Longfellow Middle School Invitational at McLean High School this Saturday, February 3. The actual statewide competition takes place at our school sometime in April. We wish the best for our team!

### PSAT/SAT Preparation Program: first session Feb 3

The first session of the program is this tomorrow from 9am to 12pm in the Kogelman Theater. Attendance is mandatory, so please plan to attend. For more information, contact sponsors Christine Spaulding or Barbara Conner.

### Class of 2009 Day Care Fundraiser: Feb 9 and Feb 10

Class of 2009 is sponsoring a "Kids Night Out" next Friday, February 9, and Saturday, February 10, from 6pm to 10pm in the Main Gym. Sign up ahead of time (before Friday, February 2) for only \$30 per child. Fee includes daycare, dinner, games, movies, and other activities for kids between ages 5-12. Drop offs on the day of are \$40 per child. Help is ditched needed by any class students, teachers, or parents. (Community service is offered to participating students.) For more information, contact Denise Green at [denise.green@tjps.edu](mailto:denise.green@tjps.edu). The Valentine Balloon Sales started this past Monday and will continue all next week. Buy your special someone a heart-felt balloon for only \$2.

### International Engineering and Science Fair: Feb 10

The annual International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF) will take place on Saturday, February 10 in the cafeteria starting at 7am. Good luck to all participating!

### BAM, from page 1

groups. "After we split up and they had a chance to speak, [the students] were much more responsive and attentive," said Ramsey. The leaders never addressed the difficulty of the work; they know that all of the students are capable of it. Instead, the leaders focused on positive habits, like asking questions in class and breaking math problems down. The eight mentors challenged their peers to ask teachers for help and avoid falling into the trap of "not trying because others don't expect me to do anything."

Colbert said, "A big part of what is going wrong is that these students are sitting in the back of the room and just not paying attention. They have a lot of potential and I know they can do the work."

### Drug, from page 1

According to experts at the University of Michigan, one of the factors in the increase of medicinal drug abuse is that prescription drugs are so widely available, but not monitored like their illegal counterparts.

The national study found about one in ten high school seniors has abused a painkiller, with Vicodin being the most popular. John Walters, the White House National Drug Control director, credited public service advertising with a steady decrease in overall teen drug use over the past five years and said the agency would shift some of its 2007 advertising budget toward combating prescription drug abuse. Even if it was not recognized as a growing problem in the past, it most certainly is now.



**Larry Gray**  
Owner  
• Grill Specialists (703) 765-1555  
• Painting Fax: (703) 768-0316  
• Plumbing  
• Electrical  
• Garden Supplies  
• General Hardware  
7934 Fort Hunt Road  
Alexandria, VA 22308



**Tom Harvey**  
Owner  
7926 Fort Hunt Road  
Alexandria, VA 22308  
(703) 765-3722  
(703) 765-2648

## February Calendar

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| February 2nd   | • ACT Test                              |
| • Sandburg Counselors visiting WPHS                    | February 14th                           |
| • Soccer conditioning                                  | • NHS Meeting                           |
| February 3rd   | February 15th                           |
| • PSAT/SAT Test Prep                                   | • ESOL Family Potluck                   |
| • SGA Winter Ball: 9pm - 11:59pm                       | • Winter Play @ 7:30pm - 11pm           |
| • Science Olympiad Competition at McLean HS            | February 16th and 17th                  |
| February 6th   | • Winter Play @ 7:30pm - 11pm           |
| • Foreign Language Honor Society inductions            | February 19th                           |
| February 7th   | • George Washington Holiday             |
| • AP Curriculum Night in Quander                       | February 21st                           |
| February 9th   | • Senior Oscar Night                    |
| • Kids Night Out in Gym @ 6pm - 10pm (Sophomore Class) | February 23rd                           |
| February 10th  | • Mr. West Potomac in Auditorium        |
| • Science Fair in Cafeteria @ 7am - 5pm                | February 26th                           |
| • Kids Night Out in Gym @ 6pm - 10pm (Sophomore Class) | • Winter Sports Awards Banquet          |
|  | • WPPTSA Meeting                        |
|  | February 28th                           |
|  | • Boys and Girls State Applications due |
|  | • Black History Month Assembly (FLEX)   |



Happy Valentine's  
Day Baby!

Mimi

"Girls are superior  
in all aspects of life,  
they are prettier and  
smell better."

~ senior *Tori Wong*



Photo by Adele Hampton

Jessica Poole,  
From friend to friend we are with  
you to the end. Despite hardships  
and pain together through the  
rain I will love you forever my  
friend  
Turnerz

Zamie Crowe-  
my pink pony princess, I  
look into your eyes all I see  
is a part of heaven looking at  
me. I love your hair,  
it resembles a mare's  
-anonymous

To the 2 best friends in the  
world- I love laughing, crying,  
pouting, dancing, and eating too  
much food with you! Thanks for  
all the randomness!  
Love, Erin

Hugs and Kisses Class of 2007  
You are the best!

Love, Mrs. Kreloff

Happy 6 months  
Justin

Love, Sam

Dear Mr. Coe,  
You are the beat of my drum. You are  
the sparkle in my make-up. You are  
the seasoning on my goldfish.  
Love, Ruby, Szilagi, Jessica,  
Rodgers, and Megan Gilmore

Mary Poppins,  
I love you, and everything about  
you. You'll always be special to  
me. I'm here for you.  
-baby

## Girls Have It Rough

Sydney Smith  
Wire Reporter

The most important part of any single girl's day is getting ready for school. Most girls think that in order to attract a man, they must appear to be calm, confident, and attractive. Unfortunately for us, men do not have this problem. A boy can walk through the halls looking like he just rolled out of bed, and get a girlfriend. However, if a girl walks by with the same disheveled appearance, some students may think she looks stupid and unattractive, certainly not the qualities most find desirable. Senior Annie Keast said, "Women have it harder than men because it takes them more time to get ready. When going out, both girls and boys judge women based on their

appearance." However, some girls think that this problem is more psychological than factual. Senior Kate Kosan said, "I think women have it harder than guys because we are often the ones who care more about the little things in a relationship...the girl tries to make up for being over-stressed, she dresses up, she kisses him, she makes a fuss."

The most important thing to remember when trying to get a date for Friday night is that the guy has to like you, not your image or how you look. This is why many students use clothing as a symbol of self-expression. Kosanovich said, "I really do not take that long to get ready for a date because I know that my boyfriend likes me no matter what I wear."

## What a Woman Wants

Angie Palma  
Business Manager

A typical "get to know you" activity is a game that involves naming something you cannot live without. It is easy to imagine that males and females would differ in what they would instinctively grab. When asked, most girls responded with music, iPods, cell phones, and make-up. After giving it some thought, many added family, friends, and photographs. After polling many girls at our school, it seems that there are ten items or "something's" that many girls agree they can not live without.

1. Friends
2. Family
3. Pets
4. Music
5. Cell Phone
6. Boys
7. Camera
8. Jewelry
9. Shoes
10. Clothes

Photo by Adele Hampton



# THE BAT SE

## But We Do Not Have Cooties

Mariya Ilyas  
News Editor

Girls are annoying. Or so believe the guys.

The four main things guys find annoying about girls are: how they look, loquacious ability, attitude, tendency to on another.

The majority of girls in our school try, in one way or the other, to look beautiful for the opposite sex. Beauty may mean lots of Revlon eyeliner to one, a Polo shirt to another, and letting down natural hair to another. "I hate when they wear too much makeup," said senior Nicholas Spataro. Spataro explained girls do not need to wear a lot of cosmetics to look good, in fact, "guys prefer natural beauty."

And if a boy happens to run across this article, then listed to the right is some advice in dealing with annoying girls.

- "If the girl is annoying you, then she's not right for you."  
~ Senior Nicholas Spataro
- "Try to be just as annoying."  
~ Junior Chris Silva
- "Girls don't [always] have to be right."  
~ Sophomore Daniel Yohannes
- "[Tell them] we need to talk."  
~ Freshman Jack Murphy

Annoying  
Characteristics  
of Women

1. How they look
2. Loquacious ability
3. Attitude
4. They all cause trouble

To Mrs. Sridhar's 5th period  
Discrete Math Class-  
Good work, keep it up for 2nd  
semester!  
From 5th pd



Photo by Adele Hampton

"It takes awhile to find a good guy, because most of them are immature and there's not that many good-looking ones at our school."

~ junior, *Amanda Willis*

To the  
2nd





"Men enjoy women's cooking more than women enjoy men's cooking."

~ Associate Principal  
Bruce Jankowitz

Photo by Adele Hampton

# The Difficult Lives of Guys

Emmanuel Koduah

Wire Reporter

It is the age old question that is sure to produce heated debates when asked: Who has it easier, men or women? Most people believe that the lives of their own sex is a lot harder than those of their opposite sex, but the truth of the matter is that men have it a lot harder than women.

Any woman reading this is likely to state the difficulties of being a woman, such as having to take thirty minutes or more to put on make-up and accessories, while a guy can get dressed in five minutes or less. The biggest difficulty of being a man is one that he cannot do anything about: women.

As the old saying goes, "Can't live with them, can't live without them." Because of this, we (men) are forced to live with the most complex organism on the face of the earth. Anyone with a sister, girlfriend, wife, mother, or even just a female friend can relate to

the difficulties of living with these beautiful monsters. I asked my own mother what the most difficult thing about being a woman was and she quickly said pregnancy and giving birth. Ironically, when I asked my father the same question about men, his response was, "Living with your mother when she was pregnant with all cravings and emotional mood swings."

To take it to another level, not only are men expected to understand the millions of emotions of women, but they are also expected to express their own. What women do not understand is how difficult it is for a man to show his true emotions.

Most of the guys at this school are relatively young and have yet to experience that worst difficulties of living with women. We can start bracing ourselves for the chick flicks, the pottery classes, and the dance classes. As my father best stated, "If you find yourself spending your Saturday afternoons in a shopping mall, holding your wife's purse, consider it one of the difficulties of just being."

## Goofy Girls

Ken Llewellyn

Opinions Editor

Beastie Boys singer Mario C may have described how guys feel about girls best when he said, "All I really want is girls," and while the male species craves the female species, the old saying, "can not live with 'em can not live without 'em," never gets old.

However, all guys know that chicks can be pretty annoying sometimes. From having the need to go shopping 24/7 to straight up "b—ing," girls can be a real drag sometimes. Girls might say the same thing about guys, but girls do way more annoying stuff than guys.

Anyone who has seen *American Idol* knows that every girl on the planet thinks they can sing well, and while a girl singing is not that annoying, it is when they get into groups that your gag reflex kicks in.

One of the annoyances that every guy is familiar with is girls' non-stop craving for shopping. Even guys' moms do it, and it is not just the shopping that is whack, it is the fact that it takes a girl forever to buy something.

Girls also have a tendency to get angry way easier. Maybe it is some kind of issue with girl hormones or something, but girls just get angrier, much more easily than guys. I mean, there is no movie called *Mean Boys*. Ask a girl the question she does not know the answer to or make a joke about her that she does not like, and she will demolish you, but the barrage of verbal abuse is not as bad as when girls talk about you behind your back. This can cause what is known as "drama," where girls talk about what another girl or guy did and how that makes them a female dog or a donkey's behind.

While these things can drive a guy mad, none come close to the most annoying thing about girls. It is the small clothes, or lack of clothing, girls wear and the huge distraction it is for guys. How is one supposed to be concentrating on a test when the girl in front of you is wearing (or not wearing) her summer threads? During the warm periods of the year, guys must hit the books even more because so much knowledge is lost when the girls are in visual range during a test or quiz.

No guy likes these things but when talking about girls the positives always outweigh the negatives. Just cut down on the amount of time it takes to pick out clothing from three hours to half an hour and the guys can put up with the rest.

"Although society depicts males as being stronger, women are actually stronger because they give birth and know what real pain is like"

~ sophomore Dorothea Kamara



Photo by Caroline Staples

"Guys are better because in the Bible they are created in God's image."

~ senior Eric Tronton



Photo by Adele Hampton

TLE  
HE  
XES



Photo by Adele Hampton

Wire Reporter

- Average age boys have their first drink: 11
- Average age boys first start to grow facial hair: 14.5
- Average age boys get their driver's license: 16
- Average age boys have their first kiss: 16
- Average age boys have sexual intercourse for the first time: 17
- Average age boys finish puberty and reach adult height: 18
- Average age men get married: 27
- Average age men die: 73
- Boys use about 7,000 words a day
- This year, for the 63<sup>rd</sup> year in a row, more boys were born than girls in the U.S.
- Boys produce twice as much saliva as girls.

Facts from:  
[www.whitcousepolicy.gov](http://www.whitcousepolicy.gov) [www.govinfo.about.com](http://www.govinfo.about.com) [www.obgyn.net](http://www.obgyn.net)

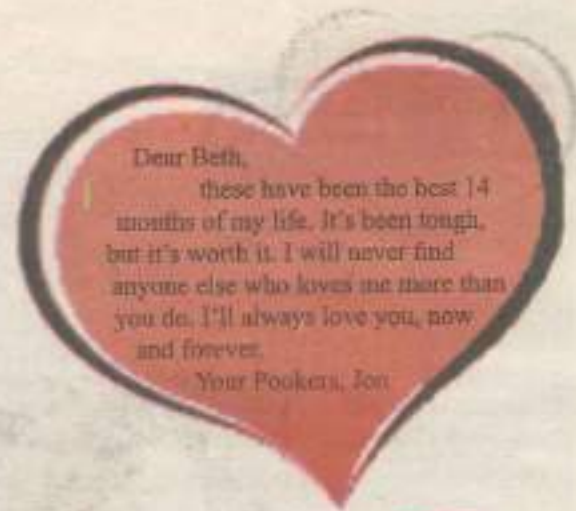
### Annoying Characteristics of Men

1. "Boys do not show emotion. They never say what they really mean. They pretend they do not care and brush everything off. It is 'whatever' to them." -consensus of Ms. Reynold's AP Literature class
2. Their obsession with video games and other things that do not really matter
3. Lying all the time
4. Cocky, inflated egos
5. Trying to be a jock when they clearly lack jock qualities
6. They smell funny

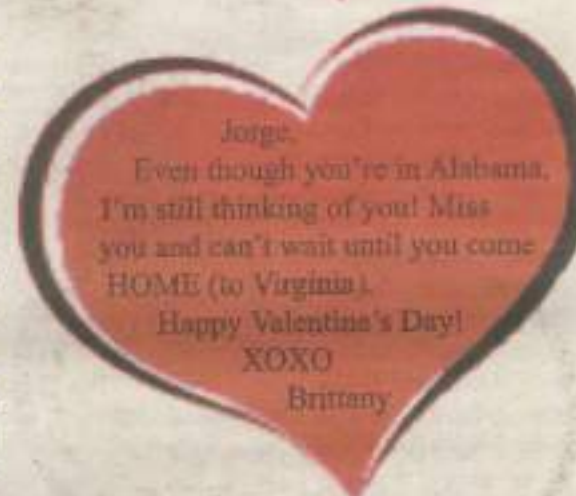
You rock!



To my sweetheart James,  
After two years, I'm still  
greatly in love with you!  
I wish us many more endless  
Valentine's Days together.  
I LOVE YOU!  
XOXOXOXO  
Dani



Dear Beth,  
these have been the best 14  
months of my life. It's been tough,  
but it's worth it. I will never find  
anyone else who loves me more than  
you do. I'll always love you, now  
and forever.  
Your Pooker, Jon



Jorge,  
Even though you're in Alabama,  
I'm still thinking of you! Miss  
you and can't wait until you come  
HOME (to Virginia).  
Happy Valentine's Day!  
XOXO  
Brittany



Photo by Adele Hampton

"Girls rule and  
boys drool."  
~ senior Kathleen  
Jones



Mary-  
You are the most beautiful  
person I have ever met.  
I'd be LOST without you.



Photo by Caroline Staples

"Girls are better  
than guys because  
they are kind, sexy,  
and sensitive."

~ custodian Jeffrey  
Lewis



Diana- I love you!

You're the best  
girlie ever!!



Dear Kathleen O'Connor  
You brighten our day.  
Love,  
Farve, 22, Cox, JD, Ken, KS,  
BL, CG, KC, The Greek



## Tackling the Issues

## Colts Will Come Out On Top

Hooff Cooksey

Sports Editor

After an emotional victory by the Indianapolis Colts, defeating the New England Patriots 38-34, Peyton and his team hope that they can finish their quest for glory in Miami with a victory over the Chicago Bears. The Indianapolis Colts will win Super Bowl XVI. This is the year for Peyton Manning and the Colt's defense.

In my opinion, the Bears have not been challenged in their victory over the Saints in the NFC championship game. The game was played in Chicago, in weather conditions greatly favoring the Bears, who were playing the team from the hot and humid state of Louisiana. The Bears did shut down Drew Brees, but once again, the snowy weather could have played a huge factor in the performance of the star quarterback from New Orleans.

The Colts' defense went through their ups and downs the entire season, but have really stepped it up in the playoffs. Through the regular season, the Bears allowed about 294 yards a game, whereas the Colts allowed about 332 yards per game. However, the Colts' defense is playing at an all-time high level. After holding off the Tom Brady and Patriots dynasty in the AFC championship game, the Colts should be very prepared and ready to defeat the Bears.

Offense is a totally different story in this game. Both teams have high powered passing and running games. Peyton Manning and the Colts averaged about 379 yards per game, 269 of these yards being passing. Manning's favorite targets, Marvin Harrison and Reggie Wayne, should be able to pick apart the Bear's secondary. The Colts' weakness on offense is its running game. Joseph Addai is not at level of the one-two punch the Bears give in the backfield, Thomas Jones and Cedric Benson. The two

stars in the Bear's backfield gained a total of 1,857 yards this season. The rushers were very reliable throughout the entire regular season, especially in the playoffs. Addai gained a total 1,081 yards, through the entire season. The

Colts also do not have two backs who can make an impact on the game like the Bears. However, the rushing game of both these squads is not nearly as lopsided as the passing game.

Rex Grossman peaked too early in the 2006-07 season. The last half of the season has been very rough for him. Critics continue to badger him about his play. In the NFC championship game, Grossman led only one impressive drive down the length of the field for a touchdown. Against the Colts, who have a high powered offense and a defense on the rise, this will not get it done. The Super Bowl will be decided based on skill, coaching, and most importantly effort.



Photo by Brittany Catina



Sergei Desai/VKRT



Nuccio DiNuzzo/VKRT

NFL stars Peyton Manning and Brian Urlacher will square off for the Vince Lombardi Trophy in Super Bowl XLI this Sunday.

## The Bears' "D" Will Stop Indy

Sam McCann

Aut. Sports Editor

As the Chicago Bears stumbled through the end of the regular season with a hapless,

sputtering offense, many would have predicted the only way quarterback Rex Grossman would be in Miami on February 6 would be on an early vacation. However, the young starter and the rest of his teammates turned their season around, playing some of their best football when

it mattered most, and now find themselves in the Super Bowl against the AFC champions, the Indianapolis Colts. Here is why they will soon be shuffling back to the Windy City with rings on their fingers.

The most obvious reason the Bears should come out on top is their defense. Anchored by a talented corps of linebackers, including Brian Urlacher and Lance Briggs, and cemented by a strong line and secondary, the unit is easily one of the strongest in the NFL. It held opponents to an average of

a microscopic 15.9 points per game through the regular season. Best of all, the defense was able to beat strong offensive teams such as Seattle and New Orleans in the playoffs. That bodes well for them against

an offense lead by Peyton Manning. The defense should coax a couple of interceptions from Manning and perhaps a fumble or two from rookie runner Joseph Addai, and take the game by storm. Manning, despite his most recent comeback, is notorious for choking in the clutch, and should struggle against the fearsome front seven of the Bear's defense.

While defense is definitely their strongest aspect, the Bears also have strong special teams, led by Devin Hester, who tied the records for longest play in NFL history and most return touchdowns in a season earlier in the year. However, Hester is only part of the NFC champions' special teams. Kicker Robbie Gould has been key to the team's success all year, and his presence ensures that, in a close game, the Bears will at least have a kicker to rely on if they get within field-goal-range.

Although no one will ever confuse Rex Grossman with Peyton Manning, there is no reason why Grossman will not turn in another solid performance in the Super Bowl. After struggling at the regular season end, Grossman has turned it around in the playoffs, consistently giving his team more than it needed to win. He is certainly not spectacular, but he gets the job done. Also many forget that the Bears boast the best one-two punch running back punch on this side of the Saints, Cedric Benson and Thomas Jones.

As long as the offense remains relatively mistake free against a defense that was twenty-first in the league in total defense, the Bears should march to victory.



Photo by Brittany Catina

Hooff's Pick:  
Colts 42, Bears 38

Sam's Pick:  
Bears 31, Colts 13

Staff Picks:



Photo by Lakeisha Langley

"Peyton Manning is long overdue for a championship, and he'll come out on top in Super Bowl XLI."  
Score: Colts over Bears 31-24



Photo by Brittany Catina

"The Bears' defense will make Peyton Manning pee his pants."  
Score: Bears over Colts 21-10.



Photo by Brittany Catina

"With Peyton leading the offense and Bob Sanders hawking on defense, the Colts will fry."  
Score: Colts over Bears 31-17

## Championship Schedule

## Boys Varsity Basketball Districts:

Date: February 13-16

Location: First Round @ top seed night  
Following rounds @ Hayfield

## Gymnastics Regionals:

Date: February 9

Location: Lake Buckdork

## Indoor Track &amp; Field

Date: February 7 (field events)

February 10 (track events)

Location: Episcopal

## Girls Varsity Basketball Districts:

Date: February 13-16

Location: First Round @ top seed night  
Following rounds @ Hayfield

## Swim &amp; Dive

Date: February 2-3

Location: Oak Marr

## Wrestling

Date: February 9-10

Location: Annandale

George C. Branche III, M.D.

Orthopaedic Surgery

Specializing in Sports Medicine  
and Arthroscopic SurgeryThe  
Anderson  
Orthopaedic  
ClinicA Center of Excellence  
for Orthopaedics3445 Anne Nancy Drive, Arlington, VA 22206  
(703) 769-6600 • Fax (703) 893-4478  
OrthoDoc@andersonortho.com

Shakura,

You are the greatest!

Sharifa

GROW  
YOUR OWN  
FACE

Ms. Hall,

I've been throwing signs at  
you, but you haven't picked up  
on any yet  
-secret admirer



# Former Student Excels in NCAA

Alex Keckisen

Editor in Chief

With the 2010 NFL draft just three years away, new names are starting to appear on the top of many scouts' lists. Micah Johnson, a former student at our school, is one of those players that will be hoping that his name will come at the end of the sentence, "With the first pick in the NFL draft, the San Diego Chargers select..."

Johnson, now a freshman at the University of Kentucky, is excelling at the collegiate level with a great combination of skill and size. The six-foot, two-inch, 255-pound linebacker is currently being touted as one of the top picks for the 2010 NFL draft, a huge distinction considering the odds of being drafted into professional football.

There has been plenty of discussion as to why Johnson left our school after his sophomore year. Some suggest it was to increase his chances of receiving scholarships, while others say he left for his brother, who would be attending the University of Kentucky. "We had to leave because my dad was stationed in Ft. Campbell," said Johnson. In two seasons at Ft. Campbell high school, Johnson totaled 2,543 yards rushing, 46 touchdowns, and 293 tackles. He was also named Kentucky Mr. Football and an All-American by Parade magazine, and EA Sports. ESPN.com has ranked him as the top inside-linebacker for the 2010 NFL draft. Scout.com touts him as possessing "freakish athletic ability."

After just one season of play, Johnson is becoming a favorite player on both sides of the football. In the first quarter of the Music City Bowl, Johnson ran the ball from the one-yard line to the Wildcats' 12 play, 62 yard drive. Unfortunately, he was stopped on his first attempt. Johnson did get another chance, but this time, he could not be blocked. The play was just the beginning of the Wildcats' impressive 28-20 win over Clemson, their first bowl win since 1984. "Scoring in the bowl game was the best part," said Johnson of the season.

Johnson's senior year of high school was full of scholarship offers from over 30 schools, including Penn State, Notre Dame, and Ohio State. Surprisingly, Johnson spurned these traditional powers, deciding the University of Kentucky Wildcats was where he wanted to play football. "I went to UK because my older brother goes there and that is where I feel most comfortable," said Johnson about his decision. "They also have the coaching staff that I like the most."

Christian, Micah's older brother, is currently a sophomore at Kentucky



Micah Johnson avoids pursuing Clemson players as he leaps into the endzone. Johnson scored the first touchdown for the Kentucky in their win in the Music City Bowl.

and plays on the offensive line at the tackle position. Micah's size is big, but is practically nothing in comparison to his older brother, Christian, also a graduate of our school, stands at 6'4" and weighs 325 pounds. He currently holds the bench press record in our weight room and has even increased his lifting statistics to 440 pounds on the bench. He also lifts 545 pounds in the squat lift.

The Johnson brothers also want to help their team compete in arguably the most competitive conference in college football. "I think I will be one of the best players in the SEC [at Kentucky]," said the younger Johnson. "I want to play in the NFL more than anything else," he added about his aspirations for playing after college. Now at Kentucky, Micah is being touted as one of the top young players in the SEC, and soon enough could be one of the best in the NFL.

## IN THE NUMBERS

1

point- the margin of victory by our boys varsity basketball team over South County.

13

feet- the height junior Nick Schaum pole vaulted. This vault qualified him for the state championship competition.

48

The number of swimmers from our school who swam in the District competition.

6

runners from our school who qualified for Nationals at the Virginia Tech meet. Rashan Colbert in the 500 m dash. Kelly Jemison, Brooke Regensburg, Elizabeth Heath, and Kelsey Rosenburg in the 4X800 m relay. Kat Lee in the long jump and triple jump.

## Soccer Stars Start Sooner than Some

Devon Cain

Wire Reporter

How do West Potomac soccer players get ready for the season? They play the game. When it is too cold to play outside, the girls and boys soccer teams of our school play indoor soccer at the Fairfax Sportsplex. The facility is in an Industrial Park about twenty

minutes away from school, off Route 395. Despite its odd location, the Sportsplex is a haven for dedicated players who often drive out to the facility two or three times a week.

Indoor soccer games are very different from those played on our home field at West Potomac. The smaller fields at the Sportsplex are covered in turf and surrounded by a thick plastic wall. Each side plays with six players (in an outdoor game, each team has eleven players on a field) on a field and substitutions can be made any time during the game, like they would be made in a hockey game. There are also usually more goals scored during an indoor game than an outdoor game. Because indoor games are so fast-paced and the field so much smaller, players have the opportunity to work on their foot skills and speed. Senior Samantha Strong, varsity goalkeeper for the girls team last year, said, "Indoor is great for the regular season because it helps me with my reflexes." Conditioning before and throughout the spring is also very important and, "[Indoor games] help to keep us in shape," said senior varsity player Alex Mounts. There are also pick-up indoor games being held in the auxiliary gym at our school, where new potentials join members

from last year's teams and everyone has the opportunity to play.

West Potomac soccer players see offseason indoor practices as the first step in preparation for a successful spring season. Member of last year's boys varsity team, senior Surafel Wondimu said, "[Last year], we had a lot of close games but we gave up goals at the end and lost more than we should have." The boys team, coached by Gavin Stevens, ended last season sixth in the Patriot district with a 2-7-4 record. "We have an older team this year, people who have played with each other for a long time, so I think we are going to do well," Wondimu said.

Last spring, the girls varsity team basked in the light of victories against hard opponents such as West Springfield and the nationally ranked Chantilly team, but ultimately lost in the District semifinals. Coached by Jean Coder, the girls were fourth going into the district tournament and ended as the number two seed from the Patriot district in the regional tournament with a 11-7-0 record. Senior Teresa Caro said, "It's going to be hard to live up to our success of last year, but we have a lot of potential and high hopes for a winning season."



Indoor soccer has risen in popularity at our school as a training method for the upcoming spring season.

Jamie,  
Happy Valentine's Day

Love, Mom

Gretchen, Erin, Marie & Helen,  
We miss you, we need you, we  
love you! Come back to us!  
SOS!

Colin,  
No matter what, you are  
loved!

-M + D







## Jayne Seaward



The question is, what makes a Super Bowl party a memorable event which comes once a year?

able to watch the biggest football game of the year on a huge TV," also makes Super Bowl parties much more fun. If you are planning to throw your own Super Bowl party, this February, here are some tips to make the best ever:

- Create a relaxing setting. Invite everyone over



This way it is not just a 'day' or 'grade' night. It will make it much more interesting and fun. What is the one thing that will make or break your party? Figuring out what food to serve is key. When asked, Nicholas said, "The best food to serve is definitely Toasties and salsa, along with food on the grill. Most people really love it with the burgers and



So, when February rolls around, all you need is a big screen TV, a grill, and lots of enthusiastic and you have got yourself a great Super Bowl party.

Taylor, John

Others are afraid that the idea of a touch screen could backfire - will people be able to use it? However, when the iPod was introduced, the click wheel was a fairly innovative idea, and people were able to use it very easily. Apple, which prides itself on making things easy, is hoping for the same success with the touch screen on the iPhone.

ing cost \$200,000, the  
Rhoad gives you all of  
that, plus some faster  
features, and the best  
part, an iPod (\$250,  
350 product itself). A

and simplified to just text.  
only allow you to go on certain sites,  
and the sites can look completely different  
Just like they did with the iPod, Apple will al-  
most certainly increase the size of the hard drive every  
time they update the iPhone, and keep it at the same price.

For more on the iPhone, go to [apple.com/iphone](http://apple.com/iphone).

The term of actors presented their One Act play to a jam-packed Kogichman Theatre. The fifty-minute skit exceeded expectations in every aspect. The show focused on three young men presenting an abridged history of the United States. However, when trying to present this information their slide

the year 1992 all the young men present. However, they left out the fifty or so years between the end of the Civil War to the start of WWII. Not only did the joke, humor, and acting in this skit make it great.

one point in the show, a man's cell phone began to ring, and moments later that incident was incorporated into the play. These unique aspects allowed to audience to become involved in the skit and helped the skits popularity soar.

---

Hoot Cooksey  
 1985

# One Act

and maybe add some of their own aspects to the play. The audience sees a shot that lasts about thirty minutes, but a much greater amount of time goes into preparing the performance. One successful group led by seniors Molly Weisblatt and Patrick Moniz set up a shot based on American

love acting," said Weisblat. "This great to see them grow and come to no prior acting experience, and

including this group. The show even includes a 1085 between two of the performers.

allowed to advance in the competition or only perform in the



PHOTO BY DREW SMITH

water guns to reenact American history.

very brief overview of one point in the show,



## Day in the Life of... Magnífica McKenzie

Ken Llewellyn

Opinions Editor

You have seen her around; she is the one who is a tad shorter than most people. Spanish teacher Carla McKenzie has been here for a long time, so she is used to most looking down to talk to her, but despite her small stature, she has got a big personality.

McKenzie was born in Panama as the oldest of eight children. She was raised in Brooklyn and then became a teacher in Prince George's County at Central High School. "I became a teacher because, at the time, I enjoyed working with teenagers and I really enjoyed the Spanish language and its culture." Then a friend told her about our school and how great it is. McKenzie decided to apply and has taught Spanish 1, 2, 3, and 4 for seven years. McKenzie said, "I enjoy teaching Level One the most because the students are more excited about the language at that level."

Outside of teaching, McKenzie is an avid photographer. "I enjoy taking pictures of others," said McKenzie. She also enjoys dancing and laughing. When asked what her favorite thing about West Potomac is, McKenzie said, "some of the students." It is that kind of sense of humor that makes McKenzie a favorite among many students. Said junior

Devin Clarke, "She is really motivated to teach and a very interesting person. She is kind of funny, too." McKenzie said she especially enjoys when students who have graduated come back and visit. "It is a really rewarding experience," she said. McKenzie is usually an upbeat and positive person but you do not want to make her mad because, as she says, "You do not want to see the Brooklyn come out." Although McKenzie threatens her students often, she is considered one of the nicest teachers at our school.

Although McKenzie has many interests and hobbies, she



Photo by LeKeisha Langley

Although Spanish teacher Carla McKenzie has a small size and stature, students describe her as having one of the biggest hearts and attitudes in the school.

does not have much time to have fun anymore. At the beginning of the year, McKenzie gave birth to her first child, a boy named Brandon. This caused her to miss a lot of time at school and many students' language skills suffered. "My language comprehension skills really did not excel when she was not here," said junior Craig Gaylord. She says her baby is her life and she does not have time for outside activities other than school.

If not a Spanish teacher, McKenzie says she would be a social worker, because she loves kids and helping other people. No one knows how she would fare in that profession, but it is a good thing she is not a social worker because she provides great insight on the mysterious language that is Spanish.

With her help, many students are mastering words like "pantalones" and "juevos" in her exciting and educational Spanish classes.

## The Vicious Violinist

Mariya Ilyas

News Editor

Music is her love and the violin is her passion. When she plays, all are silent, and when she stops, all are clapping. She takes a deep breath, stands up, and leans forward for a slight bow.

No one is more passionate about the violin than sophomore Emily Rapavi. As a freshman, she made our school's top orchestra, the Sinfonietta. She has participated in District 10 Honors Orchestra for three years now. "Playing the violin gives me the opportunity to express myself in a creative way through music and it is challenging which is what I enjoy most about it," she said.

Rapavi's passion for the violin dates back to when she was young. She always wanted to play the violin and when the opportunity came around in fourth grade at Groveton Elementary, she was the first to sign up. In the summer of 2005, she went to music summer camp at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) where she was concert master.

Sophomore Emily Rapavi works hard to make her performances the best.

Her hard work is shown through her performance in class. "She is an amazing performer. She has a really great stage presence and she understands what it takes to truly prepare for a performance," said her orchestra teacher, Mary Wilkerson. Many in the class find her company overwhelming too.

Rapavi's charismatic character is shown outside of class as well. One of her friends, sophomore Yoon-ji Ha, described Rapavi in three words, "caring, super-talented, and enjoyable."

"She's a really hard worker," said Ha. There is no doubt about that because Rapavi takes playing the violin very seriously. She practices for two hours every day while balancing her extracurricular activities, strenuous Honors courses, and AP World History class. Her infatuation does not stop there: first violinist for the National Symphony Orchestra today's finest orchestra, Vernon Summers, is her private tutor outside of school.

"In five to ten years, I see myself as a successful violin performer or a musical director," said Rapavi. No matter where life takes her, one thing is for sure: with a bow in her hand, there is no doubt she will bring a great reputation to our school. As Wilkerson said, "Whatever Emily puts her mind to doing, I have no doubt she will excel."



Photo by Brittany Catina

## The Spiel On Behind The Wheel

Zach Feinstein

Online Editor

Driver's Education is something that changes a student's life and every sophomore looks forward to completing it. This is always a very exciting time in a teenager's life, but there is only one thing that can give students this legal right: Driver's Ed.

Driver's Ed is a course that prepares high school students for the dangers and excitement of the road. In Driver's Ed, one learns about the road signs, how to turn left and right, and how you should drive when there is not ideal driving weather. When asked about what you learn in the class, junior Paris Fletcher said, "You learn the rules of the road. One can learn when to use certain hand symbols, parking symbols, and how to read maps."

Driver's Ed is taught by P.E. teachers, Tyrone Strother, John Bulmer, Jean Coder, and Paula Treherne.

In the class, students are taught how to control the wheel and how to get a permit or license. P.E. teacher John Bulmer said, "You learn the rules of the road, driving techniques, and the effects of alcohol."

When a student is fifteen and six months, they can obtain a learner's permit. Even if you have not completed Driver's Ed, the student can still get their permit. Once they have completed Driver's Ed, a student can get his/her driver's license when they are sixteen and three months.

While completing Driver's Ed is something most teenagers

look forward to, some question if completing the class helps your driving skills? Junior Allison Leisner believes it does. "I think that Driver's Ed does help with your driving. I think that without it, students would not know the rules that come along with it." As students finish Driver's Ed, most would assume that they get their license because they completed the class.

However, the Virginia Driver's Manual says when one finishes the class, he or she receives a Driver's Education completion certificate.

Taking Driver's Ed is one of the most exciting times in a high school student's life. It begins a time where most parents will have to take shotgun as their new drivers take control of the wheel. Driver's Ed changes a high school student's life for the better.



Photo by Brittany Catina

Sophomore Courtney Walker practices steering in her Driver's Ed class.

## State of the Arts

**Rascal Flatts**  
February 15, 2007  
1st Mariner Arena  
Baltimore, MD

**Localpalooza**  
February 10, 2007  
Jaxx Nightclub  
Springfield, VA

**O'Jays**  
February 23, 2007  
Rams Head Live!  
Baltimore, MD

**Goo Goo Dolls**  
February 6, 2007  
9:30 Club  
Washington, DC

LICENSED - INSURED



**BEAL CONTRACTORS**  
ADDITIONS - RENOVATIONS - IMPROVEMENTS

BILL BEAL  
(703) 765-9334  
(703) 765-4816 (FAX)

1138 CEDAR DALE LANE  
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA 22308

Flip, Ninja, Cici,  
Goobers, Liz-Bit  
Jakob's Girls

I LOVE YOU  
Cara Yaworske

Love, Brendon



## FREEDOM TO...WRITE

Sandy Slippen

Copy Editor

In the cinematic subgenre of inspirational films, one of the most common formulas is the "inspirational teacher who makes a difference." Many films in the past, from *Dangerous Minds* to *The School of Rock*, have used this theme as the basic backdrop of their plotlines.

*Freedom Writers*, from writer/director Richard LaGravenese, is the newest feature film of this variety. However, *Freedom Writers* ends up being a truly surprising film. It does not completely adhere to every

of destructive racial riots in the city of Los Angeles. Following the riots, the former A-list public school of Woodrow Wilson High School is forcibly racially integrated by a school board. As a result, racial tensions within the newly integrated school run high as each group or race struggles to maintain their power.

Erin Gruwell (Hilary Swank), after accepting a job as a teacher of freshmen and sophomores, is presented as a crusading, idealistic young teacher who believes the only effective way to end this racial tension and hate is to convince her students to expand their knowledge.

Through unconventional and controversial (particularly to her fellow teachers) methods of extensive teacher-to-student interaction, Erin forms a bond with her multicultural students, who she encourages to tell stories of the struggles they all face every day. Over time, the students began to trust and admire Erin. In 1999, Erin's students' collective thoughts were published as *The Freedom Writers Diary*, thus laying the groundwork for this feature film.

*Freedom Writers* is blessed by strong acting from all major cast members, comprised of a variety of newcomers and veterans. Two-time Academy Award winner Hilary Swank, in addition to being lively and energetic, brings a dignified, appealing presence to Erin. Through scenes of her home life with her neglected husband (Patrick Dempsey), the struggles Erin faces to balance work and home are fully realized. Many of the

newcomers portraying the *Freedom Writers*, including pop star Mario and feisty April Lee Hernandez, bring a hardened edge to the film that keeps the audience completely invested in the proceedings.

Overall, *Freedom Writers* succeeds wholeheartedly in spite of its conventions. As a result of being based on a true story and using much of the actual words of the *Freedom Writers* from their diaries in the film, *Freedom Writers* is able to be authentic, emotionally solid, and surprisingly profound.



Paramount Pictures/KRT

The newly released film, *Freedom Writers*, tells the inspirational story of the teacher Erin Gruwell, played by Hilary Swank. The film portrays the battles of racism found in a newly integrated school.

## Food out of this World



Raul Rubiera/KRT

Brittany Catina

Photographer

When contemplating where to go for your big date this weekend, consider the new Johnny Rockets located in Kingstowne, near the new megaplex cinema. The restaurant opened on December 19. When entering this old-fashioned restaurant, people are greeted by very upbeat waiters who are eager to serve their customers. Johnny Rockets is known "The All American Diner."

Typical diner items that can be found on the menu include: Starters such as "American Fries," onion rings, and cheese and chili fries. Popular lunch and dinner items include their ever popular hamburgers, for example, "The St. Louis, The Smoke House, The Route 66, The Streamliner, and their #12." Burgers are probably the most popular meal item on the menu. Not only does Johnny Rockets sell burgers, but they also have sandwiches and salads, which are all equally delicious. If going to Johnny Rockets with a family, which might include little ones, Johnny Rockets also has a wide variety of choices on a children's menu. The absolute most popular item on their menu has got to be their famous milkshakes. You have not gone to Johnny Rockets unless you have tried their shakes. Flavors include: Hershey's® Chocolate Syrup, Vanilla, Strawberry, Oreo® Cookies & Cream, Strawberry-Banana, Butterfinger® Chocolate Peanut Butter Big Apple, Mocha Fudge, and more.

The new restaurant is very clean and well-kept. Although their seating space is limited, there is usually room at the counter for people to sit, at which point they have the advantage of being able to watch the cooks at work. The restaurant also features numerous mini old-fashioned table-side jukeboxes. For only 5¢, you can play any one of your oldies favorites. This restaurant is like a flashback from the 1950s. When looking around the diner, you can see many pictures from the 50s. There is a very unique feel to the restaurant that cannot be beat.

## A Dream to Light up the Sky

Kelly Wood

Features Editor

The rocket launched into the sky, leaving behind a trail of smoke. The spectators from the small mining town of Coalwood, West Virginia, cheered as their pride soared with the rocket. Although the town and its industry were slowly dying, the memory of the "rocket boys" success lives on even today.

The memoir of Homer Hickam Jr., *Rocket Boys*, is a true and inspiring story about the dreams of a high school boy and his determination to fulfill them, despite great adversity. Coalwood was a poor town where boys were expected to become coal miners and hopes of a better life were quickly extinguished. Hickam was different. After seeing the Soviet-launched satellite Sputnik streak across the October sky in 1957, he decided to build a rocket of his own with a small group of friends.

The process was one of trial and error, but eventually became more scientific as the boys learned about rockets, physics, and calculus. Initially, the townspeople scorned Hickam's efforts and reserved their enthusiasm for the high school football team. Eventually, they grew to respect and support the

rocket boys' efforts. He went on to win the National Science Fair for his project on rockets during his senior year in high school. In an interview by Jack Bales, Hickam said, "The experience taught us we could do anything if we put our minds to it." Hickam later went to work for the NASA space program.

The story had all the right components to make it a fun and heartwarming read. Hickam brought the characters to life and I

felt as if I was standing beside him helping to light the fuse for the next rocket. It was hard to put the book down, but luckily, there are more books in the "rocket boys" series. The book, was also made into a movie in 1999 called *October Sky*, and was just as exciting and stimulating. Although some small aspects of the plot were slightly altered, the main storyline stayed true to the book.

The book is truly inspirational and entertaining. The idea that one boy's dreams and motivation helped him excel in life shows the importance of perseverance and never losing sight of your goals. When asked about the novel, junior Cliff Smircina said, "I liked it because it was interesting and it gave a message. It was definitely an inspirational book and movie."



www.homerhickam.com

Homer and two of his friends in Coalwood, WV holding one of their rockets. The memoir of Homer Hickam tells the exciting story of one boy and his ability to dream big.

To my Lucifer  
I LOVE U

Your lil teddy bear

Dear Jack,  
Happy Birthday  
to my favorite twin!!  
Love,  
Katherine

Cole,

Happy Valentine's  
Day!



## In the Eyes of the Painter

Drew Smith

Wire Reporter

Part of being a young, vivacious high school student is being loud and rowdy in everyday life. However, one student that does not fit this profile is senior Silvia Baptiste. Quiet and reserved, she is a talented student, gymnast, and an extremely gifted artist. Her quiet and calm demeanor is simply a disguise for an outgoing artist, who inspires friends and teachers alike.

Silvia is gifted in many dimensions of the artistic field, including painting, graphic design, and her favorite, photography. Now in AP Photography/Portfolio Prep, her talent and ambition have been observed for three years by teacher Anne Dunn. When asked about Baptiste's artistic talent, she said, "I like that she is not afraid to go



Photo by Brittany Cotina

Silvia Baptiste is a gifted artist and enjoys painting, graphic design, and photography.

out on the edge a little bit. She's very meticulous." Specializing in abstract forms, high contrast, and very unique angles, her art work in and out of the studio is a sight for sore eyes because of her hard work and determination in everything she does. Her dedication shines not only in the dark room of the photo lab, but in her academics as well.

Her friends also think extremely highly of her. Senior Usra Mirza said, "[Silvia] is smart, creative, and outgoing, when you get to know her." A major part of who Baptiste is as a person is because of her Colombian

background. She was born in Colombia and moved to the United States when she was in sixth grade, where she attended Waynewood Elementary School. Because she was not born in

the U.S., she is not actually a citizen, which makes it tricky when applying for college and taking the SATs. This also means that she is bilingual, speaking both English and Spanish. However, despite the obstacles associated with being an immigrant, Baptiste uses her experiences to grade her. When asked about how her cultural background affects her art work, she said, "I guess in some ways, it has given me inspiration." This inspiration can clearly be seen in all that she does. Baptiste obviously uses this in a positive way.

Baptiste, although a great friend to many, is very timid. Often times, Baptiste is overlooked due to her quiet nature, if it was not for her daily attendance, fellow students would not even realize she was there. However, when given a reason to express herself, she never falls short. Unlike most high school students, Baptiste steers clear of all gossip and rumors, and instead leaves her mark through her beautiful art and coherent ideas.

With her fantastic artistic ability, quiet, yet strong personality, and diverse cultural background, Silvia Baptiste is sure to be a student worth watching in years to come.

## Seniors in the Halls:

### John Jordan



Photo by Brittany Cotina

Describe yourself in three words.

1. Goofy
2. Fun
3. Loving

Do you have any embarrassing or interesting nicknames? How did you get them?

People call me John Henry, Henry the III, because those who know my full name have a lot of jokes.

What is something not everyone knows about you? Any interesting hobbies?

I use to be the nerdy, fat kid that you wouldn't date, and I wore sweatpants every day for eight years of school.

### Chelsea Hylton



Photo by Brittany Cotina

Describe yourself in three words.

1. Goofy
2. Outgoing
3. Cheerful

Do you have any embarrassing or interesting nicknames? How did you get them?

My dad calls me Chello Bird, because when I was little my favorite thing to do was chase all of the birds in the front yard.

What is something not everyone knows about you? Any interesting hobbies?

I play golf, piano, and ballet. I also work at St. Elizabeth's Camp as a counselor for mentally retarded children.

## The Joyful Face in the Halls

Erin Burke

Wire Reporter

Mauricio Ramos, a senior in the Pulley Center, is a smiling face in the hallways of our school everyday. He loves his school and loves everyone in it. Those around him say he is a "hard worker" and is "always happy to be here."

Ramos is a very calm and happy high school student. His favorite color is



Photo by Drew Smith

Mauricio Ramos is known around the school for his wide grin and happy, enthusiastic personality.

red and he is very fond of the singers Selena and Jennifer Lopez. He said, "I sing Selena and Jennifer Lopez all the time, I love them!" Outside of school, he spends his free time watching television, particularly *Home Improvement*. He enjoys laughing at the funny antics of Tim Allen. Being at home and sitting in front of the TV are very relaxing to him.

Ramos also loves coming to school every day. He said, "I love to do all this neat work they give us." He loves his math class and enjoys doing division and multiplication problems. He also likes his reading class, as well as taking tests and going to the library. As part of the Pulley Center program, Ramos travels by Metro everyday to the Gateway Marriott in Crystal City. While there, he helps the Banquet team by setting up and clearing tables used in parties. He was just transferred into this center and program a few short weeks ago, and according to his new instructor, "he is adapting very well and is very optimistic in his work."

There really is not one thing that Ramos does not like about his schoolwork. His teachers are his favorite people in the school, especially his former teacher, Special Education Instructor, Jamaal Carter.

The people who work with Ramos love teaching him as much as he enjoys learning. Carter said he is "very efficient, he has very few mistakes and is a very hard worker." Peer Helping student, senior Maddie Humphreys, said, "Mauricio is so unique. He has the ability to tell you the area code for any area in America, and any day of the week for any year up through 2008!"

In addition to school, Ramos has a job at Roy Rogers in the Belle View Shopping Center. He is usually the friendly "hello" you hear behind the counter as he fills up the ice for the soda machines. It is really great that he works there, since his favorite food is fried chicken. His daily duties include cleaning the trash, cleaning the tables, and washing windows. "I like my job, the people are really nice there and my boss is nice to me," he said. You can see him working after school on Thursdays and Fridays, as well as for most of the day on the Saturdays and Sundays.

The next time you see Ramos smiling at you, you should give him a friendly smile back. He is indeed a positive asset to our school, and anyone is lucky to know or work with him. As Carter marvelously put it, "There is only one Mauricio. He's very special, and everyone loves him in the school and community."

Annie, Daniel, Eric, Gina,  
Meredith, Jesse, Thom,  
Joe, and everyone else.  
Love Ya and Happy  
Valentine's Day  
Kate C.

You know that  
I miss you...  
Jovani!

From your princess

To all my friends (you know  
who you are!): Happy  
Valentine's Day and know  
that I love you all!  
Lotsa love,  
Caitrin