



Learn about some unusual sports in the middle section.

Tuesday, January 19, 2010

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Are the freshmen sport teams beneficial for high schools and students?

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Find out the shocking new rape statistics in college settings.

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Learn about athletes who participate in different sports.

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Find interesting activities to do during the cold winter months.

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Lady GaGa wows her fans with her newest album *The Fame Monster*.

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Learn about two seniors who happen to be teammates.



Photo by Paula Accardi

Parents gathered for a meeting to discuss the changes that will be implemented starting this year.

School Improvement Plan[s] for change

School community will see more modifications made to meet goals

MICHAELA ACCARDI
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Students, teachers, and parents alike have acknowledged the changes occurring around them but few knew that they were a part of the School Improvement Plan (SIP), introduced by Principal Cliff Hardison and the Team Instructional Leaders (TILs).

Hardison, the Leadership Team (heads of each academic department), and a couple parents are currently working on the program. A parent working on the SIP and PTSA President, Ronda Drucker, said, "Until more work is done, I am not sure what the changes will be to the next school year. As you know FLEX has been on hold and it is one of the major items we are looking at that will benefit the students in the most positive way."

The SIP does not just reach for academic student achievement goals, but aims to foster essential life skills and a sense of responsibility to the community. The more specified goals of the school are to encourage students to hold themselves accountable and responsible for their education, and for the faculty and staff to support community service learning.

"We now are rescheduled (due to the December 21st

snowstorm) to have the SIP meeting on February 8 immediately following our regular PTSA meeting." Students are invited to attend this meeting with their questions for Hardison.

These basic plans being discussed involve a great amount of change that will be incorporated into the school covering various areas of a student's high school education. In a meeting with the Leadership class on December 18, Hardison introduced the full document of the SIP to the students and explained that a large portion of the plan requires that students are in compliance with the rules stated in the Student's Responsibilities and Rights (SR&R) handbook. In addition, "continuous learning" will be used that can be applied to all learning styles and vertical articulation will be used as a source of communication between the high school and the middle school. For example, regular Algebra 1 will be available to seventh and eighth grade students at Carl Sandburg Middle School and Honors Algebra 1 will now be available to freshman students. "Online geometry will also be available during the summer to students," said Hardison in his meeting with the SGA.

During the meeting with the members of the Student Government Association (SGA), Hardison stated that the humanities courses dominate and there are significant

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Increased number of assaults in the community cause concern

NORRIS BROOKS
REPORTER

On October 13, 2009 a 17-year-old girl from our school was released at 8:40 a.m. due to a minor illness. As she was walking home, she was physically attacked in a local neighborhood by an unknown male. Fortunately, an alert citizen intervened and forced the man to flee the area. The police responded immediately and are investigating the incident. Officer Goodley, our School Resource Officer, is also involved. Principal Clifford Hardison reported the incident to the students and parents via e-mail and an automated voicemail.

This was not an isolated incident on

or near a school campus in the northern Virginia area in recent months. On December 14, a man named Tereso Bonilla assaulted a 14-year-old student at Washington and Lee High School in Arlington, Virginia. Bonilla wandered onto the school's track, while intoxicated and grabbed a random girl where she was standing with a group of other teens. He proceeded to kiss her on the head and refused to let her go until her friends interceded. Ultimately, school officials confronted Bonilla, and he was arrested.

On the next day, December 15, a 13-year-old girl was sexually assaulted around 7:15 a.m. near Arcadia Road and Hawaii Court in the Falls Church area as she

walked to school. The police reported that a man approached the girl from behind and grabbed her inappropriately. He then fled the scene and still has not been apprehended.

These incidents occurred despite school security. Goodley remarked, "Unfortunately, I know of many crimes that occur in the county, and I am not happy with it. I, along with the rest of the police department, work hard at not only protecting the citizens of the county, but also solving and arresting the people who choose to victimize the people of this county." School grounds and buildings are patrolled

See *Assaults* on page 4

Students volunteer locally at Bucknell

CAMILLE DIFOLCO
REPORTER

Who keeps kids on track with their studies, motivates them during sports practices, and inspires them to light up the stage? A mentor does.

January is National Mentoring Month (NMM), instigated nine years ago by the Harvard School of Public Health, MENTOR, and the National Mentoring Partnership. MENTOR is an organization that works to pair up young Americans with "quality mentors," and was founded in 1990. NMM has boasted such celebrated sponsors as Maya Angelou, Clint Eastwood, Senator John McCain, and former President Bill Clinton.

This year, 65 students are volunteering at Bucknell Elementary School as mentors every Wednesday afternoon. According to Jones, who oversees the mentors within this program, "The mission of the program is to develop positive, caring relationships between high school and elementary students. The goal is promote academic success and instill a greater sense of responsibility, compassion, and self-confidence in all participants."

In April 2009, the Bucknell program was recognized as the FCPS Based Mentoring Program of the Year, and two past students from the program have been distinguished with the Mentor of the Year Award.

In regard to the program's effectiveness, Jones explained, "Students complete a survey at the end of the year to provide us with feedback, and past results report that 100% of mentors had a good or excellent relationship with their mentee... 100% of mentees enjoyed having a mentor and over 95% reported that having a mentor helped them feel better about themselves, improve their grades, and learn about setting goals and the importance of school."

The aforementioned mentors meet with their mentees every Wednesday afternoon at Bucknell ES. Their tasks include tutoring and guiding the mentees, both academically and socially.

Senior Linnea Markson, a mentor for the past two years, explained why she mentors: "I want to be a kindergarten teacher, and [the program] is good preparation. It's a good experience and helps the community." Senior Chyna Johnson-Owens called the experience "enlightening" and said that mentoring is important because "helping the younger generation is a two-way lesson."

The program teaches "how to work with others" and is about "giving back and helping future

See *Mentoring* on page 4

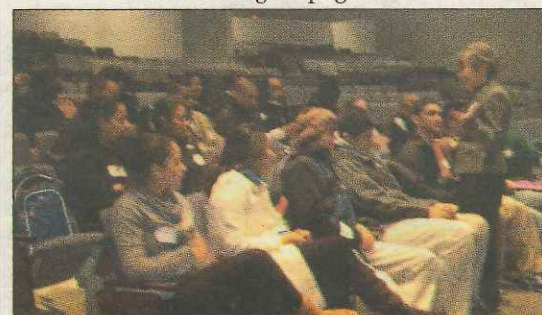


Photo by Nia Copeland

Many students are participating the mentoring program at school.

Self defense is needed in schools

The Students' Responsibilities and Rights (SR&R) handbook covers many areas of how one should behave and conduct themselves in school. Although all of these responsibilities and rights are essential to having a school run smoothly, not all of them prepare students for the outside world.

As of now, if two students get into a fight, they will be treated identically. This means that if two students get into a fight both students will be punished the same. However, if one student is in turtle position when the fight is broken up, it is more likely that that student will receive lesser or no consequences. In the court system of this country, the person who started the fight is tried differently and more severely than the one who did not start the fight. This is also the same in sports. When two players get into a fight, the player who started the fight usually receives a harsher punishment than the player who did not start the fight. Why is our school and county not following what has worked in the court of law for so many years? There could be many answers to this question. First, it could be difficult to find out which student did actually start the fight and get accurate information on the events of the fight. Secondly, the administration could not be as attentive or lack the time to thoroughly go through the case. In other words, it is better to get into a fight outside of school grounds because then at least one has a chance of a fair trial.

The SR&R handbook clearly states that any

kind of physical assault will result in a ten day suspension and depending on the nature of injuries or if weapons are used, a recommendation for expulsion would also be issued. Moreover, the victim of the assault is supposed to remain in a protective position called turtle position and not fight back or cause harm to the student assaulting them. Then, a school administrative is supposed to come to the scene and stop the assault. This means that no matter the circumstance or the situation, if another student inflicts physical harm to a student, then that student must go into turtle position and remain in that position until an administrator faculty member comes. This might be a good way to protect some students; however, this does not prepare any student for reality.

If a person assaults a student in an alley or a park, they would not crawl into turtle position and hope that the police come. One would most likely try to get away from the scene and inform a police officer as to what just happened. This does not mean that one necessarily needs to knock the attacker out, but more of to get them out of the way while they make a break for it.

Let us face it; Fairfax County has some rules and regulations that do not always make sense to people. However, one of the main lessons a student is supposed to have learned by the end of high school is the feeling that they can handle themselves in the real world. The outside world does not involve crawling into turtle position.

Corrections

- On page 5 of the December Issue, in the article "Debate team shines in meet," senior Julia Pei is listed on the Debate team. Her freshman brother Christopher Pei is a member of the debate team, not Julia.
- On page 5 of the December Issue, Tommy Friederich was credited with "News Briefs" but the writer was Laura Reynolds.

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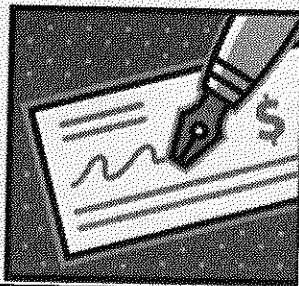
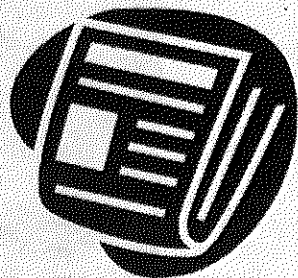
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RANTS and Raves

A **RANT** for drug trafficking in Mexico

A **rave** for the movie *Avatar*

A **RANT** for the entire Southern California Athletic Department

A **rave** Mark McGuire finally coming clean about his steroid use

NHS becomes less prestigious

EMILY SMITH
COPY EDITOR

NHS (National Honor Society), a once prestigious organization, has recently changed its tune. West Potomac NHS, sponsored by physics teacher Garrett Hubbard and math teacher Allison Satterwhite, announced that NHS has decided to open its arms to all students, whether or not these students can meet the exceptional standards on their own.

In all previous years, students applying to NHS were required to fill out forms, get teacher recommendations, and write multiple short-answer essays about leadership, grades, and why they wished to be a part of the society. Now, however, the once-a-year process has dramatically changed, thanks to pressure from administration, students, and parents. Starting this year, the NHS invitations will be sent in the spring, at the end of the first semester. No matter if a student was rejected earlier this year, they are encouraged to apply again. All students with above a 3.5 GPA should receive letters inviting them to apply. Notice the GPA has stayed the same from last year, while AP class GPA boosts have doubled, with Honors classes adding a hefty 0.5 points to the GPA.

The application has also changed. Along with some smaller formatting changes, the number of short answer essays has been cut to only one. If the drastic cut in the application process is still too difficult for potential members, Satterwhite and Hubbard encourage students to attend their Saturday workshop to "hone their applications," said Hubbard.

This is not to say that students should not receive help from their teachers on writing essays, nor that these students are not deserving of a place in NHS. However, the fact that a prestigious and selective organization is now encouraging less-than-stellar students to join is simply rude to the older members of the society. Applying to NHS is difficult and stressful. The essays can be discouraging, and not everyone is cut out to be a "leader of society." But that is the entire point of NHS. "The feeling is that we wanted more people who were eligible," said Hubbard. There is a reason these "eligible" students were rejected earlier. NHS was designed to be an organization for the "crème de la crème" of high school—the overachievers who work hard and succeed academically and in extracurriculars. Not for students who simply "try hard."

Why should future NHS members be held to a lower standard than those in the past? Trying to make a purposefully exclusive club "inclusive" is merely diluting the society. NHS is not supposed to reach out to everyone who makes an effort. NHS is a club for those who have all of the materials to draft and complete the essays by themselves, without holding the hands of the sponsors. West Potomac needs to re-learn the values and goals of the National Honor Society, and keep the club for those who can achieve membership on their own.

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

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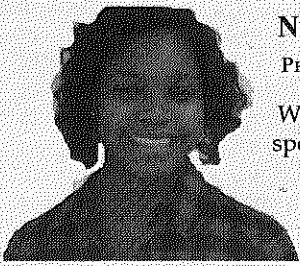
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Freshmen sports teams should remain

Due to budget cuts, freshman sports teams may be affected



NIA COPELAND
PHOTOGRAPHER

What if there were no freshmen sports?

There have been several suggestions for changes in the athletic department this year due to budget cuts, but eliminating freshmen sports

may be the worst.

School sports bring in a great deal of money, especially when the teams are successful. Without freshmen teams, students will not have a chance to build athletic skill and develop competitive attitudes. By the time several students reach the varsity level they have not mastered basic skills or learned many of the fundamentals that many athletes are taught at the freshmen level.

Freshmen sports provide self confidence, team work skills, and physical activity. Though budget cuts are meant to eliminate programs in order to ensure that all Fairfax County money is spent wisely, the removal of freshman sports will not benefit or help the county in any way. Parents put a lot of money into athletic programs in which their children are involved. Often, a majority of the

“Without freshmen team sports, students will not have a chance to build athletic skill and develop competitive attitudes.”

money donated to the program is from proud and involved parents, and during this harsh and difficult economic moment in time, the school should welcome any programs that bring in sufficient amounts of cash.

Having only junior varsity and varsity sports levels will crush and destroy many of the students' self-esteem and confidence. Students that are cut from sports during their freshmen year lose a lot of self respect. Is it worth causing them to lose interest in becoming involved in other extracurricular activities and sports? Several students will use the time, that could have been used positively being

active and building skill, doing things that will have a negative influence on them or cause them to make choices that may send them down the wrong paths and distract them from their school work, which is most important.

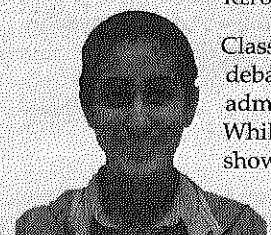
Freshmen teams also allow students to take school work much more seriously. Since students

are unable to participate in sports when their grades are slipping, they work harder to complete school work and study more often. This teaches freshmen how to balance their school work and out of school activities, so by the time they finally do reach the varsity level, they know how to get good grades while being involved in sports without becoming stressed or under pressure.

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Smaller classes will have a positive impact on grades

Student achievement will increase with greater individual attention in classrooms



SHIRINE LOGHMANIAN
REPORTER

Class size has always been a debate among teachers and school administrators.

While evidence has been gathered to show that smaller class sizes have a positive impact on student achievements, due to various other variables, the overall result is unclear.

Many administrators also consider the cost to be overwhelming compared to the results. However, even the most minor difference can help a child strive to learn more and end up being more successful in their studies. The American Federation of Teachers is known for being a strong advocate of smaller class sizes and a large number of our own teachers have taken this belief. Our school should try to create more concentrated classes because studies have proven that class size has an impact on a student's achievement.

Class size has a significant impact on the grades and abilities of students. According to a 2002 study conducted

“Smaller classes allow teachers to focus on their students and allow teachers to personally aid students who are struggling.”

by the Public Policy Institute of California, five of the state's school districts reported significant test score gains since the beginning of the state's class size reduction program. Also, according to classsizematters.org, “The Institute of Education Sciences, the research arm of the US Department of Education, concludes that class size reduction is one of only four, evidence-based reforms that have been proven to increase student achievement through rigorous, randomized experiments – the ‘gold standard’ of research.” Smaller classes allow teachers to focus on their students and allow teachers to personally aid students who are struggling. In addition, there would be a significantly

lower amount of distractions such as talking. The class can simply focus on work. Also, students would also receive individual attention from their teacher. Students have also noticed the effects first hand. Sophomore Clare Palo said, “I have definitely noticed a big difference between my grades in small and large classes. I was able to receive more attention from my teachers.” Our school's classes have

gradually become larger, due to the growing budget cuts. This must be prevented in order to allow students to fully succeed in their studies.

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Mandatory service hours ruin their purpose

Students forget the importance of community service because of school requirements



MAGGIE GRADY
ASSISTANT FOCUS EDITOR

In each grade level, students are required to do Service Learning, which involves completing a certain number of hours of community service and then reflect-

ing on it, either by a journal or paper. Community service is defined as “services volunteered by individuals or an organization to benefit a community or its institutions,” according to dictionary.com. Because students are forced to complete community service, it completely takes the volunteering aspect out of it. Before students can begin their service hours, they must be approved by their history or English teacher.

However, it seems like now in school, community service is being defined as completing work without a form of compensation. This “new definition” is not what community service is supposed to be. The fact that community service is voluntary and that is what makes it so important to those who receive it.

Also, students are swamped with homework, quizzes, proj-

“The last thing a student wants to be doing on a school night is finishing a paper or journal of how they spent their day completing service and reflecting on how it changed their life.”

ects, and tests everyday in school, which can be very time consuming. The last thing a student wants to be doing on a school night is finishing a paper or journal of how they spent their day completing community service and reflecting on how it changed their life. It is a waste of time, and students could spend their time completing homework that is much more useful, and will benefit them in and out of school.

However, it is important for students to complete community service hours and for everyone to give back to the community where they live. Whether people pick up the trash at a local park or along a stream, or volunteer at the hospital or a nursing home, anything can help the community. However, many students complete service hours outside of school on their own and forcing students to complete more service hours at school and reflecting on it just creates more pressure and stress for students, which can affect them in many ways. According to helpguide.org, too much stress can lead to depression, and

sleep problems as well. Community service is a good thing and everyone should volunteer for their community or school, but Service Learning should not be mandatory in school. It only creates more stress and work for students.

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LARGE AND IN CHARGE

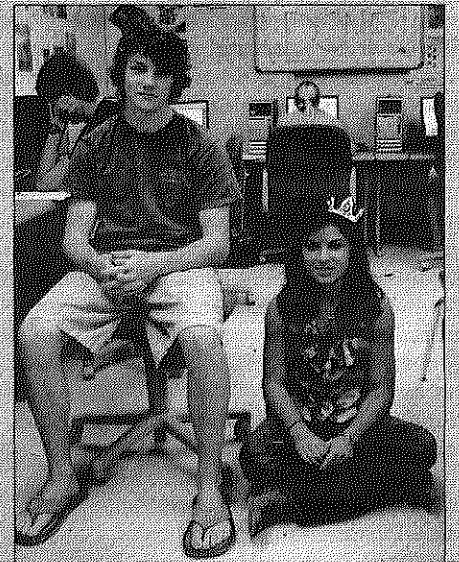


Photo by Megan Haley

LUCAS ALEXANDER
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Last month, on Christmas day, the United States experienced another attempted terrorist attack. As a result, as seems to be the norm these days, airlines will be stepping up security in an attempt to determine situations like these and catch the people responsible before attacks or attempted attacks occur. However, the biggest adjustments are high tech. One is the full body scans that can essentially strip search each person to look at every nick and cranny for anything that would not be permitted on an airplane. This measure has brought forth a lot of controversy regarding the issue of privacy.

The issue of privacy versus security has been an issue for a long time. What rights does the government have, in regards to the safety of citizens, when the issue may impede on one's privacy? It makes perfect sense for someone to be uncomfortable with a stranger looking at them so intimately. However, I refuse to get onto an airplane, and proceed to have it hijacked by a terrorist and die, simply because Americans complain that their privacy is more important than the safety of American freedom as a whole.

As a matter of fact, America should step it up another notch, and take a page out of the books of other countries, like Israel. Every single person

“Every single person should be fully searched, x-rays, pat searched, metal detectors, the whole shebang.”

should be fully searched: x-rays, pat searched, metal detectors, the whole shebang. Bags should be searched if anything suspicious shows up on the x-ray. After passing through security, all passengers should be locked in a room where they wait to board their flight. The rooms should have seats, maybe a few windows, a TV, and bathrooms. If people want their snack food or Dunkin Donuts before a flight, they can eat it before coming into the airport. After you are in the terminal, there should be no leaving. This prevents anyone from being able to sneak anything past security.

It is perfectly understandable to not want some shady airline employee “pat” searching you, but if someone has a problem with simply a full body scan that would effectively save lives, then they should choose another form of travel. People should have compromise their safety and put themselves in more danger, because someone else is a little self conscious about their insides.

The fact of the matter is that there are always going to be attempted airline terrorist attacks; some of them will work, and some of them will fail. However, at the end of the day, the safety of the United States as a whole is infinitely more important than the “privacy” of some self conscious people.

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Rape statistic yields warning for college students

GWEN FISHEL
COPY EDITOR

One in five college women will be raped, or experience an attempted rape.

According to a study released under the guidance of the Center for Public Integrity, 20% of college women will be raped or have an attempted rape. This demonstrates that rape is a serious reality for many college students. Many students in this year's senior class will be attending higher education institutions and, according to the Center for Public Integrity, they need to protect themselves, as well as ensure that the colleges they are going to attend will handle this problem with hasty priority.

The Center for Public Integrity has stated that they want to bring this growing problem to light, and to make colleges deal with the problems that occur on their campuses. According to a spokeswoman Kristen Lombardi for the Center for Public Integrity, "I'd say that what we found was pretty troubling. You know, if you step back and you look at the big picture, there's a culture of silence around campus sexual assault, and it's rooted in a staggering statistical reality, which is the majority of students who are sexually assaulted on campus remain silent. That national study that you refer to also goes on to say that more than 95 percent of college women who are sexually assaulted do not report to campus police or campus officials."

In the CNN.com article entitled "Rape Victims Offer Advice to Today's College Women" by Jessica Ravitz, there is mention that these rape statistics became public knowledge about nine years ago.

However, even before that, the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act (Clery Act) was passed to hold institutions of higher learning credible for investigating rape cases and holding the rights of the victims in high esteem. This means that, according to law, schools must publish security reports annually, give warnings against possible crimes or crimes that have already occurred, and keep a daily crime log. However, many studies conducted by the Center have shown that universities and colleges are not holding up their end of the bargain, and the colleges are rather more concerned with saving face for the school. According to the Center, schools often misidentify crimes, fail to gather crime reports, or alter statistics to best fit the needs of the school.

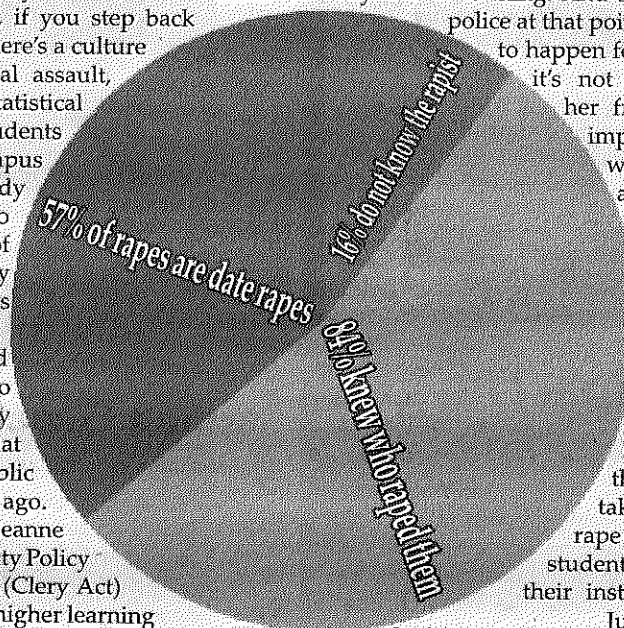
For this reason, the Center is committed to instigating education into college curriculum. George Mason University, a respected institution where students from West Potomac often apply, is one school that has taken early initiative and, since 1993, had a Sexual Assault office. However, at many schools, students are forced to take action themselves, without guidance.

Nevertheless, many students find themselves unwilling

to report a rape or denying that it ever happened on the basis they do not know where to find help. A young woman who was raped in college during her sophomore year said that the best way to deal with it is to "get help from a professional as soon as possible. I spoke with a counselor at Victim's Assistance a few days after my assault, and that was crucial in helping me overcome this."

On National Public Radio's "Talk of the Nation" segment, many women called in to say that fear played a large part in their not reporting the incident, whether it was because they thought they were in the wrong due to alcohol consumption, or because they feared what consequences would follow if they did. Lombardi said that a young woman at Towson University was scared to report her rape because alcohol was involved and she did not want to get her friends in trouble. "And it ended up that that same student who had sexually assaulted the student whose case we feature, did the same thing to another of her friends, exactly the same thing. And she finally came forward to police at that point. So it took another assault to happen for her to kind of realize that it's not my fault...my point was her friends' reaction was really important. That was the reason why she didn't come forward, and we found that, you know, peer pressure is often one of the reasons college women don't report," said Lombardi.

For students at our school, it is important to understand the threat of rape at higher level learning institutions, and the precautions can be taken to prevent them. If a rape is attempted or occurs, students should be aware of what their institution has to offer them. Junior Brooke Mero, who started Voices- a club in relation with Planned Parenthood- is not surprised by the statistic. "The fact that this statistic may surprise people or lend itself to skepticism is indicative of how trivialized rape has become in our justice system. Sixty percent of rapists will go unreported, and an even fewer number will be penalized for their crimes." She continued to say because of a lack of education and enforcement of and about rape, "[it] proliferates and misogyny is a norm. Alongside this arise feelings of shame on the part of women, who, without support/education/resources within the community, are afraid to report rapists and instead wrestle with devastating torment. Looking at college settings, this statistic most likely includes women pressured/forced into sex while under the influence. Men in such situations tend to be given a lot of sympathy/leeway, and many of these degrading displays of dominance are brushed aside if reported at all. College settings especially are places where the line between rape and consensual intercourse is likely to be blurred."



Graph by Emily Griffin

The graph above shows the current rape statistics according to abacus.bates.edu

surprised by the statistic. "The fact that this statistic may surprise people or lend itself to skepticism is indicative of how trivialized rape has become in our justice system. Sixty percent of rapists will go unreported, and an even fewer number will be penalized for their crimes." She continued to say because of a lack of education and enforcement of and about rape, "[it] proliferates and misogyny is a norm. Alongside this arise feelings of shame on the part of women, who, without support/education/resources within the community, are afraid to report rapists and instead wrestle with devastating torment. Looking at college settings, this statistic most likely includes women pressured/forced into sex while under the influence. Men in such situations tend to be given a lot of sympathy/leeway, and many of these degrading displays of dominance are brushed aside if reported at all. College settings especially are places where the line between rape and consensual intercourse is likely to be blurred."

Improvements are made for the school administration

Continued from page 1

problems for students in science and math classes as displayed by the End of the Course (EOC) tests or Standards of Learning (SOL's) exams. In an effort to strengthen the math and science department, lower level courses such as Active Physics will be removed. Students will be required to challenge themselves in their education. Senior Erin Spangler said, "I feel like we never have enough equipment in science classes, and we don't have the resources to have double classes in the ones that need them."

While many academic changes will be made, the SIP also takes into account changes in the atmosphere and students' life. There will be unified discipline policies, which will be fairly implemented towards all students. "We follow SR&R and school rules and when violations are found we report them to the administrators who handle the disciplinary action, it is not a function of security to set disciplinary policies," said Bill Haire, Security Specialist. Television monitors will also be placed in the cafeteria and in the main lobby as entertainment for students early to school, and photos of student life will be posted on the school website. The administration also plans to discuss the benefits and disadvantages of FLEX as well as to research other options Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) are using. "There is a plan for a group of us to look at other school programs in regards to FLEX before any changes will be finalized," said Drucker. Hardison was not available to comment.

Assaults have caused worries

Continued from page 1

day and night. According to Fairfax County Public School policy, School Resource Officers (SRO's) work closely with the Fairfax County police and "help principals develop and evaluate critical incident and security plans." The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors has even gone so far as to request that school officials re-evaluate whether it is safe to place bus stops near the homes of registered sex offenders.

Students cannot rely solely on school security. Hardison told parents to "please remind your [their] child to remain aware of his/her surroundings and to pay attention as they walk. This also pertains to crossing streets and parking lots and using caution." Goodley also shared some advice: "You should always be sure of your surroundings, never show large sums of money, try not to travel alone if possible, don't leave items of value in your car, and always lock your doors." FCPS's Office of Safety and Security serves as the central communications center after normal business hours and can be reached at 703-764-2400.

Mentoring month continues

Continued from page 1

generations," said senior mentor Shakil White. Mentoring programs are easy to get involved with, if one can make the time commitment, and Jones urged students to participate because "it is a way for them to have a positive impact on the community and gain experience in working with youth. Many of our past mentors are continuing to serve as mentors in college and/or pursuing careers in 'helping' professions such as education, child psychology, and criminal justice." The program is always looking for more volunteers, and additional information can be found online and around the school.

Band members shine at All District Auditions

MAGGIE GRADY
BUSINESS MANAGER/ASST. FOCUS EDITOR

On Saturday, December 12, 2009, students in the band tried out for the All District Band at J.E.B. Stuart High School. There were a total of 48 students from our school that made the band, which is the most in our school's history. Students including sophomores Jacqueline Beckwith and Elizabeth Quin, juniors Leah Naidorf, De'Sean Wright, and Julianna Labelle. Our school had twice as many students as any other high school.

The audition process for the band includes a prepared piece which students received in mid-November, memorized scales, and a sight reading piece. Even though students must have memorized all of the scales, the judges only ask them to play two (at random), which is supposed to make the audition process harder. For Beckwith, who plays the alto saxophone, this was the first year that she had made the All District Band, and all of her hard work paid off. "Since I haven't made it the past two years, I practiced a lot [more] because I really wanted to get in [this year]. As soon as I got the piece, I started practicing by myself and with my private teacher; I practiced about 3-4 times a week for a month," said Beckwith.

Another technique that helped Beckwith in her audition process was her confidence. "Strangely enough, I wasn't

that nervous for the audition. I felt really confident since I had practiced so much," added Beckwith. She also believed that one of the reasons she had not made it in previous years was because she had been so nervous for the audition. "I tried to feel really comfortable this year, and it worked!" she said.

However, not all students that made the band felt as cool and collected as Beckwith. Quin, who plays the oboe, had a harder time fitting in practice time for her audition. "It is hard to make time to practice, so the week before the auditions I tried to practice as much as I could, scales,

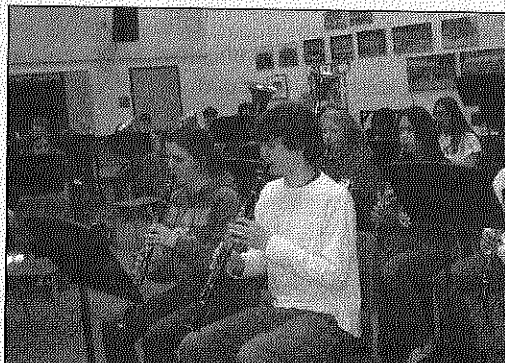


Photo by Sonia Garakyaraghi

Many band students made all district band by greatly preparing for the audition.

The band members from our school will make up most of the All District Band concert, which will take place at Hayfield Secondary School in early February.

School Calendar

Tuesday, January 19-Friday, January 22:

Electives fair is being held during lunches in the cafeteria.

Monday, January 25-Thursday, January 28:

Rising senior class registration.

Wednesday, January 27:

AP Info Night begins at 7 P.M. and ends at 9 P.M.

Friday, January 29-Monday, February 1:

Teacher workdays and Second Quarter ends.

Tuesday, February 9-Friday, February 12:

Rising sophomore class registration.

Monday, February 15:

It is President's Day and a student holiday.

Thursday, February 18:

Early closing; students leave at 12:35 P.M.

Monday, February 22-Thursday, February 25:

Rising junior class registration.

Envirothon team prepares for competition

KATIE WOODWARD
REPORTER

The new AP Environmental Science class has been quick to raise awareness throughout the student body regarding the human impact on the natural world. Many students now have a better understanding of how they can lessen their impact with environmentally-friendly attitudes and habits. Some, however, have taken their initiative a step further by participating on the Envirothon team, which will begin competing at the county level this April.

The mission of Envirothon, hosted every year by the Canon photography company, is to encourage dedicated citizens to work towards "achieving and maintaining a balance between the quality of the life and the quality of the environment." The competition allows small groups to compete in identifying and analyzing natural occurrences. Participants complete testing and training in five natural categories: soils and land use, aquatic ecology, forestry, wildlife, and current environmental issues. Each team of five then tries to answer questions about each category as quickly as possible. There is also a "special topics" section where participants prepare a presentation about a theme unique to every competition. This year's topic focuses on the effects of pollution on the recharging of groundwater. In addition to students from other schools, Envirothon participants also compete against adults and professionals in the different fields.

Preparation for Envirothon requires much dedication and hard work. Students must attend trainings on the other side of the county to learn as much as possible about each topic. However, AP Environmental Science teacher and team advisor Erin Sikes-Thurston said, "Our team has kids who are really interested in doing this stuff, so it is fun- not a chore." At the end of January, the team will go to a lodge in Central Virginia to do in-depth preparation for the competition. "The trainings have basically just been reviews for the kids....WP kids totally rock the questions and discussions," said Sikes-Thurston.

Laina Schneider and David Burns are two Envirothon participants who compete in soil science. Schneider said, "Envirothon rocks...I have learned that soil is much more important than people think." Envirothon provides a unique opportunity to educate people on the importance and relevance of not only soil but all natural resources by relating them back to issues such as world hunger.



Photo Courtesy of Michelle Gilmore

Seniors Kathleen Brady and Laina Schneider participated in the stream monitoring field trip for the AP Environmental Science class. Much of what the students learned during this field trip prepared them for the upcoming Envirothon competition in April. Both Brady and Schneider are members of the Envirothon team.

Schneider said, "It's not just dirt."

The first competition for students from our school will be against other teams in the Fairfax Soil and Water Conservation District. Should the team win there, they will go on to the state competition and later, hopefully, the national competition, which this year will be held in Northern California. Members of the top ten teams will be awarded Canon Scholarships valued at up to \$5,000 that can be used toward a four year university.

News Briefs

LAURA REYNOLDS
ASSISTANT NEWS EDITOR

New Redskins Head Coach

The Washington Redskins fired head coach Jim Zorn and have replaced him with Mike Shanahan, the previous head coach of the Denver Broncos. It is just one of the many changes that the Redskins are putting in place to be more successful than the 12-20 record that they had with two seasons under Zorn. Shanahan will most likely have all decision making privileges which Zorn had revoked this season. There is also talk about the Redskins hiring a new quarterback.

Wizards Gun Scandal

On the flight back from a losing game, Wizards players Gilbert Arenas and Javaris Crittenton got into an argument which escalated quickly, with Crittenton threatening to shoot Arenas in his surgically repaired knee. Arenas then left several handguns by Crittenton's locker and a note that said "pick one." Although intended as a joke, it is now major news. Arenas could now face charges that may include owning unregistered firearms and carrying weapons without a license.

Simon Cowell to Leave *Idol*

Simon Cowell recently announced that he will be leaving *American Idol* after this season is over. He is bringing his show from the UK, *The X Factor*, to the US. It is another talent show that involves more than just singing and will also be coming to Fox. Cowell decided that he only wanted to work with one show on Fox at a time. His leaving prompts questions about the quality and popularity of the show at the conclusion of this season. Ellen DeGeneres will replace him as a judge next season on *American Idol*.

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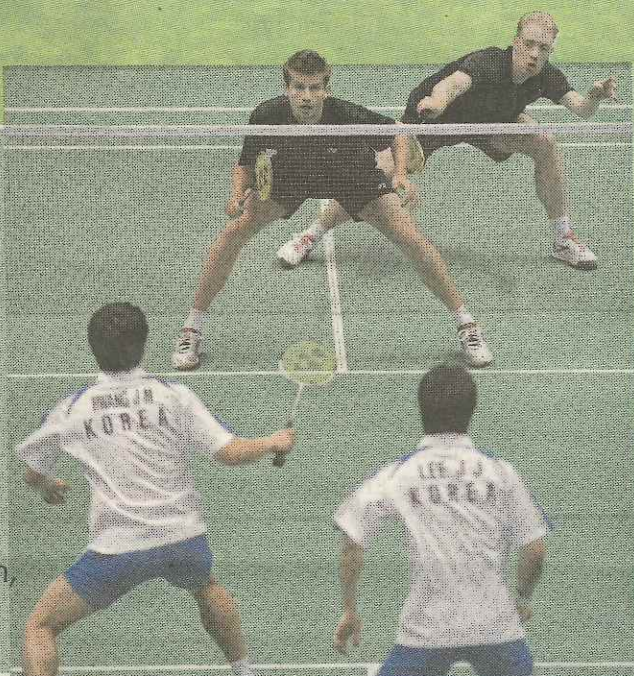
LET'S HEAR HOME



badminton

MAGGIE GRADY
BUSINESS MANAGER/ASST. FOCUS EDITOR

Badminton is played in high schools throughout the United States, across the world, and even as an event in the Olympics. It has existed for thousands of years; it was played in ancient Greece, China, and India. Badminton can be played either with a partner or alone and consists of complex rules and equipment including a racquet and a birdie. Several high schools across the country, such as Miller Place High School in New York have badminton teams for the students. In Sunnyvale, California, there is a badminton school where students can learn how to play the sport and train at levels high enough to compete in the Olympics. Although our school does not have a badminton team, there are several courts in the gym, and students are required to learn the rules of the sport in 10th grade gym.



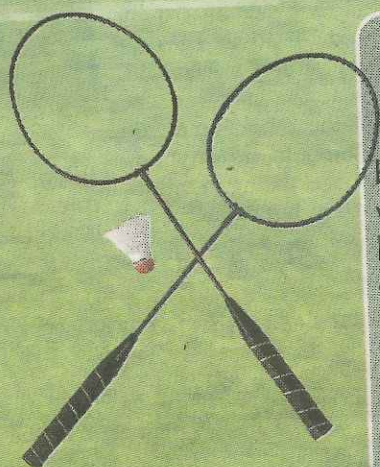
water polo

JOSEPH MARINELLI
CO-OPINIONS EDITOR

Water polo is one of the few team sports in water. A team consists of six players and a goal keeper. Very much like team handball, players score by throwing the ball into the protected opposing net. Though not very common or popular in high schools or colleges, water polo is an Olympic sport. Water polo is a very demanding sport on your body. When the sport came to the United States from Europe, it was much more like underwater rugby, for the American's style of play consisted of a lot of violence and wrestling. Eventually, the European style, used in the Olympics, was adopted universally. This involves a lot of passing and a lot more strategy. A lot of water polo rules are very similar to basketball like fouling and having a shot clock. The skill sets required from this sport are swimming, ball-handling skills, treading water, and good reflexes. This is a mostly European sport and, in the history of the Olympics, the United States is the only non-European team to receive a medal in this sport.



IT FOR THE TEAM!



strange sports

SARAH HOLLOWAY
REPORTER

"All American" pastimes like football, soccer, golf, and basketball can be seen on just about any channel of sports T.V. any time of day. But what is it that makes them more popular than sports like water polo, badminton, and cricket? Firstly, one has to take into account location. Origins and location have a lot to do with where sports become popular. Secondly, one must look at the media's influence on certain sport's popularity. Most American children have it ingrained in them that football and baseball are the America's favorite pastimes. However, in the UK most young boys believe cricket to be the most influential sport in their country. Here are a few "weird" sports that cultural differences have sparked.



SHIRINE LOGHMANIAN
REPORTER

According to Indiainfo.com, cricket is one of the most popular sports in the world. It is believed to have been started by children living in Southeast England. By the seventeenth century, cricket was played by adults and was considered a sport. It later began growing in popularity in countries such as India and England, and is still very popular in those areas today. According to the International Cricket Council, over 100 countries play cricket. It is played on an oval shaped field with 11 players on each side. Cricket is similar to baseball. The teams take turns batting in successive innings and attempt to score runs. The opposing team must stand on the field and try to stop the playing team. The objective of the game is to try to score more runs than the other team and completely dismiss the other team.

cricket



Coffey Talk

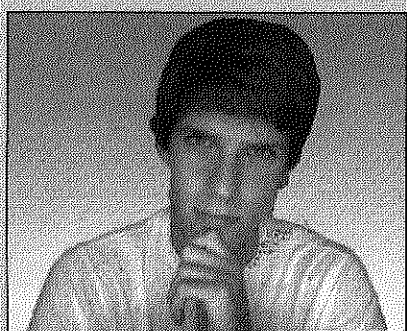


Photo by Peter Coffey/Mac

PETER COFFEY
SPORTS EDITOR

Eric Henderson has been the head football coach at West Potomac since 2004, but no post season has been as hectic as the month of December has been. On December 4, Henderson walked into a meeting with Director of Student Activities Aaron Helmick and walked out no longer the head football coach; he had resigned. "I went home, sent emails to some parents to let them know my situation, then I turned off my computer and my phone." It was clear that Henderson did not want to be contacted by the outside world. But what happened over the next few days really defines what he has done for this community. When he returned to school, he found an anonymous note from a parent voicing their disapproval of his resignation. As a result of this note and the uproar of disapproval in the community, he decided to withdraw his letter of resignation. Helmick accepted and reinstated him as head coach.

The main question here is how this whole situation even took place. "It was a combination of concerns on both sides [administrative and coaches], especially at the freshmen level," said Henderson. "Going 2-8 sort of amplified these concerns and the athletic department did not like the direction the program was going and I resigned." It is hard to believe that the program was going in the wrong "direction," after Henderson took a team that was in total disarray when he arrived here to a district title three years later. "I entered the program in 2004, there were 7 seniors, and there was little involvement so I needed to get a lot of people involved," Henderson commented. But it was the community involvement to get him back as head coach that has really stunned Henderson. "I did not expect it and I am humbled by what happened, I did not ask for help in this," said Henderson on the 11 day period between when he resigned and when he was reinstated. He said there were not any hard feelings between him and Helmick. He added, "No way, Mr. Helmick is a good man."

However the questions still remain on next season. How can our football team come back from a 2-8 record? "We need to get stronger," Henderson admits. "We are not the strongest team in the district." This is mainly attributed to that fact that other schools like Lake Braddock and South County have larger weight room facilities and more weight training classes. Despite the lack of a large weight training facility, "we still are going to do the best with what we have." As far as long term success, Henderson is running camps and after school programs for the kids at Sandberg Middle School. "We need to level the playing field with the large secondary schools, and this is one way," said Henderson.

Henderson is ready to focus on the years to come, and as far as this situation is concerned, he is ready to move on. Henderson did mention as the interview came to an end that he was "happy to be back." We are happy to have him back too.

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

Are multi-sport athletes up to the task?

Many students face difficult schedules due to multiple commitments

TOMMY FRIEDERICH
ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

Being a multi-sport athlete is not a rare thing at West Potomac, but it does take a lot of work and time to be one. Many people at our school take on two or three sports a year, playing each at a high level. There are many things that go into being an all-around great athlete. For example, as a multi-sport athlete, one needs to find time between the sports to practice. As a multi-sport athlete one has to be good at many different things; you have to be versatile in other words. "You have to be able to adjust to the new sports, it's tough but if you're athletic, you can do it," said senior athlete Matt Cunningham.

There are many different combinations of sports in which an athlete can compete as a swimmer/baseball player or a golf/basketball player. Each different combination requires different athletic abilities. Sophomore Danielle McHugh has juggled three sports since coming to West Potomac which include basketball, softball, and volleyball. "It's hard to balance each sport,

but each sport only complements the other sports. So when playing one sport, it helps you become more athletic which will help you in any sport." Danielle McHugh plays fall softball, as well as volleyball. On weekend, she plays softball, and then keeps the school week for volleyball. Many people might think that running cross country is similar to running track but sophomore Thomas Delaney thinks otherwise. "Going from Cross Country to track is hard. In track, you have to pace yourself in on long race. In track you go all out for a race." To argue this point, Jayme Murray, a year round baseball player, said, "Playing on sport helps you focus on the little things of a sport that makes you better than the rest."

Junior Nik Dimitrivic said that there are advantages and disadvantages of being a multi-sport athlete. He said, "An advantage is that you stay in shape all year round, on the other hand you don't really have time to do anything else." As one can see, being a multi-sport athlete is not easy, but some special Wolverines can do it at a high level.

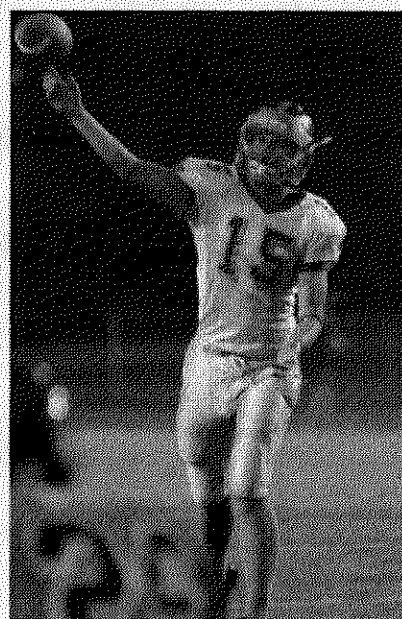


Photo Courtesy of Nik Dimitrivic

Junior Nik Dimitrivic plays a key role in both varsity football and basketball.

"Redskins" name causes controversy

JACOB ALEXANDER
CO-OPINIONS EDITOR

By now when most people hear the term "Redskin," they think of the NFL team in Washington, D.C. However, there have been numerous complaints about the name of this team over the past few years. Many people have claimed that this name is offensive to Native Indians because it is a derogatory term against them. There have even been a few cases in court on this issue. Although this controversy started a while ago, the name has stayed the same. However, it seems that lately there have been more and more complaints on the subject.

The opposition, including NFL writer Michael Silver, claims that the name does not fit well for an NFL team anymore, and that it is simply a discriminatory term. However, others argue that the term has been used a long time and is not meant to be offensive, so it should not be changed because it is part of this team's history. This team has been around since 1932, and has always been called the Redskins. Also, some people argue that it is no different than other every day racial terms, such as white or black.

The most recent case on this was declined on November



Photo Courtesy of MCT/Staff

Both the logo and name of the Redskins have caused great controversy.

16, 2009. A group of Native Americans complained that the term and logo of the Redskins is offensive. Even with complaints from not only Native Americans, but people from other backgrounds, all cases on this issue, including this one, were shot down. The main reason for this is that the complaints are not enough to force the Redskins to change their name, so the judges rule against them for legal technicalities.

Many people said that not only is the name offensive, but that the logo is, too. At this point, it is highly unlikely that the Redskins will be forced to change their name. After all, this name has been around for a very long time and the complaints about the name have made roughly no progress.

Still, it may not be as unlikely to ask for the logo to be changed, because it is not as important as the name. The Redskins logo is simply the face of an American Indian.

A few surveys have been done, many focusing on opinions of Native Americans. However, the amount of Native Americans that did not see a problem in this name was surprisingly high. Most of them did not care about this and did not see how it was a problem. Overall, the arguments stating that the name should not be changed overpower the opposite ones at this point. Therefore, the name has remained the same.

Gymnastics team is successful early in the season

NORRIS BROOKS
REPORTER

Last year, many rumors were floating around that gymnastics was one of the sports that would be cut from the Fairfax County Public Schools sports program. Much to the happiness of the participants, the gymnastics team survived another year. Not only did it return this year, but the team has come back strong. Senior captain Cara Yaworske said she thought the team was doing really well. "The team has done the best we've done in the four years that I've participated. We may not be placing as high as we used to, but we are scoring more points than before," she said.

Not only is the team stronger, but it also has more participants than ever before. Sophomore Sarah Woodward, who was on the team last year and serves as manager for this season, said, "Our team is larger, and we have a couple of strong freshmen with previous experience. This really adds to the team." There are 20 students on the team, including freshmen talents Nicole Marinello and Marien Vorhes.

The closeness of the team, along with its positive attitude, are a reflection of Ya-

worske's leadership style. She is a strong leader who likes to have fun and is not too harsh on the girls. She listens to the opinions of all the team members when making decisions and tries to schedule as many bonding activities as possible.

Marinello said, "The team for me is really close and we feel like a family. I also feel like Cara Yaworske, our captain, really makes an effort to make our team the best it can be. I was excited when I found out that gymnastics was not getting cut because I was looking forward to contributing my experience to the team and helping us score in meets."

Yaworske summed up what the gymnastics team has meant to her. She remarked, "I have developed a love of competing and I feel it's a great way to represent our school."

Head Coach Pete Novgrad has a strong vision for the team and is helping them perform successfully. The team has competed in three meets so far and has done fairly well.

This month, the team takes on Thomas Edison, Thomas Jefferson, Robert E. Lee, West Springfield, Mount Vernon, Annandale, Lake Braddock, Woodson and Falls Church at various meets.

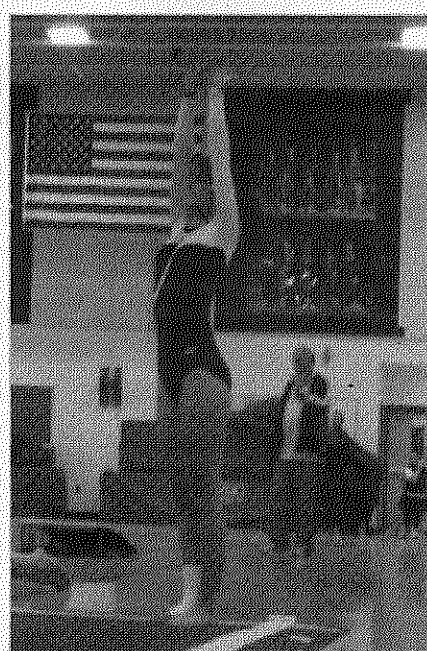


Photo Courtesy of Cara Yaworske

Senior captain Cara Yaworske is about to perform a routine in one of her meets. Yaworske has been a member of the gymnastics team since she was a freshman, and she hopes that this season will be the best yet.

Martin Luther King Day encourages students to make a difference

GWEN FISHEL
COPY EDITOR

Newscaster Tom Brokaw once said, "It's easy to make a buck. It's not easy to make a difference."

Once a year, Americans find different ways to come together to celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King (MLK) Jr. Day, which honors the life of the major civil rights leader, who was able to make a difference in our racially segregated country during the 50's and 60's.

MLK Jr., a prominent civil rights activist, was assassinated in 1968, in Memphis, Tennessee. Many regular citizens and celebrities joined together to pass a bill that would turn MLK Jr.'s birthday into a federal holiday.

While a bill was passed in 1983 to commemorate the day, the holiday was not observed until 1986; it was stated then that it would be celebrated on the third Monday of January ever year. In 1994, under President Bill Clinton, MLK Jr. Day became a national day of service, where citizens are asked to go out and perform some sort of service in King Jr.'s name. This tradition continues on today.

This year, MLK Jr. Day was celebrated on January 18, and there were many ways that students at our school could have participated in the activities of this day.

On the government website devoted to celebrating Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day this year-mlkday.gov, the informal mission statement is, "On January 18, 2010, people of all ages and backgrounds will come together to improve lives, bridge social barriers, and move our nation closer to the 'Beloved Community' that Dr. King envisioned. Dr. Martin Luther King devoted his life's work to causes of equality and social justice."

The website credits several reasons to serve such as "strengthen[ing] communities, empower[ing] individuals, and bridg[ing] barriers." It also gave several ways that stu-



Photo Courtesy of MCT Campus

Many people go to the Lorraine Motel, where Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated, to remember him and his life's work.

dents at our school can serve as well, through another website, serve.gov. serve.gov was set up as way for citizens to explore volunteer options, read blogs from Americans doing service, and think of service not as a one-day activity, but as a consistent commitment to the United States. Both websites have many resources available such as news articles and service opportunity finders, among other tools.

At West Potomac, some particular clubs and organiza-

tions around the school planned and are planning to commemorate the spirit of the day through service, and continue this spirit into the coming months. Senior Precious Lockhart said that she volunteers every year on Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Lockhart said, "I find different organizations to volunteer with. Dr. King was all about service. He tried so hard to serve as many communities as possible, so I think that it is a good way to commemorate him."

I think the reason that we don't have a Dr. King assembly is because he is the only person that people associate with Black History Month, but there are so many other people. Schools don't do an assembly for him because they incorporate him into Black History Month. Key Club will be doing a book drive from January 27 to February 10, in the spirit of Dr. King's commitment to making life better for future generations."

National Honor Society is currently conducting a sock and shoe drive until January 28, in the spirit of helping those in our community who need it most, just as King did.

Some volunteer opportunities for students at our school that were available in the surrounding area included volunteering to cook breakfast for families at NOVA house in Falls Church, donating food and time to a local food pantry such as UCM, or participating in the Give Together event in Fairfax made for family volunteering.

However, for those who hope to continue the spirit of this day, long term commitment opportunities such as mentoring like many students already do at Bucknell Elementary School, tutoring at local elementary schools or UCM's Sacramento Neighborhood Center, making a weekly commitment at New Hope Housing's Mondloch House, among many other activities, are also available through that can be used to build Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Beloved Community."

Students show their personality with style

BRYAN JACOBS
STYLE EDITOR

Students know that "dress[ing] to impress" is quite a challenge. There are handful students at West Potomac, however, who seem to always be put together and dressed in the latest trends. The fash-

ions of West Potomac are diverse as the student populations and range from the wacky to the subtle beauty of the Northeastern prep look. Dress, and the culture that influences it, allow students to express their personality and their free flow of creativity in what they wear. Some notable examples are as follows...

Seniors

Michelle Gilmore



Photo Courtesy of Michelle Gilmore

"The Imperial look is mostly what I go for. I am influenced by New York, Rihanna and Lady Gaga."

Eli McMullen



Photo Courtesy of Eli McMullen

"You just got to know how to dress for all the ladies."

Juniors

Anna Leonard



Photo Courtesy of Anna Leonard

"Don't underestimate the value of 'Doing Nothing,' of just going along, listening to all the things you can't hear, and not bothering."

Max Jones



Photo Courtesy of Max Jones

"Eclectic. From casual to class. From loud to chill. All around, my style is just me. It shows who I am through what I wear."

Sophomores

Lara Gianelli



Photo Courtesy of Lara Gianelli

"Style is a way I express myself and show my personality."

Django Szilagi



Photo Courtesy of Django Szilagi

"I like to think of my style as 'Nerd-Chic.' A huge influence would be dapper fellows like Frank Sinatra."

Freshmen

Nicole Marinello

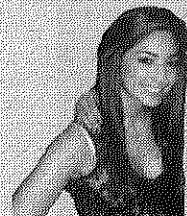


Photo Courtesy of Nicole Marinello

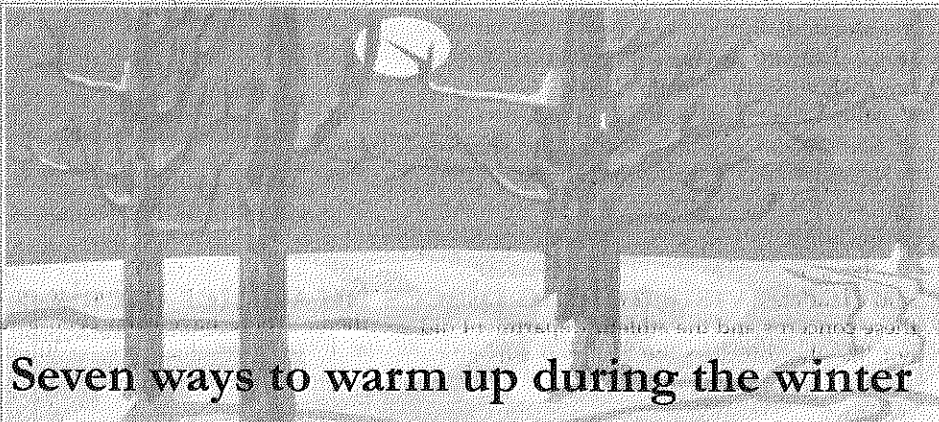
"Rachel Bilson inspires me."

Alex Holm



Photo Courtesy of Alex Holm

"I guess it's [my style] more like from Switchfoot or Blink-182 and a bit from The Strokes."



Seven ways to warm up during the winter

KATIE WOODWARD
REPORTER

The charm of the holidays has a way of masking the misery of the winter months; the cold always seems more appealing in the context of Christmas carols and twinkling lights. But, the holidays are behind us now, and we still face three more long months of gray days and freezing rain. Here are some ways to make the best out of the winter gloom:

- 1. Learn to cook.** Not only will using the oven (or microwave, should one choose that route) add a little warmth to your house but it will also help you develop a skill you can use for the rest of your life. Try baking something one can make and enjoy with your friends, such as gingerbread or apple pie.
- 2. Have an indoor picnic.** Clearly you will need your standard checkered-print table cloth and an oversized wicker basket. If you cannot pull that off, why not make real use out of your Snuggie and set it on the carpet? Its box doubles perfectly as a cardboard basket. Instead of looking for shapes in the clouds, look for cracks in the ceiling...do not forget the potato salad.
- 3. Improve your dancing skills.** This is not a joke- for upperclassmen, prom is only a few months away. For everyone else, you have up to three more years to embarrass yourself at school dances. Why not save your dignity while you still can? You can get professional about it and take a class with a friend, or take at-home lessons from *Dancing with the Stars* episodes and perhaps even some Beyoncé music videos.
- 4. Read a book.** It sounds cliché, and some would say it is lame, but there is no better way to forget the cold than by wrapping

up in a big blanket by the fireplace and immersing yourself in some good literature. This season's best includes *Let the Great World Spin* and *Ford Country*.

5. Explore the Smithsonian. Unless you've been living under a rock, you know that Washington, D.C. is home to the world's largest museum complex. Admission to all 19 museums and the National Zoo is free, but the cultural benefits are priceless. It is near impossible to spend enough time in each, so be sure to visit classics such as the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, the Natural History Museum, and the Portrait Gallery. When you are ready to branch out a little, try the Postal Museum or the Arts and Industries Building.

6. Get a pen-pal. It does not matter whether they live in Bangladesh or right across the street; nothing beats getting something besides college propaganda via snail-mail.

7. Go ice-skating. The sculpture garden outside the National Archives offers season-long skating on an outdoor rink. When you lose feeling in your fingers, you can get some hot chocolate at the café nearby. If you do not want brave the Metro, every Friday the Mt. Vernon REC Center hosts Skate Night- just try not to run over any sixth-graders.

Feel free to mix and match these suggestions to your taste. Even if you give some of them a try and they do not go so well, remember that every minute you spend cleaning up the kitchen or figuring out how to lace ice-skates puts you that much closer to sunny spring days. In the end, maybe you will find that because it provides one with so many opportunities to try new things, winter is not that bad after all.

Unknown electives offer students a variety of opportunities

NIA COPELAND
PHOTOGRAPHER

With the end of the semester fast approaching, it is important that students begin thinking about which courses to take next year.

Many students are unaware of the wide selection of electives offered here at West Potomac, so they often stick to the usual choices such as musical courses, gourmet cooking, languages, and creative writing.

Although there is nothing wrong with selecting these courses, there are other exciting options to choose that are educational, entertaining, and may help with future success and careers.

Those who are interested in fine arts might want to consider taking a course like photography or computer graphics.

Photography teaches students the photographic process through the use of film, cameras, light effects and dark-room techniques.

Through this course, students are able to express themselves creatively through their work and learn basic skills and procedure.

Since this course involves a lot of "hands on" activity and experiments, it may be extremely enjoyable and interesting. Junior Anna Manalo is in her second year of photography and absolutely loves learning about the art of photography. "I decided to take Photography 1 last year after a friend recommended it to me," said Manalo. "I thought that the class would be boring and uninteresting but it is actually really fascinating and a lot of fun. It helps me express myself and I just love adding new photos to my portfolio."

For those who are not as artsy as Manalo, but enjoy hands on branch of learning, there are plenty of health and medical science courses.

Animal science and medical assistance are classes offered at our school and other local Fairfax County high schools and allow students to actively learn and study animal and human behavior. Animal science trains students to master the basic animal care techniques needed to pursue a career in the animal health care field. Students will examine animal anatomy, behavior, nutrition, and disease control.

They will also gain hands on experience working with live animals while learning handling procedures, disease pathology, and animal sanitation.

Animal science is taught at the Edison High School Academy and is a good way to experience what it is like to work in the animal care field.

After completing this course, students may receive a Career and Technical Education Diploma Seal which may

allow students to begin working in their desired field straight after high school.

Unfortunately, students lacking space on their schedules may not be able to select this course since the course is worth two credits and requires to class periods.

Senior Deisy Lopez loves working with animals and has plans to go to college and study animal science. Her dream is to become a veterinarian or pursue any career in the animal care field.

"Animal science is an amazing elective to take," said Lopez. "Not only do you get to meet new people from different schools with similar interest, but you also get to learn about animals and interact with community dogs and cats once a week."

Deisy wishes that she had selected this course earlier because she feels that it is truly preparing her for future profession. "This class really gives you a taste of what working with animals will be like," she continued.

Through our student-run grooming service you experience the pleasures and difficulties of working with animals. It also helps students realize that working with animals is not as easy as it seems."

Animal science gives an introduction to the knowledge that one needs to know when working with animals and can help students realize if working with animals is what they really want to do in the future.

The electives are offered here at West Potomac are meant to introduce subjects to students outside of the normal curriculum in a variety of subjects.

If students are interested in a certain subject of career, they are advised to talk to their counselors about other courses offered to help steer them in the direction of the field that they desire to become involved in at some point in time.

Ask about new electives that will be offered in the upcoming year and for recommendations or advice.

"There is a wide variety of courses for students to take at our school and it is important that you communicate with your counselors and find the ones that are best for you," said Manalo.

"I'm sure that after you do some research on several of the classes you can take, you will find something really interesting just like I did."



Photo by Daisy Lopez

Daisy Lopez tends after a cat named Whiskers as a part of her animal sciences class.

Students visit unique places for winter break

Sophomore student celebrates the holidays in the Philippines

ANNA DREYFUSS
REPORTER

Some students braved D.C.'s third biggest storm, but some traveled to exotic countries. Sophomore Jasmine Picini went to the Philippines with her family. She has family there and it was her fifth visit. One of her most memorable moments was when she flew to a small island, Boroaky, for three days and spent most of the time on the beach tanning and swimming.

Picini celebrated her Christmas on the beach and stayed up late with her cousins singing karaoke almost every night, but the whole trip was not just relaxing and singing.

She also went to a local orphanage and gave the children chocolate for Christmas. "It was the best time of my life!" said Picini.

Another student who did not have to deal with the snow went to Cozumel, Mexico. Sophomore Sara Sanders soaked up the sun for five days and celebrated the New Year at a resort, which she stays at every winter break.

Having her scuba diving license for five years, Sanders scuba dived every chance she got. On New Years, she

celebrated a little differently than most teenagers.

One of her favorite experiences was scuba diving with bull sharks, which are the second most dangerous sharks in the world. "I wasn't scared swimming with them because I knew they wouldn't eat me" said Sanders. Sanders has many family friends there and cannot wait until next year to go back.

Sanders was not the only West Potomac student to go to Cozumel. Sophomore Laura-Paige Mertins also took a trip to the beautiful island, known for having such interesting marine life. Mertins is not a regular, but took full advantage of the ocean.

She celebrated New Years at the resort she stayed at and ate a lot of grapes, since it is an old tradition on the island to eat grapes to help bring in the New Year.

"My favorite part was when I went snorkeling. I saw this huge sea turtle! I've never seen one so big," said Mertins. Her spontaneous trip to Mexico was definitely one of her favorites.

Many students travel over winter break to be with their families, like junior Jacob Glaser.

Spending five days in Buffalo, New York, with his huge family is what he looks forward to every Christmas.

"Every year my uncle dresses up as Santa and gives presents out to all the little cousins," said Glaser.

As the little ones were getting their presents, Glaser enjoyed most of the holidays playing poker, watching football and seeing *Sherlock Holmes* with his whole family.

Maybe his experience was not as unique as scuba diving with bull sharks and snorkeling with sea turtles, but whether students are celebrating the holidays in Asia, a tiny island or a couple hours away, family togetherness is an important part of the holidays.

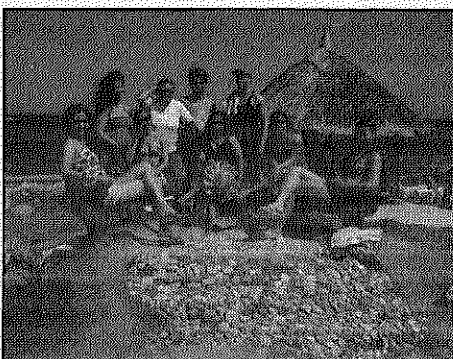


Photo Courtesy of Anna Dreyfuss

Sophomore Jasmin Pacini enjoys her winter vacation, unconventionally, at a beach in the Philippines.

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Lady Gaga's magic still in action

BRYAN JACOBS
STYLE EDITOR

Going gaga for Gaga?

Gaga's new album *The Fame Monster* is a revolution in pop music. Lady Gaga mixes her uber-modern style with chic beats to make her music, which has seemingly stroke a cord with fans. The first single on the album is "Bad Romance." It has a similar tempo to her previous singles; "Bad Romance" features a sing-and-tell bridge and a full-mouthed chorus. The song talks about exploring the joys of a bad romance while referencing Alfred Hitchcock films in some of the verses. Similar to her past song, "Poker Face," Gaga's hook "Rah-rah-ah-ah-ah/Roma-roma-mah/Gaga-oh-là-là" immediately invites the listener into a rollercoaster of electronic and pop beats that combines to make pure listening bliss. Other notable songs in the album include "Telephone," "Alejandro," "Monster," "Dance in the Dark," "Speechless," and "So Happy I Could Die."

Lady Gaga's third track on the album, "Monster," has stuttering synths and instrumentation from heavy drums. "Speechless" is a 1970's rock-inspired number that touches upon abusive relationships in lyrics such as "I can't believe how you slurred at me with your half-wired broken jaw." It has impressive vocal harmonies and guitar riffs. The song was recorded with all live instruments like drums, guitars and bass with Gaga playing piano. The album's fifth track, "Dance

in the Dark," depicts a girl being uncomfortable when having sex. "She doesn't want her man to see her naked. She will be free, and she will let her inner animal out, but only when the lights are out," explained the singer. The lines "Around her kiss is a vampire grins/ Moonlights away while she is howling at him" are references to supernatural events. In "So Happy I Could Die," Gaga presents an ode to masturbation. Essentially a love song, the object of affection in "So Happy" becomes Gaga herself as she talks about looking at, drinking, dancing, and touching herself.

Gaga's voice is sedated in the song. The song uses auto-tune. "Alejandro" incorporates elements of the music of ABBA and Ace of Base with the lyrics talking about Gaga fending off a harem of Latino men. "Telephone" talks about the singer preferring the dance floor rather than answer her lover's call. The verses are sung in a rapid-fire way, accompanied by double beats. It deals with Gaga's fear of suffocation that she explained as a "fear [of] never being able to enjoy myself 'cause I love my work so much." She has spiraled to the top of the music scene. Following her success with her first single "Pokerface" and her first album *The Fame*, she has been compared to Madonna, Michael Jackson, and Britney Spears. Lady Gaga's monumental success is due to her ability to be unique. Her music, personality, and fashion all create a different person—a person who is sensual and addicting.

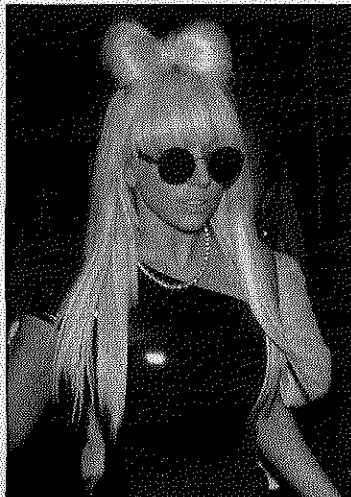


Photo Courtesy of www.shockya.com

Michael Cera stars in new movie

ALEX FABRIZIO
FOCUS EDITOR

Youth in Revolt is a movie based on a series of novels of the same title, written by C.D. Payne. The basic plotline is the main character is a good boy who turns bad in order to earn the affections of the "love of his life."

Michael Cera plays a 16 year-old Nick Twisp who loathes his last name and his mother's boyfriends. After her, Estelle's (Jean Smart) boyfriend Jerry (Zach Galafianakis) is threatened by a group of sailors, they go away Ukiah, a beautiful trailer park in the woods.

There, he meets, Sheni Saunders (Portia Doubleday). The daughter of religious fanatics and younger sister of stoner Paul Saunders (Justin Long), she is a mix of Zoëy Deschanel's Summer (from *500 Days of Summer*) and Ellen Page's Juno MacGuff (from *Juno*). Sheni embodies every ideal trait Nick is looking for in a girlfriend. The only problem is her athletic boyfriend Trent (Jonathan Bradford Wright). Sheni convinces Nick, before he returns back to Oakland and after they begin to informally date, that the only way for them to stay together is for him to misbehave. Thus, he creates his alter-ego Francois Dillinger. Francois has a pencil mustache, smokes hand-rolled cigarettes, wears white pants, is contemptuous of authority, and helps Nick follow through on his plan to get into trouble.

The storyline continues to progress and the characters develop organically. Earlier characters like his father, George Twisp (Steve Buscemi), his father's 25-year-old girlfriend, Lacey (Ari Graynor), and his neighbor Mr. Ferguson (Fred Willard) return, playing important parts in Nick/Francois's plans. New characters like Paul, Vijay Joshi (Adhir Kalyan), Bernise Lynch (Jade Fusco), and Taggart (Rooney Mara) are also vital to bringing Sheni back to him.

Akin to films of recent years, adolescent

main characters' tongues are sharp with sexual maturity that is between relatable and pretentious. Their vernacular is much more proper and intelligent than is typically heard out of a teenager's mouth. It is saved from contrived territory because it is used to discuss common and real teen topics like sex, authority, and puppy love.

Michael Cera's portrayal of Nick Twisp shows traces of his previous parts like cousin-loving Evan (*Superbad*), cross country-runner Paulie Bleeker (*Juno*), and culturally knowledgeable Nick (*Nick and Norah's Infinite Playlist*). *Youth in Revolt* captures a new side to the type-casted actor, having him also play Francois Dillinger.

Some of these facets seem daunting in the first few seconds, but are actually used humorously and well in context. Other quirks include the aforementioned vernacular, Nick Twisp's affinity for old foreign films, Sheni's desire to become fluent in French and live there, and most obviously: the cast wardrobe.

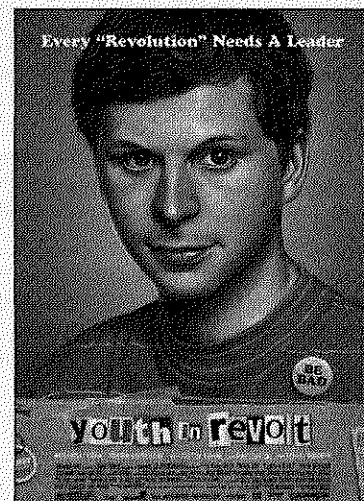


Photo Courtesy of www.iwatchstuff.com
Michael Cera stars in a new hit teen comedy, *Youth in Revolt*.

Sherlock Holmes still an classic brought to life by Ritchie and Downey Jr.

CAMILLE DiFOLCO
REPORTER



Photo Courtesy of www.17productions.com

A true classic is brought back to life in this long awaited remake with Robert Downey Jr., Rachel McAdams, and Jude Law.

"It does make a considerable difference to me having someone with me on whom I can thoroughly rely," admits detective Sherlock Holmes (Robert Downey Jr.) at the opportune arrival of his crime-solving partner, Dr. John Watson (Jude Law).

In director Guy Ritchie's adaptation of the classic Sir Arthur Conan Doyle series, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, Holmes and Watson are as close as ever, and the movie cer-

tainly upholds the essence of the stories.

The movie opens on an inky London alleyway, but the viewer is not left in the dark for long. Within fifteen minutes, Holmes and Watson have infiltrated the headquarters of the twisted Lord Blackwood (Mark Strong), fought down his burly henchmen, and foiled his sinister plot to sacrifice an innocent victim and thereby supplement his own powers. The night before his execution, Lord Blackwood summons Holmes to his prison cell and claims that he will return. A few days later, Blackwood's sandstone tomb lies in jagged slabs, evidently broken from the inside, and the corpse of an unidentified man is found in Blackwood's coffin. Holmes seems rather pleased that the case is reopened, not least of all because it will guarantee that Watson, whose wedding to Mary Morstan (Kelly Reilly) is imminent, will have to postpone retirement for the time being. The rest of the movie follows Holmes and Watson's race against the clock to find Lord Blackwood before he kills again and ultimately takes over England. Meanwhile, distractions such as Watson's approaching wedding, the reappearance of Holmes' old flame and lovely criminal mastermind Irene Adler (Rachel McAdams), and the ineptitude of the London police force quicken the movie's pace.

Between poisoning Watson's dog and practicing his violin at unearthly hours of the night, it is incredible that Sherlock Holmes gets any sleuthing done at all. Of course, this is what makes him the ultimate detective, a character that became the definition of a genre and a household name. His incredible observation skills allow him to deduce far more about his foes (and friends) than they might wish him to know. Downey's portrayal of Holmes is classic in much of the detective's daily life and habits. There is a notable scene wherein Watson finds Holmes, deliriously tired, using his violin to lure flies into a jar. This scene came directly from one of the novels. Holmes' hobbies and lifestyle are aptly represented as well, and Downey puts a humorous twist on the character.

Another consistency between the classic stories and this new adaptation is Watson's character. Traditionally an intelligent but somewhat ordinary man who is in awe of Holmes' brilliance and abilities, Law's Watson is clearly someone upon whom Holmes relies very greatly. The only difference is that Watson engages in plenty of duels as well. Throughout the movie, Watson rescues Holmes from tricky situations, berates him for his "general lack of hygiene," and is altogether more able-bodied than the literary Watson.

The movie is built upon one action scene after another, interspersed with witty exchanges between Holmes and Watson, and a bit of a romantic subplot as well. In this way the movie is quite modern, as the storybook Holmes never dueled with his foes. However, the action scenes are well choreographed and often entertaining; at one moment, Holmes faces down an adversary who is twice his size and armed with a large mallet. His comic defense is to pitch a regular hammer at the man, only to watch it ricochet harmlessly off the brute's chest.

Ritchie's version of the world's most famous detective is fantastic, armed with the fatal weapons of quick wit, thrilling action, and a hot cast. Not only did the plot play out at a pleasant pace, but it really kept the audience's attention. Throughout the film, new twists were introduced, and there was no paucity of hilarious moments. Not only is the movie worth seeing, it is worth seeing twice. The one drawback to this movie is that the viewer never did get to see Watson's wedding. This made the subplot feel a bit incomplete. By far the highlight of the movie was the climactic moment atop the Tower Bridge of London, and the tense disclosure and explanation by Holmes of the mystery. But then, that is the best part of any Holmes story, is it not?

So when it comes down to choosing between *Sherlock Holmes* and that other flick on the 'must-see' list, the choice should be elementary.



Photo Courtesy of Warner Bros Pictures/MCT

Robert Downey Jr. and Jude Law play their respective roles well.

Two Teammates Share their Differences

Name: *Max Muir*

Occupation: *Student*

CAMILLE DiFOLCO
REPORTER

Q: Do you play any sports, take part in any clubs- extracurricular activities in general? Do these in any way relate to your future plans (i.e. are you planning to play a sport in college)?

A: Yeah, I've been in the running program since my freshman year. I was God-awful and didn't care much, but I have come a long way since then. I definitely plan on running in college. College running is on a whole other level, and I think I am well prepared to make the jump.

Q: What are your college plans? (Where, what you'll study, etc.)

A: In-state. I was getting ready to send off my application to UC Santa Barbara, but then California public universities increased their tuition by 31%, so that dream was dashed. Luckily, Virginia has a huge pool of great schools to choose from, so it won't be so bad. Virginia Tech and JMU are definite prospects. As for what I will study, I really have no idea. I like architecture, and i really enjoy writing, but still, anything can happen.

Q: Have you looked into architecture courses at the West Potomac academy, or pursued it in some tangible way?

A: I took basic technical drawing and architectural drawing in my freshman and sophomore years, respectively. A few summers ago, I stayed at Virginia Tech for a weeklong architecture and design camp. It seems kind of nerdy, but it was a lot of fun.

Q: What are your favorite books, music, movies, etc.?

A: *Once A Runner* by John L. Parker is an awesome book. As movies go, I'd have to say that *Fight Club*, *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*, and *Holes* are all up there. When it comes to music I listen to just about everything. Right now, I'm really into The Killers and Say Anything.

Q: Is there anything interesting about yourself that few people know?

A: I'm a youtube junkie. Does that count? Also, I'm addicted to the TV show *Scrubs*. [And] I'm actually not an American citizen. I was born in London, and I'm a citizen of Australia through my dad, but I'm still not technically American. My friends find it hilarious for some reason...

Q: Any shout-outs to your class, or West Potomac in general?

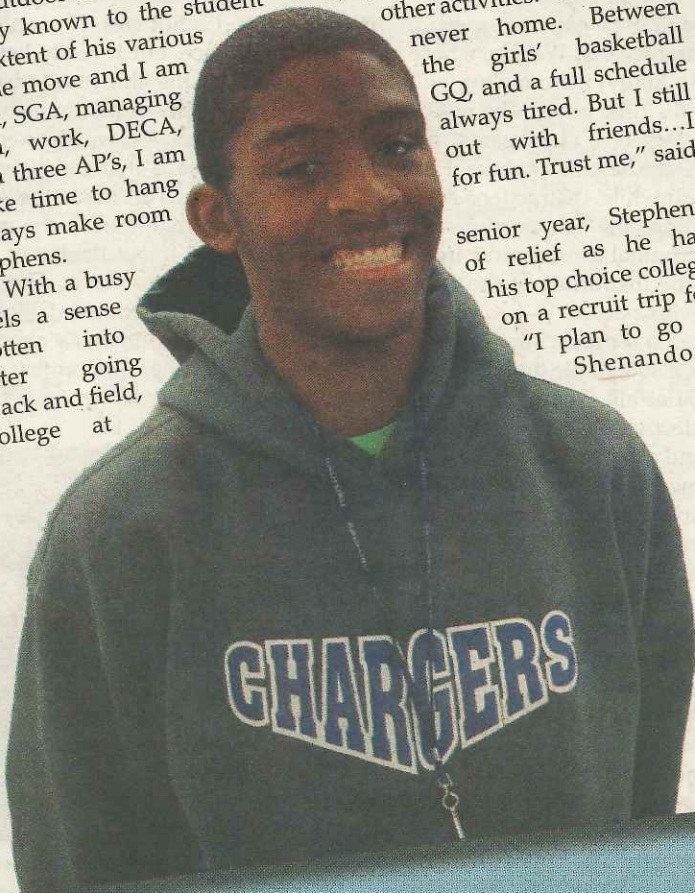
A: I'll give a shout-out to the class of 2010 fo sho. I would like to use this opportunity to ask my peers to please chill with the "oh-ten" chant. It's not oh-ten. It's just ten. And a special shout-out to Khoki "Big Buck" Bernier- you are a champion.



MICHAELA ACCARDI
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

How many males are confident enough to cheer in front of crowds of fans in a cheerleading uniform? Senior Wesley Stephens is. Stephens is not only the sole male cheerleader at our school; he is also the Student Government Association (SGA) Secretary and an athlete on the indoor and outdoor track and field team. While he may hold these positions widely known to the student body, students may not know the extent of his various other activities. "I am always on the move and I am never home. Between track, SGA, managing the girls' basketball team, work, DECA, and a full schedule with three AP's, I am always tired. But I still make time to hang out with friends...I always make room for fun. Trust me," said Stephens.

With a busy senior year, Stephens feels a sense of relief as he has gotten into his top choice college on a recruit trip for after going to Shenandoah track and field, college at



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Name: *Wesley Stephens*
Occupation: *Student*

Administration. One day, I also hope to have my own event planning business in a big city like Los Angeles or New York," he said. However, Stephens also noted that, "I also have a secret desire to appear on the *Real World* after I graduate college. I like writing, so maybe I will write a book. I don't know, but everyone will know my name someday."

With all of his large plans and a busy schedule, one may be amazed to learn that Stephens still finds plenty of time to enjoy his senior year. Aside from doing homework, Stephens said he spends his free time "hanging out with the Fab 5." The "Fab 5" is a group of Stephens and four senior girls: Kiara Artis, Nishma Brown, Chyna Johnson-Owens, and Ashleigh White. Stephens also listens to the over 2000 songs on his iPod and writes stories in his spare time, "I have composition books full of unfinished stories," said Stephens, "I also love to shop! Shopping is my life, I love getting new clothes and shoes. It's so much fun to try to find an outfit for a certain occasion."

Stephens would also like to leave one final message for his fellow senior classmates, "'You are never too old.' I think that a lot of seniors have checked out and lost all interest in school, but I think it should be the opposite. Senior year should be the year you should try new things and explore yourself. Take that interesting class, join that club, become a cheerleader, or do whatever floats your boat because it is the last chance you will have," said Stephens.

Clearly, Stephens is a multi-dimensional person and when asked to define himself, he said, "I can't be defined. If you ask ten different people who Wesley Stephens is, you would get ten different answers. I'm just me, I don't want to be defined. I'm just Wesley... I am a very complex person and few know beyond my top layers. I have accomplished things many people in this school wouldn't think I could, such as passing AP exams or being elected an SGA officer. I am living proof that you can't judge a book by its cover."