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THE WIRE

WEST POTOMAC HIGH SCHOOL

Volume 24, Issue #5
6500 Quander Road
Alexandria, VA 22307

THE TOP, BEST, FAVORITE, GREATEST, COOLEST, MOST SUPERB, FUNNIEST, CRAZIEST, WILDEST of...



Friday, January 9, 2009

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Graphics by Clip Art

Check out page 8 for information on the recent success of our swim team.



Photo by Oliver Douliery/MCT

What do students think of the upcoming concert?



Graphics by Clip Art

Are foreign languages valuable later in life?



Photo Courtesy of Handout/MCT

How was the latest holiday movie *Marley and Me*?



Photo by Erin Parker

Find out why grade printouts are beneficial for students.

Proposal for Late School Opening School Violence Decreases

STEPHEN HOWELL
LAYOUT/NEWS EDITOR

A proposal from the Fairfax County school transportation planners to move high school start times back, at no extra cost, is likely to be approved by the Fairfax County School Board this week.

The proposal would push back the start times of high schools to 8:15 a.m. and schools would close at 3:20 p.m. The plan would give students extra sleep; recent research and activists note the current start time is arbitrary and unhealthy for teenagers, who are recommended at least eight hours of sleep a night.

While the proposal of a late start time is popular, the implications of a later release have many worried. The biggest concern about the plan is its effect on students' after school plans. "I want to make sure we work out the schedule so kids aren't shortchanged in after school activities and responsibilities," Principal Rima Vesilind said. Many students at our school are involved in plans after school such as jobs, sports, and watching and caring for family members.

"I am for it and against it," Principal Rima Vesilind said. Vesilind, like many others, wants a later start time, but is skeptical about the schedule's effect on extracurricular activities. "I do not want sports games going to 11 o'clock," Vesilind said.

Students at our school have expressed a variety of opinions, with enrollment in extracurriculars and amount of homework being deciding factors. "I like [the proposal] because I would be able to sleep more. I am usually up to midnight on the computer and doing homework, and I don't have to much going on after school that would be compensated [by the proposal]," freshmen Diana Devine said.



Photo by Stephen Howell

Junior Maddie Dahl and sophomore Drew Sanders struggle to stay awake in English class. Fairfax County hopes to resolve this by proposing a new school start time at 8:15 a.m.

"I don't like it because sports practice already goes long enough anyways. If practice gets moved back another hour, I will probably just go to bed later," junior Michael Brandt said.

Teachers have expressed a similar range of viewpoints. "If students use the extra time for sleep I think it will be beneficial," said history teacher Salvatore Olivo, who teaches a first block class on B days. Olivo notes that the end of the school day is almost worse for teachers because students appear to more tired then.

See Grading Scale, page 5

School Violence Decreases

GRACE POWELL
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Senior Lewis Simuel says he remembers being punched in the face the last time he was in a fight. Lewis said a large group of students gathered at a church near Bucknell. Words were exchanged and "I came home looking like Rocky," said Lewis. But that was three years ago. Fights like that are now few and hard to find.

Since 2000, the number of reported fights has decreased significantly. "It was a pretty rough school," said security officer William Haire, who came to our school in 2003 along with principal Rima Vesilind. 77 fights were reported that year. "There were fights almost on a daily basis," said Haire. According to Vesilind, fights are defined as, "one person hitting or shoving and another person responding. If the second person does not respond physically, it's an assault rather than a fight."

Senior Emily Cortez's sister attended West Potomac from 2000-2005. Cortez said her sister often notes the apparent difference in our school, "She said that everyone was fighting everyone and it was like a fight every week, administrators always running around," said Cortez.

"It's a lot different from when I was here," said Crime Prevention Officer Darryl Davis who worked as a Student Resource Officer at our school for eight years. Davis said that violence has "decreased significantly" at our school. Davis

See Violence, page 4

Predicted Inauguration Crowds Worry Students and Citizens

JESSICA TAYLOR
REPORTER

The upcoming Inauguration is projected to draw a record number of attendees, and living right outside the Nation's Capital, students at our school will have front row seats to the whole deal.

With such high estimations of turnout for Inauguration Day, many people are worrying that D.C. will not be able to handle the large influx in visitors. The Federal Bureau of Intelligence (FBI) and Secret Service forecast the crowd come January 20th at near one million, while D.C. Mayor Adrian M. Fenty (D) estimates the crowd to be upwards of 3 or 4 million. These large estimations, far surpassing any recent Inauguration, have caused some to worry about various problems such big crowds might cause,

Worries include that there will not be enough bathrooms set out for the mass of people and that the large throngs coupled with the volatile weather of the region (which

will likely be cold, wet, and possibly snowy) could spell disaster. D.C. has taken measures to prevent these problems, however, requesting that the surrounding museums owned by the Smithsonian remain open to house shelter and sanitary bathrooms. For those that cannot deal with the extremities of the outdoors, the Newseum will also be opening its doors to allow people to have an up close view of the Inauguration from the warmth of indoors.

The city has been making various preparations to accommodate and profit from the crowds that will be swarming the area. The D.C. Council has put forth a bill allowing bars to remain open 24 hours and serve alcohol until 5 a.m. from January 17-21. Though this legislation is supported by Mayor Fenty, opposition from Senators Dianne Feinstein (D-California) and Bob Bennett (R-Utah) might halt it from passing and council members have begun looking at alternate options that would allow bars



Photo by Chuck Kennedy/MCT

President Elect Barack Obama (D) awaits his inauguration on January 20, with an expected crowd of over 1 million.

to open later than usual though still require them to close.

Metro has also made plans to sell commemorative SmarTrip cards with

Obama's face printed on them for the Inauguration. They have warned against taking the Metro to the Mall.

The influx of tourists to the region for Inauguration will likely jam-pack the Metro, and traffic in the area is considered the second worst in the country, but the Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA) has a solution. Hoping that some residents will opt to bike into D.C., WABA is making plans with the D.C. Department of Transportation to run a "bike valet" for people that do bike in.

For other residents looking to make some money off the event, many Washingtonians are turning to Craigslist. People from all over the area are placing open apartments and even parts of their own homes up online to rent out to citizens across the country looking for a place to stay to witness this event.

The Inauguration might be proving to be See Inauguration, page 5

The First Amendment is Freedom of Speech, or Did You Forget?

STAFF EDITORIAL

If there is one thing we love, it is the first amendment. As student journalists of this publication, *The Wire*, we hope to practice true journalism by expressing our opinions and reporting facts. We write to entertain, inform, and make our voices heard. All of us value our freedom of the press and expression. Although we may not have degrees that certify us as "journalists," we are still entitled to these freedoms.

Last issue, Focus Editor Alex Fabrizio's article "An Updated Tragedy," a review of our school's *Romeo & Juliet* play, came under fire from the administration. Though the review was not positive, it certainly was not libelous. People throw that word around without knowing its true meaning. Merriam-Webster dictionary defines libel as "the publication of blasphemous, treasonable, seditious, or obscene writings or pictures." Fabrizio's article can be described by none of those adjectives because it did not aim to hurt anyone's reputation based on false facts. Anyone who pays the admission to see a play is entitled to his or her opinion, and in this case, Fabrizio's opinion was not 100 percent positive.

When the drama teacher, Ms. Melissa Christensen, found out about this review, she requested to see a copy of the article, something *The Wire* does not allow anyone to do, except the principal under *extreme* circumstances. Throughout the history of journalism, prior review has always led the content to be dictated, which defeats the purpose of free press. Regardless, the pages had already been sent to the printer the day before her request. Little did we know that upon denial of her request, she would contact the administration, eventually leading to the halting of the distribution. We understand that as a teacher, Christensen was trying to protect the feelings of her students and the play they worked hard on. However, we also felt the need to defend our rights.

On Thursday, December 4, when we should have been distributing the paper, *The Wire's* editorial board had a meeting with Assistant Principal Mr. Bruce Jankowitz and Director of Student Activities Mr. Aaron Helmick. It was odd that Christensen – the person who brought up the concern – was absent.

To us, the call for "discussion" was pointless, simply because we did not believe the content of the review was harsh. We realize there will always be people that agree with our articles and people that disagree in general. Those that are not satisfied are encouraged to write a Letter to the Editor, which would be printed the following issue.

During the meeting, Jankowitz repeatedly stated, "this is a *high school* newspaper." Perhaps he meant that in high school the administration deals with volatile emotions. Although that is respectable, we felt that this comment also diminished our paper and discouraged us from practicing true journalism. High school is supposed to expose us to experiences that will prepare us for the professional world.

Richard Just, professional journalist and deputy editor of *The New Republic*, is a strong advocate for student journalists' rights. In his article "Unmuzzling High School Journalists," published in *The Washington Post* on January 12, 2008, he wrote, "Be brazen in pushing the boundaries of what you're allowed to write."

That is exactly what we are doing.

RANTS and Raves

A **RANT** for the new after school policy.

A **rave** for 2009!

A **RANT** for the end of Winter Break.

A **rave** for the NFL Playoffs.

A **RANT** for Jack Dale's disapproval of the 10-point grading scale.

A **rave** for having two "four day" weekends in January.

A **RANT** for administrative censorship.

A **rave** for the end of cheesy Christmas specials on television.

CORRECTIONS

The publication date of the December issue of *The Wire* was delayed and off by four days to Monday, December 5. Also, the rave for Wacky Wednesday and FLEX 8 was referring to the previous week.

The photos in the page 9 Entertainment article movie review of *Twilight* are actually credited to MCT, not KRT handout. Also, on the front page style teaser, the photo should be credited to Peter Sorel/MCT.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

I was horrified when I read the article about winter solstice by Asma Ahmad in the last *Wire*. I was expecting to read a recap of the quaint rituals of ancient Norwegians and the Celts as they celebrated the day symbolizing the end of winter. Instead, it implies that Christianity is some kind of continuation of pagan practices. "Today, many Western-Europeans refer to the Winter Solstice as Christmas because many of the traditions associated with the holiday are interwoven with Christian mythology." What! Western civilization doesn't celebrate winter solstice, they celebrate Christmas as the birth of Christ, nothing more. Categorizing our beliefs as "mythology" is extremely insulting! Yes, the early church leaders purposely replaced old celebrations with ones associated with Christianity to encourage conversion. Yes, we kept the fun aspects of the old traditions, but certainly not in a pagan, nature-god way. Why did the author of this article feel the need to turn what could have been a simple informative article into an insulting misrepresentation of Christianity? Is Christian-bashing acceptable? Are we living in such an age of political-correctness that this article will spark no controversy?

-Jody Taylor, parent

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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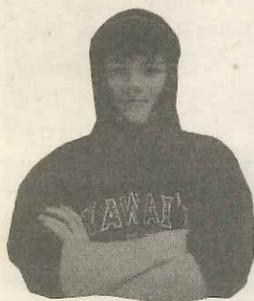
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Teachers Need to Give Out Grade Sheets More Often



LUCAS ALEXANDER
OPINIONS EDITOR

Jim Alexander walks into his living room and greets his parents after a long day at school. He drops his 12.63 pound backpack onto the couch and begins to start his outrageous amount of AP homework. Today is the day that report cards are being sent home. However, Jim is an outstanding student and he is relatively confident that his meticulous studies have given him nothing to worry about.

As he finishes up the first half of his homework, he notices the mailman shoving a large amount of mail through his mail slot. He gets up and begins to go through it, finding nothing but *Pottery Barn* magazines and spam. He sifts through about two thirds of mail, when he stumbles upon his report card.

He opens the important piece of paper and as he goes through his usual straight 'A' report card, he notices one thing that stands out: a C+ in AP US History. "What? How did that happen?" he thinks to himself.

As Jim ponders the possible causes of this mishap, his parents stroll back into the room and grab his report card. They yell at him for the blunder. The next four and half weeks of Jim's life will be filled with doing nothing but sitting in his room and doing

homework, because he will be grounded until interims come out the following quarter.

Many students have seen the same situation as Jim did. They made one mistake, perhaps they did not turn in an assignment or have not yet made corrections on a test they did poorly on. Now, the students have no way of remembering these mistakes.

Students should not be required to remember and record grades received on assignments or what they need to do for a class. Teachers are paid to teach and to help students, and it is their responsibility, not the students. "I think it is the teacher's responsibility to keep track of our grades and assignments because that is a part of their job; to teach and grade us," said

junior Frankie Gerow. Gerow also added that, "it is just the student's responsibility to make sure that the teacher does not make a mistake and give a wrong grade."

However, some teachers still refuse to take the time to hand grade sheets to their to students. Math teacher David Fink said he gives out grade sheets "twice a quarter." Concerning posting students' grades, Fink does "not think that they should do that because students need to be conscious of their grades."

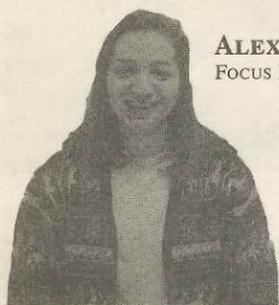
Jim's problem could have been easily avoided if his history teacher

had taken five minutes to print grade sheets for his students. With interims being the only significant record of a student's grade before report cards, and a bad one at that, these grade sheets are essential.

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“The next four and half weeks of Jim's life will be filled with doing nothing but sitting in his room and doing homework, because he will be grounded until interims come out the following quarter.”

Foreign Languages Are Essential



ALEX FABRIZIO
FOCUS EDITOR

and culture, we learn how to humanize people we might normally think are very different from us."

Junior Aidan Mosley said, "I would like to be fluent [in a foreign language] because of the opportunities that are missed knowing only one language." The

Foreign language does not only benefit people emotionally but it also benefits students academically. A number of different reports proved the various benefits of studying a foreign language throughout high school. A very impressive report by College Entrance Examination Board (Collegeboard) of college-bound seniors from 1992 showed that the students who averaged four years of foreign language scored higher on the verbal section of the SAT. Another report agreed with those findings and also proved that students score higher on other "SAT sub-tests" as well. Lastly, a 1985 report showed that students who studied a foreign language in high school had a higher academic performance in college than those who did not.

Proficiency and fluency in another language also improve marketability when seeking a job because it takes many years to become fluent in a language and other skills, like technological ones, do not take nearly as much time to train an employee in.

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STUDENTS WHO AVERAGED FOUR YEARS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE SCORED HIGHER ON THE VERBAL SECTION OF THE SAT.

STUDENTS WHO STUDIED A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN HIGH SCHOOL HAD A HIGHER ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN COLLEGE THAN THOSE WHO DID NOT.

opportunities he described were similar to O'Connor's including experiencing another culture, and also being able to communicate with "an entirely different group of people than you would if you spoke only one language."

Communication plays a huge role in every person's life.

Whether they are a new-born baby or an infirm elderly person clinging on to life, the use or even the lack of language affects their lives on multiple levels. And the more outlets someone has for communicating, the more likely it is that they will be understood.

Back in 1999, Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley said, "English is surely a world language. But learning a foreign language exposes young people to new cultures and new horizons and helps them understand English better."

Foreign language department head and Spanish teacher Mrs. Victoria O'Connor believes almost exactly that. "Learning a foreign language makes us more compassionate human beings. When we learn another language

HANGING OUT WITH THE HEAD HONCHO



Photos by Tida Johnson, Graphic by Grace Powell

MARIYA ILYAS
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

What is the point of having rules if they are not going to be followed?

High school is supposed to teach us how to become adults – that is, it is supposed to teach us to take responsibility for our actions. How are we being prepared for life if rules are bent every time we make a mistake?

For example, in December, about 30 kids were involved in a cheating scandal. One senior stole Mr. Alex Case's AP Government midterm, and about six met to complete it the day before the actual exam. Answers were distributed to the others. How is it justifiable that only those six get punishments and the others are let loose?

And what were the punishments of those six that got caught? They got detention, were required to write three essays, clean the senior parking lot in "humiliating" yellow vests, and retake the midterm for 50%.

I personally know most of the seniors involved in this scandal, and over half of them hold some sort of official position in our school. Four of the six that were caught were dismissed from the prestigious, integrity-based chapter of National Honor Society. Kudos to NHS for following through.

I was more disappointed than surprised with my fellow peers. To know that my friends are amongst the millions that craft the reputation of our society was simply disturbing, even frightening. In the recent December 2008 survey conducted by *U.S. & World Report News*, 64 percent of students admitted to cheating on an exam. This is simply sickening, especially knowing that these cheaters – some of whom walk our own halls – feel ethnically good about themselves. The survey reported that students "who engage in dishonest acts still hold a positive view of themselves" and that "93 percent of the respondents said they were satisfied with their personal ethics and character."

If these students are being let loose because they are seniors and it would hurt their chances of getting into college, then I argue just the opposite – because they are seniors, they should know better. Any person who decides to screw up his or her final year of high school deserves proper punishment – which is suspension from school.

One of the reasons I love Mr. Bernie Cabral's English class is because we can openly discuss things that matter to us. Shortly after the scandal, our discussion topic for class was "Why do you cheat?" One student argued that if one is trying really hard in a class, and still does not understand the material, then cheating is okay, especially if the information will never be needed in the future. Many agreed that people cheat to take a short cut, to cut corners for immediate results. Some confessed their everyday cheating habits, not just in academics, but in relationships too. Yet, others sat quiet, perhaps too guilty to speak up.

People will only change if proper actions are taken. But if the school administration keeps letting students loose and is not playing by rules, how is that justice? George Orwell's famous short novel, *Animal Farm*, is a great example of exactly what is happening at our school. The rules keep changing to please the pigs.

Our school is teaching us that we can break rules and get away with it.

I had a three-hour discussion about this with a good friend of mine. He told me, "Why ruin their entire futures for one simple mistake?" It's not about ruining anyone's futures; it is about teaching students to be adults and to take responsibility for their actions, because in the real world, one screw up is all it takes. Just look at what happened to New York Governor Elliot Spitzer earlier in March. He did not get a second chance when he was caught having an affair with Ashley Dupree. I am sure he was sorry, but he still had to pay the consequences.

I am not saying once someone makes a mistake, they should be scared for life. Nor am I saying that people do not deserve a second chance. All I am saying is if we are going to make rules, we should either follow them or not have them at all.

At the end of English class that day, Mr. Cabral profoundly stated, "We deserve the society we create." I could not agree more.

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High Teacher Turnover Rates Do Not Affect Morale

RACHEL MARTIN
REPORTER

According to the *Washington Post*, 50 percent of teachers leave their jobs within the first five years. In law careers, there is only a 19 percent resignation. Why is the teacher turnover rate so high?

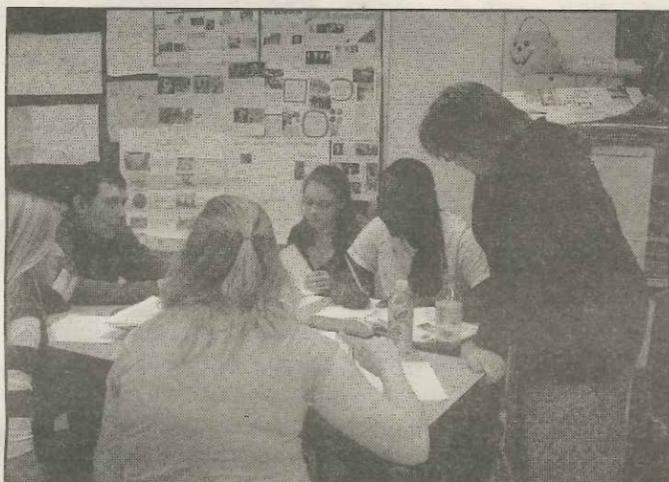


Photo by Mariya Ilyas

Although national statistics show that 50 percent of teachers leave within their first five years, the attrition rate at our school is lower, according to Vesilind.

The Alliance for Excellent Education tells us that this decline in the work force is largely due to problems including heavy workloads, not enough planning time, student behavioral problems, and having little input in school policy. Teacher Policy Research states that high turnover rates are a bigger problem for poorer schools, where students are more likely to score low on standardized tests. Losing teachers creates problems for these schools in particular because replacing teachers is costly and time consuming, and creates instability for the students, where many are already performing poorly.

At our school, high reduction in the work force is not a problem. Principal Rima Vesilind said that our attrition rate does not reflect the shockingly high

national percentage. "We don't have a high attrition rate of beginning teachers... The people who left us did so because their families were moving, they were retiring, they got sick, or they got promotions... We seldom lose a first year teacher." In fact, only eighteen teachers left our school last year, and those only for personal reasons, not because they disliked their jobs.

Most teachers at our school genuinely like working here, and would not like to resign, even if they were offered a higher paying job, despite the fact that teaching positions are generally thought to have low salaries. As history teacher George Coe said, "It's too bad we're not paid a million dollars, but that's not why we teach."

There are other things that the teachers seem to enjoy about our school, especially working together in order to teach the students the skills they will be expected to have in their next grade level. They do have some complaints, however; the biggest one being students coming to class unprepared to learn. They all stress the importance of students coming to class not only with the materials they need but with the right attitude to learn. Disruptive behavior is a problem that is specific from class to class,

but most teachers agree that it is only a moderate problem at our school.

Allison Satterwhite, a math teacher, feels she can understand why the attrition rate is so high for teachers. "A lot of young people come into teaching with the idealistic view of 'I want to do something for society, I want to do my part and give back'... but then it's a burden to keep up with the bureaucracy, that can range from any kind of grading and faculty meeting, there's a lot of paperwork to get through on top of the classroom management, and on top of the curriculum and the instruction." She also feels it may be a problem more specific to her generation than to the career of teaching. "A lot of the current generation, like my generation, people my age graduating college, set out and say, 'oh, I'm going to go do this and see how I like it and if it doesn't work out, I have plenty of opportunity to go do something else.'"

Overall, though, the teachers at our school enjoy working here. Physics teacher Stephen Rezendes feels that his coworkers enjoy their jobs a great deal. "The teachers are all dedicated and they all enjoy being here. It's an excellent school and we like working here. It's the best job I've ever had."

"Gossip Girl" Website Spreads Rumors, Angers Students

MEGAN HALEY
REPORTER

Throughout the month of December, there was an influx of "Gossip Girl" websites, none of which lasted longer than a few days. The second site was arguably the best, because its information was the closest to the truth and it did not contain false information. Freshman Emily Hauptle said, "The second site was by far the best, most accurate and original, that was before it started getting mean and the first one was just kind of lame." The consensus of the student body was mixed. Those who were talked about either were secretly excited or completely angered about the accusations. "I was upset when I saw a post about me on Gossip Girl. It wasn't true and I asked them to take it down," said junior Katie Woodward, concerning the slanderous material posted on one of the sites.

The websites were posted on a blogging website (<https://www.blogger.com/start2>) which were discovered through Google.com. "Hannah [Shelloner] only found out about the

sites when someone googled her name and the site came up," said junior Alex Butler. As the week went on, the sites were put up and taken down almost randomly. According to a source, the "Gossip Girl" was receiving hate mail and feared being discovered by administration. However it was not long before another site was up and running, that contained new information, with questionable reliability. Since the sites went up and came down rather rapidly, and each new one was slightly different than the one before, there was speculation on whether they were made by the same person. "I don't think they were made by the same person because some of the sites were very uninformed and others were much better," said junior Zach Jongema.

For those who are unaware of what Gossip Girl is, it was originally a book series created by author Cecily von Ziegesar in 2002. The series contains twelve books, with the twelfth being a prequel to the entire series. Essentially the series took place in Manhattan's Upper East Side, following the lives of the rich children of Manhattan's elite. "Gossip Girl"

was an unknown, presumed female member of this group who posted everything about everyone who was anyone's life, while keeping anonymity. Then in 2007, producer Josh Schwartz of *The O.C.* adapted the series to be a television show and it was picked up by The CW network. "Gossip Girl," the series, is currently in its second season on The CW and although it does not mirror the story line of the books, it has been well accepted by fans. Junior Molly Bowdring said, "I read some of the books when I was younger and even though the TV show isn't the same, I still love both."

As of now, most every site has been taken down. By the end of the "Gossip Girl era," the sites were very hard to find. The names had to become more creative, such as "22307 Gossip Girl," because they could not all be named the same thing, and they stopped appearing on Google searches. It seems as though the true author of "West Potomac Gossip Girl" will remain a mystery. "I don't know if we'll ever figure out who was making these sites because it upset so many people," said Hauptle.

calendar

January

- 12 PTSA Meeting, Key Club Meeting
- 13 WABC Meeting
- 14 NHS Meeting
- 19 Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday
- 20 Inauguration Day Holiday
- 21 Conversation Club Meeting
- 24 SAT Test
- 26 Teacher Workday
- 27 Teacher Workday
- 29 AP Information Night
- 31 Science Fair

February

- 3 Touchbase with Teachers
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Violence Rates Have Decreased in Past Years

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worked along side a team of administrators dedicated to diminishing the amount of violence on school campus. "Now the security department is totally different," said Davis. Haire said that while the former security team was qualified, "I don't think they were as aware of what was going on." To begin the reforming process, security officers said they increased their presence on campus. For example, Haire said administrators were posted when students got on and off buses. "Adult presence cuts down on that kind of activity."

Gang activity has also decreased. "Gang activity was zero tolerated, Zero," said Davis. Davis also said that there were active gang members at our school. However, the administration began addressing the core of the problem. They did not allow students to wear gang paraphernalia such as bandanas and hats. "Gang activity had really gotten out of control in the county." Now Davis said that while gangs may still be active in the community, "They keep it quiet."

"The rate of violence has dropped a lot in this school" said senior Ashleigh White. White said, "literally, they had this strict policy like if you were even to initiate a fight, you were suspended for 10 days and recommended for expulsion." White defined the zero tolerance policy which also contributed to the violence decline.

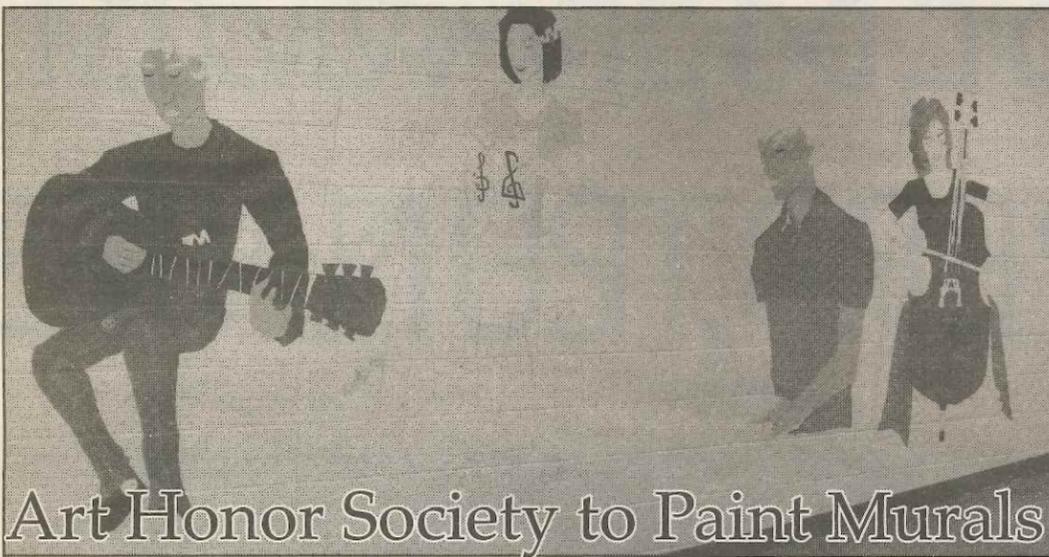
"I'm not going to let you fight her!" yelled security guard Debora Rife to a girl student. Rife restrained the girl to a school bus as the girl cried, "Let me fight her!" This incident demonstrates a

rising suspicion amongst the administration, girl fights are on the rise. This year three fights involving girls have been reported. Davis said unlike guys, "Girls, they tend to fight for months." The increase in girl fights may be due to rising technology. "Myspace and Facebook were nightmares for me" said Davis who encountered cyber bullying amongst girls. Lewis said guy fights are more about pride, "We have a lot of stuff to prove, that's our problem...if someone talks smack to us we have to try to do something about it." White said "I think guys get it a lot worse...they're not looked to do right, they're looked to do wrong. So even if they're not doing anything bad, they're still going to be watched."

Senior Teneisha Jordan came to our school last year from Austin, Texas. "I felt really safe just knowing the fact that they had one security officer. Because in Texas there was only one security officer and there was a lot of discipline problems."

The vigilance of the administration and no-nonsense policies have contributed to the paling evidence of violence on our campus. "It doesn't happen overnight...it took around 7-8 years," said Davis. The number of reported fights have declined throughout the years. In 2004-2005, 22 fights were documented, the following school year 13 fights were reported, and during the 2006-2007 school year 10 fights were recorded.

Davis also noticed a more innate change occurring among students. "To be honest with you the new era of kids, they're more bonded together." Davis listed the failing economy, violence and terrorism bombarding our nation as reasons for why students may have other things to worry about besides a fight.



Art Honor Society to Paint Murals

JESSICA TAYLOR
REPORTER

The Art Honor Society (AHS) had a rough start to the year, finally forming and taking off this past month, yet this hasn't stopped them from setting lofty goals for this year that they seem determined to achieve.

Members of the AHS hope to paint several murals throughout the school this year. The primary mural they are currently focused on is a massive one in collaboration with the Spanish Honor Society (SHS) that will great students in the crowded halls of the foreign language hallway. Members are currently finishing sketching out and making plans for the mural, but should begin painting this week. The project began in the Spanish Honor Society towards the end of last year, but now

that the Art Honor Society has agreed to paint it, members of both societies hope for the mural to be completed by the end of the month.

There are no other murals currently planned, but the club does hope to paint more this year. Once the foreign language mural is completed, the Art Honor Society expect to continue focusing outside of Springbank and getting more artwork into Quander and Gunston.

There are only two non seniors, senior Michael Tse explains, "so basically, the club dies next year." Because of this, the Art Honor Society wants to achieve a lot this year.

One of those two underclassmen, junior and Art Honor Society member Rachel Himes has been busy at work on her own mural project independent

of the club. "Since I needed community service hours this year," she explains, "I thought I'd do something I really enjoy. It's great because I get to leave my mark on the school." The mural, located in the main hallway of Springbank at the corner right before the music hall, is very music oriented - comprised of a guitar, cello, saxophone, and singer- because Rachel Himes noticed a lack of music themed murals in all of Springbank.

Himes said she hopes to finish the mural, which she has been working on about a month and a half ago, by the end of the month, but still exasperatedly admits that "it's taking forever." The Art Honor Society is not currently involved in Himes's mural, but she said she has considered inviting them to join her in completing it.

FCPS Open at a Later Timing

Continued from page 1

"At the end of the day is when I see lack of sleep catching up with students," Olivo said. Olivo also coaches shot-put for the school's winter track team and is concerned about the schedule's impact on practice times. The team already has trouble finding time to practice when it's still light outside, Olivo said.

Our schools FLEX 8 schedule would not change if the proposal is approved, however the "Wacky Wednesday" late start would be eliminated.

A majority of schools in our county start at 7:20. Our school starts

at 7:30 to balance the schedule for students enrolled in academy classes. Arlington county high school have started at 8:15 since 2000.

County elementary start times would also move back to times between 7:50 and 9:25. Most middle schools would start at 9:40 as a result of the plan. Our schools faculty is beginning talks about the late start this month.

Elementary start times would also move back to times between 7:50 and 9:25 a.m. Most high schools would start at 8:30 a.m., and most middle schools at 9:40 a.m.

To save money, county transportation would be cut and bus stops will be consolidated.

DC Prepares for a Large Crowd

Continued from page 1



a nightmare to plan for, but both the city and residents are remaining optimistic that the event will go off well, and that just maybe, they can make a bit of a profit.

With all the excitement and attention some people have been directing towards the Inauguration, it might seem like most students would be jumping at the unique chance living near D.C. presents and be heading into the city for Inauguration, but most students are electing to watch it from the warmth and comfort of their own

homes. "I will be nowhere near D.C. on Inauguration Day" vows senior David Aramony citing the "crowds and nightmarish traffic conditions" among other concerns for D.C.'s ability to cope with the abnormally large crowds the Inauguration is expected to draw. "The crowds will probably be insane" agrees senior Daniel Fritz, adding that, "you can see the event better on T.V. anyway, so I won't be going." Some, however, are willing to look past the problems the city is likely to run into. Senior Mary McKnight agrees that the prospective crowds are a concern, but says that "I think it's worth it. It's a historical moment, and if that mean I have to be packed like a sardine, then so be it."

world&school

newsbriefs

SGA Launches Publicity Initiative



The SGA Communications Committee has started a new initiative to make information about the activities of our school more accessible to students. Sign boards will be placed in the cafeteria, main lobby, and gym lobby. These sign boards will allow students to come to central locations and get the information they need.

Annie McCann Remembrance Bracelets on Sale



Bracelets are being sold in Mrs. Kelcy Pierre's room (416) in remembrance of Annie McCann, who passed away in November. The bracelets are selling for two dollars and all proceeds will go to the McCann family. If you have any information on Annie's death, please call (410) 396- 2100.

Interclub Council Meeting to Meeting Held



The newly formed Interclub Council, under the student leadership of senior Student Chair Tina Svalina and teacher Mr. Alexander Case in connection with SGA, met during FLEX four on December 15, 2008. There, representatives from each club and honor society in our school discussed their plans for the year. They also discussed how each club will deal with the new late bus policy starting in the new semester, which will allow for only Wednesday late buses.

Key Club Reaches Out to Community Afar



The Key Club started their annual "Nothing But Nets" fundraiser, which helps to raise money for the purchase of mosquito nets for families in Africa. The purpose is to help stop the spread of Malaria, a potentially deadly disease. Members from Key Club have been collecting donations at some of the home basketball games.

New Attendance Policy in Effect After School



Under the guidance of the new Dean of Students, Mr. Hassan Mims, our school is enforcing a new policy for after school procedures. Everyday, students will have to be with or on the way to be with a sponsor, teacher, or coach by 2:30 p.m., and after 3:30 p.m., students will have to wait outside for their rides or with their sponsor, teacher, or coach. Hall sweeps will help to enforce this.

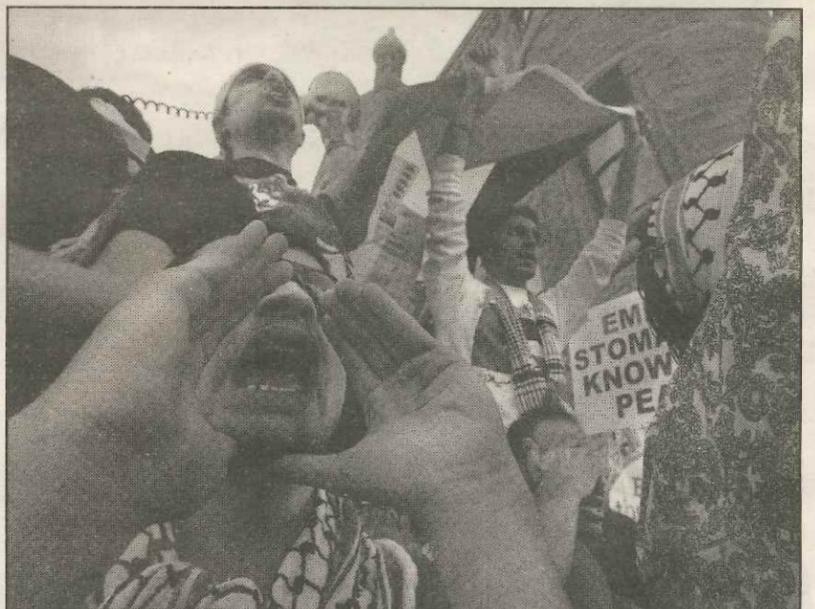


Photo Courtesy MCT Campus

A protestor shoots at a march in the Gaza Strip. Israel and Palestine are engaged in war, with the estimated death total over 75.

War Continues Between Isreal and Gaza



Isreal started a series of air strikes on Palestine, as a peace agreement dissolved. This attack further agitated the religious differences between the Muslim Hamas and the Jewish Isreal. As the strikes continued, Isreal started a land stike, killing hundreds of Palestians trapped on the Gaza strip. This conflict has become a call for humanitarian action.

Burriss Rejected from Senate Seat



Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich's appointee for Presdient elect Barack Obama's vacant senate seat, Roland Burriss, has been rejected from filling the position. Secretary of the Senate Nancy Erickson denied to authorize the appiontment, amid Blagojevich's corruption charges. Burriss insists he has the right to be Senator and plans to arrive at the Capitol on Tuesday for the Congressional Inauguration Ceremony.

THE TOP, BEST, FAVORITE MOST SUPERB, FUNNIES

EMILY SMITH
MANAGING EDITOR

2008 was a big year, but Americans are glad to leave it behind and begin again on a clean slate. Politically, 2008 was a roller-coaster ride of excitement. Illinois Senator Barack Obama came out of the woodwork to run for President, and successfully won the election, making world news as the first African-American elected as the President of the United States. Though political activism was high, few people expected the economic crisis. As gas prices climbed, real estate values dropped, and people turned to more frugal and eco-friendly living.

As the economy struggled, technology advanced with new products such as the 3G iPhone and the Kindle. The internet continued its influential role in the media, pop culture, and economy. On a side note: 2008 was the year that Lindsay Lohan dated a woman and Britney Spears restarted her musical career.

These lists were compiled from *Time Magazine's* "Top 10" and general popularity.



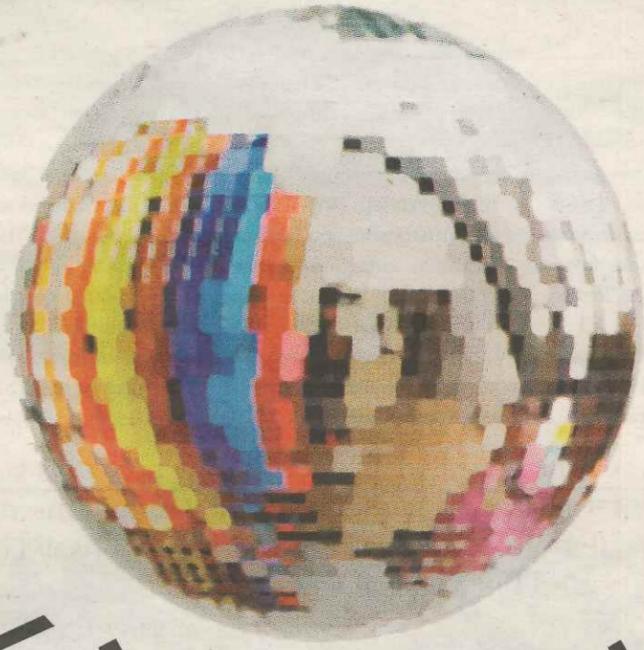
scandals

1. Seniors steal Mr. Case's AP Government midterm test.
2. Illinois Governor Blagojevich tries to sell President-elect Barack Obama's senator seat.
3. New York Governor Eliot Spitzer elicits sex from a high-end call girl.
4. Senator John Edwards had an extramarital affair while his wife is ill with incurable cancer.
5. Miley Cyrus had a controversial Vanity Fair cover photo taken by Annie Leibowitz.
6. Republican Vice Presidential nominee Sarah Palin spent \$150,000 of the Republican National Committee's money on her personal wardrobe.
7. Senator Larry Craig is caught trying to solicit sex in the men's bathroom.
8. Under aged Chinese gymnasts kept their medals from the Beijing Olympics.

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2008

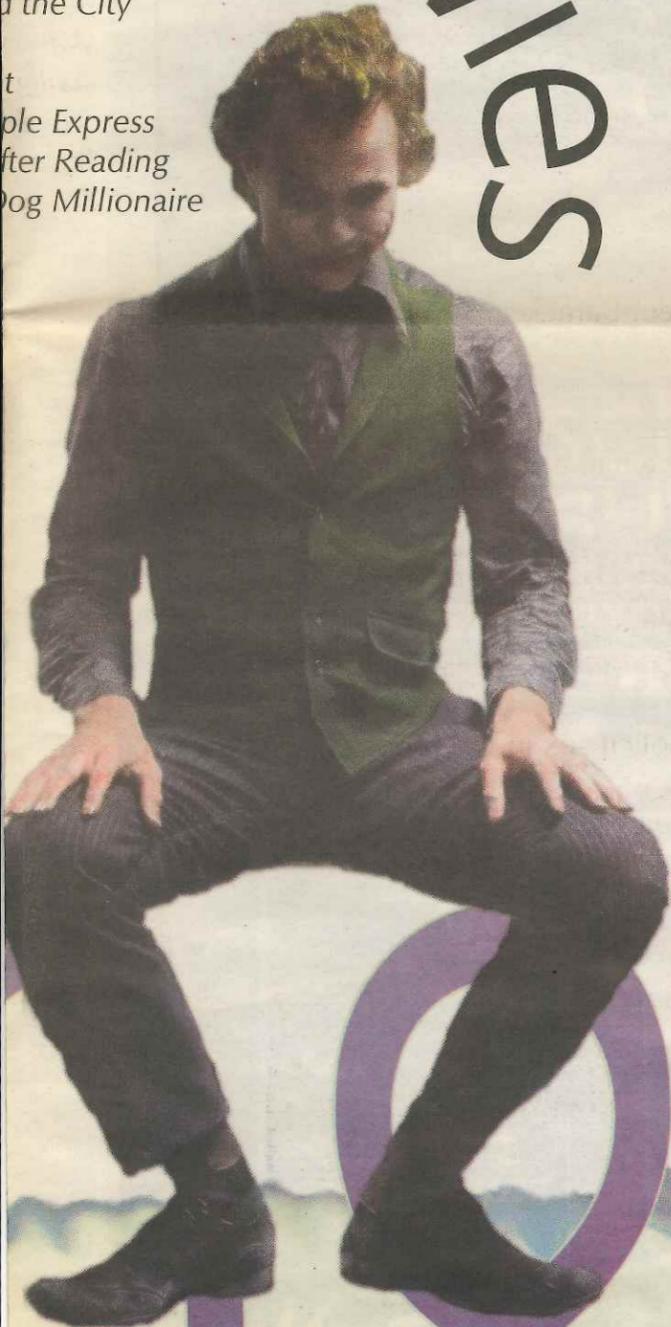
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1. "I Kissed a Girl" by Katy Perry
2. "Love Song" by Sara Bareilles
3. "Disturbia" by Rhianna
4. "Viva La Vida" by Coldplay
5. "Paper Planes" by M.I.A.
6. "Whatever You Like" by T.I.
7. "A Milli" by Lil' Wayne
8. "I'm Yours" by Jason Mraz

Swim Team Shows Their Many Strengths

EMILY GRIFFIN
ASSISTANT STYLE EDITOR

Michael Phelps rose to the top of fame with his athletic ability, having won a total of eight gold medals and seven world records at the Beijing Olympics. Such talent can be found at our school as well, on our own swim team.

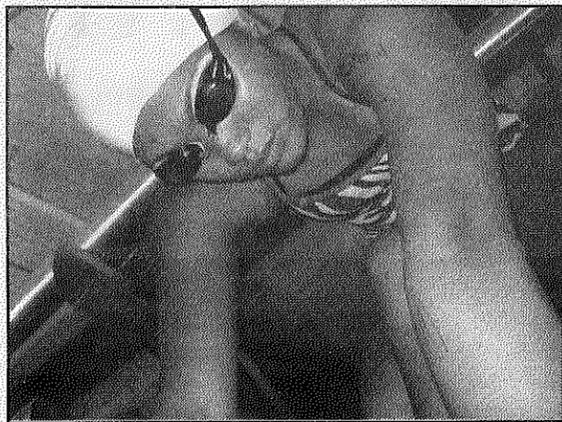


Photo Courtesy of Bryan Jacobs
Reanna Dona prepares to enter the pool. Being one of the best athletes on the swim team, she trains as early as four o'clock in the morning.

The swim team at our school is known for going all out and trying their best in swim meets against competing schools in the district.

They have beaten Hayfield every year for the last few years. The swim team also competes in a total of twelve meets in the district throughout their season, which lasts until the end of February and even into March if the swimmer makes states.

Swim team captain Justin Rajadhyaksha, who is considered a coach-like figure to many on the team said that, "The team is doing pretty well so far. I think as the season progresses we will only get better."

He also mentioned that their biggest competition is Hayfield, which they beat 190-60 for the boy's team. Preparation for meets is the key to winning for most swimmers, which includes Rajadhyaksha. He said, "I listen to some good music [before the meets]. 'Firebird' and 'Slowride' get me pretty pumped to swim."

However, there are two people that have rose above the other swimmers. For girl's team there is Freshman Reanna Dona and for the boy's team there is Sophomore Mark Mat-

tis. These two swimmers are considered to be the next best swimmer at least in the state.

According to Rajadhyaksha, Dona is "the best swimmer by far on the team and she is just a freshman."

Dona said, "I have not done anything as great as [Michael Phelps] yet, but I feel honored [to be compared to him]." There are many ways to stay in shape for the next swim season; Dona has joined another swim team so she can continue to get better at swimming.

Mattis said, "It feels great [to be compared to Michael Phelps], [but] I am not nearly as good as him and there are people out there that are better than me, but that just pushes me harder every day at practice." Mattis continued to mention that he has been swimming since he was six and it was in the seventh grade that he started to swim competitively.

In addition to having an 4,000 calorie diet, Mattis also competes in monthly swim meets with his year round team but it is not just to win the meets; Mattis is always striving to improve his times. He humbly mentioned that he finishes in the top eight in all of his meets.

Marching Band Continues to Impress and Succeed

MICHAELA ACCARDI
NEWS EDITOR

As our school's marching band and drumline members watched bands perform at the annual Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, thousands of thoughts ran through their head. One such thought was the utter disbelief that they were a part of something that could compete with bands heard nationwide.

High school marching bands around the nation played at the Macy's Day Parade. Many students remembered seeing those same bands at the national competition held in Annapolis, Maryland at the Naval Academy this November.

This school year, the band had numerous achievements, including being awarded the following: USSBA State Champions in Group VI Open, 2nd Place at USSBA Nationals Group VI, a Superior Rating at VBODA State Marching Band Festival, and 4th Place and High G.E. at Parade of Champions at James Madison University (JMU).

These competitions had a wide range, from JMU's Parade of Champions to USSBA's State Competition placing first and second in most. In addition, their second place awards were only a fraction of a point away from first. Assistant band director, Mr. Adam Foreman said, "We never did poorly, but we always knew what we had to work on the upcoming week."

The band prepared for these competitions beginning the first week of August with practices held from 8 am to 5 pm which continued until the last week of August. When the school year began practices continued after school three times a week and the band performed on Fridays at the football games. "Practices got

more intense as we geared up for competitions and the band showed a very impressive attitude towards having a longer season than normal this year," said Foreman. "It [the season] was a lot of fun and it was a good experience for us since we didn't start out with a very good season," said junior Madalena McNeil, member of the Colorguard.

However, the year is still not through and the band has many more programs and events ahead. The stage bands will compete in the VBODA Concert Band Festival in March, then perform again for March Madness and the spring concerts. There will also be concerts for the Jazz Bands and Percussion Ensembles.

The marching band continues to work hard with programs such as indoor drum line, which some students chose to participate in the winter by choice. In addition, this year, an Indoor Colorguard program is being held for the first time at Carl Sandburg Middle School, in hopes to recruit students from a large upcoming freshman class. Preparation for next year has also begun and will continue as the directors pick music for next year's show and figure out how it will be constructed and performed.

"The band has made so much progress over the last two years that we are constantly looking forward to each new season. This level of improvement, more than the amount of trophies we win, is what we are really measuring the success of our program with," said Foreman. As the staff and band members look forward to next year, Foreman encourages the school to come out and support the programs held in Springbank.



Photo Courtesy of Laura Zitnik
The West Potomac Marching Band begins to practice their routines from late summer, sometimes lasting the entire day.

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WP Alumni Shine On College Teams

GRACE POWELL
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

They left our doors with an innate talent for sports. Now they are at college, running, blocking and kicking their way into collegiate success.

Kelly Carmichael did not plan to become one of the top cross country runners at our school, but he did. "I only started running to train for basketball," he said.

Track Coach Don Beeby remembers Carmichael's early years with a smile. "Well basically he came out his freshman year and after three or four week rumors were abounding that there was walking around...and how [on] two or three occasions, he just walked." But when competition time came, Carmichael was far from walking.

That year the track team placed 2nd in the district and fourth in the region "to finish 36th in the region was huge," said Beeby in a very happy manner.

Carmichael stood on the stage with the boys as they received their award, "looking out across all the people, the whole state there...it was a big deal," said Beeby. Then the change began, for the better.

"After that time it was very clear he wanted to be a leader on the team, he wanted to be the best person on the team, he wanted to bring other people in the program," and he did.

One thing students remember about Carmichael is his friendliness, his innate ability to make something hard look fun. Senior Ben Hammond especially appreciates Carmichael's influence, and his significance for the team in regards to his leadership.

With each race, Carmichael improved.

in my first collegiate race," he said.

On November 1, Carmichael led UNCW at the CAA Cross Country Championships, placing 37th at an 8k race.

He attributes his success to his former coaches, mostly Beeby. He said, "If it weren't for coaches like Beeby and [former coach Dan] Lundin I never would have continued running."

Stephanie Gerow also dominated the sports realm at our school, and was the main player for the soccer team. "To tell you the truth I like playing any sport," and she played them all including: indoor track, varsity basketball, volleyball, swimming and t-ball.

Yet, her first love was soccer. Gerow began playing soccer at four years old in the backyard with her dad and older sister, which ignited her passion for the sport.

"I would always be outside in my backyard kicking the soccer ball at my shed or passing with my sister or dad. I just loved the sport so much and wanted to get better so badly that I was playing 24/7."

Gerow continued to play nearly 24/7 and she still is. Only now, she is playing at The College of William and Mary. Gerow's William and Mary coach John Daly said, "Stephanie has been a strong contributor to our program this season. She scored the tying goal against NC State and a crucial winning goal against George Mason...she has gained valuable experience this season and will continue to develop into an outstanding collegiate soccer player."

The game at George Mason was a big one for the team. Gerow said it was a cold outside yet her team kept up the heat.

The score was tied zero when Gerow took the shot. "I felt absolutely amazing after I scored and I was so glad that my family was there to see it. I had worked really hard that game and it definitely paid off!"

A lot has paid off for these two promising athletes. They attend accredited schools, they know where they want to go, but more than that, they make us proud.

Beeby said, "From a personal standpoint Kelly could have played a number of other sports.

He could have excelled in basketball...he could have excelled in football, but he decided not to do any one of those, he stuck with this. For that I'm very grateful and humbled."

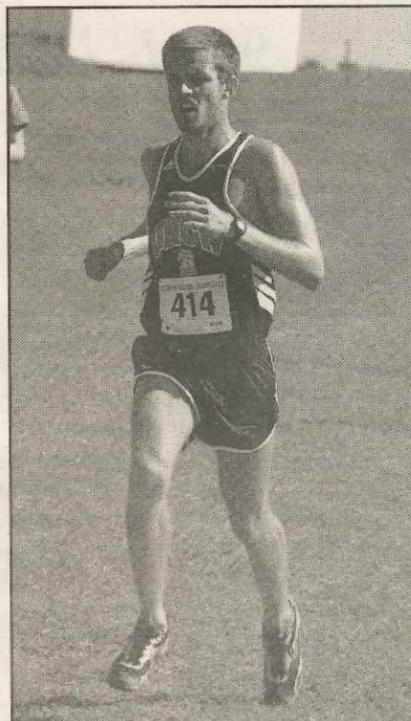


Photo Courtesy of Rosie Carmichael
Alumnus Kelly Carmichael sprints to the finish in his last track meet of the year. He later placed 37th in his 8k race.

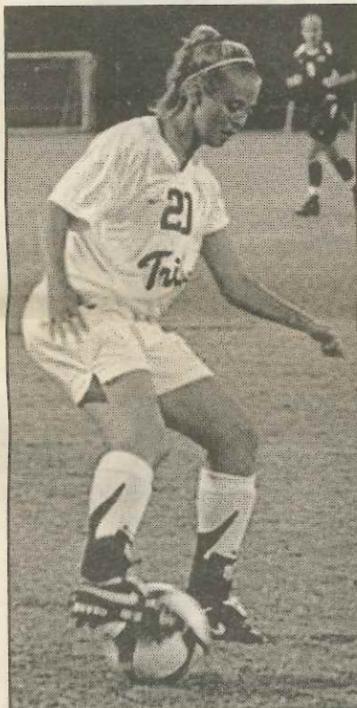


Photo Courtesy of Stephanie Gerow
West Potomac graduate Stephanie Gerow dribbles down the field and scores a winning shot for the William and Mary soccer team.

He kept running even when many others did not. "They quit, they were done...Kelly stuck with it and the benefits were just immense, he went from being a 4:29 miler to being essentially a kid that came close to 4:20," said Beeby.

Carmichael said he presses through to win. "To be honest, I don't really like running. But I do like competing and racing against other people. It's the most difficult sport there is and there's no feeling quite like crossing a finish line completely exhausted, knowing you used every ounce of your energy."

Carmichael runs at University of North Carolina at Wilmington now and his name is rising in recognition once again. "I was honored with the CAA runner of the week award

Wrestling Takes Center Stage

EMILY GRIFFIN
ASSISTANT STYLE EDITOR

When Hulk Hogan enters the ring, he hears the audience cheering and chanting his name.

What did Hogan have to go through to get to this moment?

The wrestling team at our school is made up of about 35 students for both JV and Varsity.

Casey Grubbs, the wrestling coach, is very impressed with the selection of wrestlers for this season.

Mr. Grubbs mentioned that during the practices the wrestlers take "a trip to the weight room where [they] go through a whole body circuit workout in about 40 minutes. Everything the wrestlers do is at a high intensity level and conditioning is stressed throughout the season."

Like all the sports teams at our school, each team sets a goal. According to Mr. Grubbs, the "team goal is to be the best conditioned team in the region."

During the season the wrestling team wrestles against many other schools. Last year, the team came in 5th in the Patriot District, behind Hayfield (1st), Lake Braddock (2nd), South County (3rd)

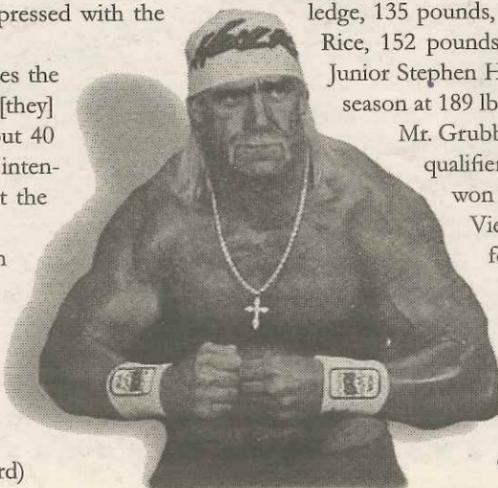
and Annandale (4th).

All of the schools team listed above are returning and are very experienced on the wrestling mat.

Mr. Grubbs said, "We hope to jump ahead of 1 or 2 of them and finish in the top four."

According to Mr. Grubbs, the wrestlers that make up the core of the team are "seniors, Michael Tse, 130 pounds, Artis Rutledge, 135 pounds, Sam Agyemang, 145 pounds, John Rice, 152 pounds, Sebastian Evennou, 160 pounds. Junior Stephen Howell has also been impressive this season at 189 lbs."

Mr. Grubbs added that Howell "was a regional qualifier last season. [And] Howell recently won the Lion's Club Invitational at Park View HS on 12/15, a real team player for the wrestling team."



Hulk Hogan is a pro-wrestler that many current students of the wrestling team look up to.

Courtesy of MCT Campus

Coffey Talk

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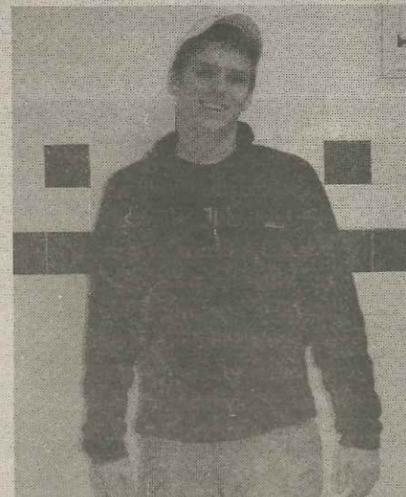


Photo by Erin Parker

PETER COFFEY
REPORTER

Fairfax County is having money problems. The county is currently suffering a \$170 million short fall. I guess the plan to put a Smart Board in every classroom has backfired.....

One of the ways that Fairfax County plans to make "ends meet" is by cutting winter track and gymnastics for the 2009-2010 school year.

Fortunately, cutting track is only on one of the three budget proposals, while gymnastics is on all three. So, I guess we can say "bye-bye" to back-flips and such.

Now, I am not saying that cutting gymnastics is a good thing. However, it would only affect about 250 students county wide, not even one percent of the county's total athletes. On the other hand, if Fairfax County were to cut winter track, it would affect nearly 2800 athletes, or 11% of the county's total athletes.

Not only would cutting winter track affect athletes in Fairfax County, but it would affect athletes in the whole Northern Region. Getting rid of winter track would eliminate 25 high schools from competition in the region leaving just five schools to compete at the Northern Region meet.

There is no fun in competing against only four teams. However, track kids are not going down without a fight.

On Saturday, December 27, there was a meet in Prince George's County, Maryland, where people were handing out "Save Winter Track" t-shirts to everyone who signed the petition against Fairfax County, who getting rid of winter track. Even Alan Webb, the American mile record holder and Fairfax County alum (South Lakes High School), showed up to show his support for winter track.

Fairfax County: If you really have to cut anything pertaining to sports, just get rid of freshmen sports, or various JV sports. Cutting freshmen teams would only encourage the freshmen to work harder to make the JV squad.

When thinking of wasting money, Fairfax County does its best. For example, making students go to school two days before Christmas Eve wasted not only the time of the students and teachers but money on power and heat for the schools and not to mention teachers salaries. Maybe Fairfax County could stop buying the Smart Boards that teachers have to reset every 5 minutes. I have faith that Fairfax County will not actually go through with cutting winter track. Then again, this is the same county that banned tag in elementary school.

Welcome to the Jungle

4:21... The Day After

VICTORIA NARINE
STYLE EDITOR

I have officially given this new subculture the moniker of Neo-Cannabis. I do not disapprove of the Neo-Cannabis Culture; but the artifice of it all has totally devastated a once iconic counterculture. The single most important aspect of this lost culture is Mother Nature's Gift to Humanity. The Gift is organic, serene, tranquil; everything today's world is not. The Neo-Cannabis Culture has left the serenity and tranquility virtually nonexistent. A culture once consumed by political awareness and social liberalism is now dominated by apathy and Slightly Stoopid.

Meanwhile, tie-dye shirts have been replaced with Mexican ponchos and cargo shorts have been substituted for chinos. More disappointingly, however, Sublime is attempting to take over as the reigning head of the Deadheads. A group that sings about "mushroom tips" should never move into the territory of the eponymous Grateful Dead. The Grateful Dead, along with Pink Floyd and the Rolling Stones, fathered a counterculture that gave us anti-war protests and radical hallucinogens. The Neo-Cannabis Culture has brought us kinky verbiage and a lack of musical ingenuity. I choose the latter.

I do not want people to think I am bashing the Neo-Cannabis Revolution. There are some positives that come with this new found culture. I like the ethnicity and authenticity of the Mexican ponchos. The ponchos are, I believe, made of cotton rather than hemp. But they still have a certain organic vibe that is seemingly suitable. Spicoli, possibly one of the most memorable individuals of Cannabis Pop Culture, donned the Mexican poncho, pairing it with black-and-white checkered Vans and running shorts. The Mexican poncho is also amazingly versatile. Rather than a Mexican poncho, I have a Mexican blanket draped over the backseat of the beloved Subi. Its mere presence evokes a sense of tribalism, naturalism, and comfort.

Devotees of the Neo-Cannabis Culture also seem to be more creative than their predecessors. Paper and natural materials were overwhelmingly prevalent. Maybe it was more about function rather than presentation. Now, psychedelic swirls and colors are extremely popular; making everything significantly more enjoyable. With global warming and our planet's eminent demise, though, biodegradable materials could be beneficial.

Bob Dylan, Jerry Garcia, and Jim Morrison (wherever he may be) are most likely extremely disappointed with the Neo-Cannabis Culture. Their musical creations seem to be unnoticeable among the bevy of "new age rock-reggae" that totally dominates. In an attempt at redemption, improve knowledge of original Cannabis Culture. Beware of distortions. National holiday 4-20 has nothing to do with Bob Marley; it was neither his birthday nor his death. 4-20 was started by a group of California students and popularized by the Grateful Dead. *Dazed and Confused* is not a period piece. It was actually made in 1993; a time when the Cannabis Culture was actually the Ecstasy Culture. But Redemption Songs will suffice.

Britney Makes a Comeback

She Is Back With Her Sixth Studio Album

BRYAN JACOBS
SPORTS EDITOR

On November 28, 2008 the Queen of Pop, Britney Spears, released her sixth studio album *Circus*.

This album has twelve songs reflecting "the new voice" that Spears is trying to create. The album is full of fast and club like beats that are typical of most pop albums. However, this album is different because of the amount of insight that Spears puts into her singing. Most of the songs are very good, except for a few which are excellent.

Her main song, "Circus," which she named after her World Tour in 2009, as well as "Mannequin," "If I Seek U Amy," "Mmm Papi," "Phonography" and "Kill the Lights" are all quite magnificent. Many people view this as Britney's "comeback" album; however she has never been a celebrity on the

back burner. Critics of this album, especially from *Rolling Stone* and other music magazines, applaud her on her new, creative beats and lyrics. Students from our school have been waiting for the release of the new album *Circus* for months.

Sophomore Kaleigh Palmer says, "Circus is sweet and poppy but when I first listened to it I hated it! However, after listening to it for about 30 times I feel into the track and began to memorize every word. It is actually quite addicting." Kaleigh then went on about her favorite songs from the album *Circus*, "Well personally, my favorite songs would have to be 'Blue' and 'Kill the Lights' especially. The song 'Kill the Lights' brings the bad girl out of me, meow."

Taking a look at Palmer with her indie looking outfit and a headband around her head, one would not think that she would be the hard core Britney fan.

However, Palmer actually is probably one of Britney's biggest fans, "I have every single album, and every single song on my iPod. Do you realize how many songs that is?" The newest event coming to Washington D.C. is the Britney Spears *Circus* Concert. Britney Spears and the Pussycat Dolls will be in DC on March 24, 2009.

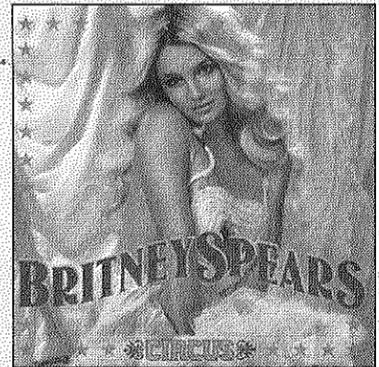


Photo by Erin Parker

Within one week of the release of Britney Spears' *Circus* the sales totalled 505,000 copies.

Ariana Would Kill for Privileges

RACHEL MARTIN
REPORTER

What would you do if you had to spend the rest of your life in prison?

This is the fate the Ariana refuses to accept.

Kate Brian, who is the author of the popular book series *Private*, put out her newest book, *Privilege, #1*, which is the first book of her new series. Ariana is locked in prison for killing her boyfriend, Thomas Pearson.

The exact circumstances of his death are never revealed, but Ariana certainly regrets killing Pearson. She has a difficult time adjusting to her new life in jail, where she is no longer leading the life of opulence and popularity that she once had in high school.

While in prison, Ariana befriends Kaitlynn, who tells her story of being framed for her adopted father's death by her adopted sister, Briana Leigh. Ariana, who becomes protective of her new friend and desperate to return to her old life, fakes her own suicide in order to escape.

Privilege brings the drama from high school to a whole new level.

Once she escapes, she plots to locate Kaitlynn's sister, Briana Leigh, and steal her inheritance to help her to set

Kaitlynn free and allow them to live in comfort and go into hiding. However, Ariana finds that things are not always as they seem as she follows through her plan to her and Kaitlynn's salvation.

Privilege, #1 is definitely worth reading. The plot was interesting because of its twists and turns. The ending was not trite or predictable. The main character was strong and had the right intentions, because she wanted to save her friend from a dreary existence of prison life, but she clearly had flaws, making her more human; someone the readers could relate to. She had to lie to Briana Leigh in order to gain her trust, and was willing to steal every cent Briana Leigh had to free Kaitlynn.

Even when it seemed that all hope was lost, Ariana never panicked, and was able to do anything necessary to save herself. There was a little bit of romance, involving a sweet boy that Briana met while pretending to be someone else, which really only added to the sadder aspect of the book, but was enjoyable nonetheless.

This book receives the grade of three out of four. It was well written, able to keep the reader interested in the plot with suspense, but it was more entertaining than anything that really made the reader think.

Ariana does bad things, but her guilt is minimal, and she is selfish enough to not waste too much time worrying about it. Her sense of entitlement to a life of luxury was occasionally irritating, but not enough to ruin a very good book.

Reviewer's Grade: ★★☆☆

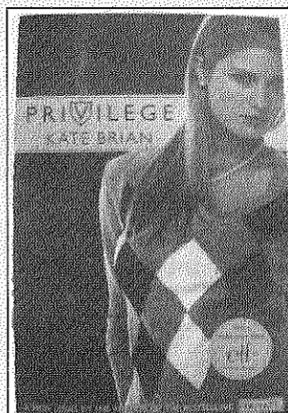


Photo by Erin Parker

Privilege brings the drama from high school to a whole new level.

Once she escapes, she plots to locate Kaitlynn's sister, Briana Leigh, and steal her inheritance to help her to set

Papa Bryan's Cooking Corner

BRYAN JACOBS
SPORTS EDITOR

Buttermilk Pancakes

For the next great cooking selection in this edition of Bryan's Cooking Corner, I will give you the recipe that has changed my life—literally. Since elementary school, I, along with many other Americans, have always loved pancakes. However, this pancake recipe can be made and kept in the refrigerator for a quick morning.

The pancake mix is different from others because of the texture and the addition of buttermilk. The warm and soft taste of the pancakes with

a combination of comforting syrup give the utmost delight to the eater. I have experimented with this recipe and also found that a half cup of chocolate chips can make this recipe even sweeter and more delicious. However, I would not recommend adding the chocolate chips for the faint of heart! This pancake recipe is one of my favorite and most recommended recipes because of its sheer deliciousness.



- 1 1/4 C. flour
- 1 Tbl. sugar
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1 egg
- 1/3 c. vegetable oil
- 1 C. buttermilk

Instructions:

1. Turn skillet to a medium high heat.
2. Pour four round circles of batter on the skillet.
3. Flip pancakes when bubbles begin to form around the bottom of the pancake.
4. Serve hot and enjoy! Makes about 10 pancakes.

Drawing by Brendan Murphy

Man's Best Friend; Not the Best Movie

EMILY GRIFFIN
ASSISTANT STYLE EDITOR

"You are the world's worst dog!"

This line is memorable in the movie *Marley and Me*, which opened in theatres over Christmas. Unexpectedly, the movie was one of the worst dog movies that has been released in a while.

The movie started with a recently wed couple running away to escape the frigid cold of the blizzard. These two are later identified as John Grogan (Owen Wilson) and Jennifer Grogan (Jennifer Aniston) who, after that frigid night, decide to move to Southern Florida, where one of John's old friends lives.

After four years of marriage, Jennifer wants to have a baby, but John, along with his best friend Sebastian (Eric Dane), comes up with the plan to adopt a dog to avoid having a baby. John and Jennifer find an adorable little white Labrador, that was surprisingly on sale, and buy him. They name him Marley after Bob Marley.

Over the course of a few years, Marley manages to eat almost everything in the house and drive the Grogan's absolutely crazy. Amidst all the chaos, Jennifer becomes



Jennifer Aniston and Owen Wilson missed the mark as the main characters in the newest dog movie, *Marley and Me*.

unexpectedly pregnant, and about 10 weeks later suffers from a miscarriage. A few months pass and the couple decide to leave Marley in the care of a dog sitter and skedaddle to Ireland, where they conceive another baby, except this time in front of pictures of the Virgin Mary and the Pope on the wall for luck.

Fortunately, Jennifer's second pregnancy is successful. After the first child, however, the couple promises not to have any more children, but they end up adding two more children to the brood. Taking care of kids forces Jennifer to quit her job, while John takes up a dream job in Philadelphia as a news reporter.

The story gets interesting when Marley suddenly becomes sick (his stomach gets twisted to be exact) and runs away, leaving the

Grogan's searching for him.

Marley and Me is rated a 1 out of 4 not just because of its horrid acting, but also because the characters never aged. The characters started out youthful in their early 20's and looked the same throughout the whole movie, even when

they reached their 40's. The movie did have some intimate scenes between Wilson and Aniston's characters and a lot of inappropriate language for kids under the age of 13.

The acting in this movie was a mix of sheer delight to just hideous beyond belief. Wilson, who portrayed John Grogan, has played many characters with liveliness and energy like Jedediah from *Night in the Museum* (2006). However, Wilson did not seem to have spunk as an actor in this movie. This could possibly be a result of medications he has been taking since his attempted suicide in August of 2007. Whatever the cause, he completely missed the character's personality. Instead of making the character interesting, Wilson portrayed as John Grogan tasteless and boring.

Aniston, who played Jennifer Grogan, had the opposite problem. She had pep—sometimes a little too much, but it was at least pleasant to watch her comedic scenes; she did not bore the audience to sleep. However, as her character grew older and matured, she did not.

Dane, who played John's friend Sebastian, did not have a major role in the movie. There was no point in even having him there; all Sebastian did was hook up with women and then move to New York. In fact, he did not have that many lines in the movie. In contrast, Alan Arkin, who played Arnie Klein, was hilarious. He nailed the one liners and had the whole audience cracking up.

Sadly, the best actor in the movie was the dog, Marley. Even though the whole movie was based the dog and his crazy persona, he was the only one who really carried the movie. Marley was played by 22 other dogs, but at least he was entertaining and a delight to watch. This dog kept the whole movie going, despite the horrible acting of some. All in all, the movie was not the greatest Hollywood has put out. There are certainly better ones out there.

Reviewer's Grade: ☆☆☆

A Day in the Life of Amna Shafqat *Seeing the World Behind a Veil*

ZACH FEINSTEIN
BUSINESS MANAGER

The first thing people notice about junior Amna Shafqat is her eyes.

They are the only things you see on her entire body. Her entire head is covered with a niqab, which is a Muslim headdress that covers the entire face, except for the eyes. Besides the niqab, she wears a plain dress over her normal clothes with white tennis shoes. While the traditional veil is common among the Muslim girls students at our school, one student, junior Amna Shafqat chooses to wear the niqab everyday at school.

Shafqat, who immigrated to this country from Pakistan right before school started, said it was her decision to wear the niqab. "It's my choice and it is because of my religious purpose," she said. In Pakistan, where Muslims make up the majority of the population, there are more conservative and traditional views on gender roles. Most women choose to wear some sort of head coverings because of their religious beliefs.

In Islamic cultures, women wear the niqab and other forms of covering themselves to promote

modesty, protection against temptation for self, and everyone else. To dispel all rumors that any women in Pakistan are forced to wear head coverings, Shafqat said, "It is a person's own choice."

As a result of 9/11, many Americans have associated the veil and niqab as symbol of oppression towards women. Shafqat disputes this entrenched view, saying that she has had many positive reactions to her own niqab, although all of her experiences have not been favorable. While none of the students at our school have done anything to Shafqat, the typical quizzical stares have been shot at her. She said, "Nothing much but yeah it is something different—so people do look at me kind of scary."

In our post September 11th world, many Americans have become fearful of terrorism, and moderate American Muslims have become the scapegoat for many. Some become fearful, but Shafqat said, "I don't feel fearful because I haven't done anything, but I do feel bad about what happened to the people." Since the dreadful attacks on 9/11, many Muslims home and abroad have developed a dislike of America because of the war in Iraq and of the Bush administrations policies

toward Muslim countries.

This is Shafqat's first school year in America and coming to a new country is scary enough, but going to a new school in an entirely new country is even worse. On her first day at our school, she said she was nervous, but not because of her niqab, mostly because she was in a new school and with many new people. Throughout her first year in her new country, Shafqat has adjusted well and seems to like America.

While America is much different from her homeland, Shafqat has started to like her new home. Even though her niqab is still very rare in America and some people have stared at it, Shafqat is comfortable enough in her new country to express herself freely and to show Americans what Islam and the niqab are really about. Beneath the cloth that shadows her whole body, and beneath the stares and misconceptions is junior Amna Shafqat and she is more than her clothing.

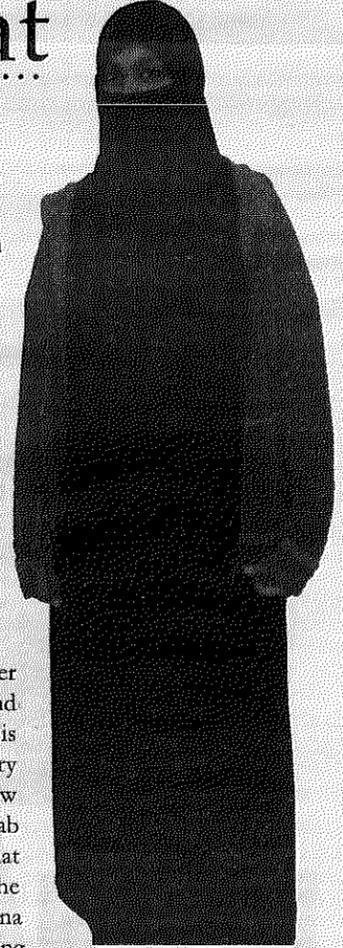


Photo by Erin Parker

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TOMMIE AUSTIN

GRACE POWELL
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Strikes A Pose

At 6'5", senior Tommie Austin looks at life a bit differently. But then again, there are a lot of "different" things about Tommie Austin.

Like his hair, for example. He was born with a mass of thick curly brown hair. He now wears it dyed red and in a slick afro. Tomorrow, it might be in braids or corn rows. Austin's a Samson for hair, "I will never cut my hair, I will trim it, but I won't cut it." He treats his hair the same way he treats fashion, as a way to express himself. "I would think that I would be a fashion leader. I don't really follow nobody's fashion trend, I just make my own." A colorful sweater, gray sweats, a maroon collared shirt, dress shoes, tennis shoes, this is Austin. "I love fashion, fashion is a part of me," he said.

Yet Austin loves other things too, like math. He plans to major in math and then become a math teacher. The math is a generational thing. "We're a math family, my Dad does taxes for people and he taught me how to do it." Now Austin is like a math guru, passing on his knowledge to other classmates. Austin remembers his math class freshman year, "I was basically the teachers' aide, because I would help everyone in the class." Yet lately, Austin's made a point of helping himself out. He has a goal to achieve before the end of his senior year and is close to achieving it. "I want to make A or AB honor roll once. I've never made it." A lot has changed since Austin's freshman year, as many of his former friends have graduated. "I'm by myself now. It's actually a good thing for me, because I can focus more on school."

Focusing on school has not always been easy for Austin; he has dyslexia. "The letters and numbers start to change around. Your brain looks at it different ways than what it really is," Austin said. "Growing up with it, I've learned

how to deal with it."

He is also bipolar, but not the Jekyll-Hyde bipolar that many people brand the term with. "A lot of people don't really understand what bipolar really is." Austin is clinically bipolar. He describes it like this, "The main thing is that for a severe period of time, for most people it's about a month or so, or five or six weeks, of like severe depression." Austin said bipolar disorder may also cause the suffering individuals to be easily annoyed to the point where if "the wind blows the wrong way, they'll completely go off on everybody." Austin did not know what was happening to him, or even that anything was happening at all. "I never had anyone to really tell me that I was doing it." When a friend mentioned the disorder last year, Austin made a conscious effort to change. "I learned how to control it a little better. I was looking at myself doing it."

Looking at 6'5" Austin, one might expect him to be a basketball star, but of course he is too unique for that. Instead, he bowls. "I've been bowling since I was seven years old." On the weekends, Austin joins his bowling league for a few intense rounds. Bowling was also a family thing, but circumstances changed over the years. "My dad can't do it anymore because he had four heart attacks and one stroke and he's still alive." Austin is the baby of a family of seven. Most of his siblings are already grown and gone to college except for his two sisters. "I guess I feel like since I'm from a family of seven, I have a lot of people in front of me so I have a lot of maturity." Austin does not find maturity in the hallways. He said, "when I come here I'm surrounded by a lot of immature people and it bugs me." But Austin is above all that now, above the drama and high school normality.

He is on his way to college. After all, he is Tommie Austin, someone refreshingly different.

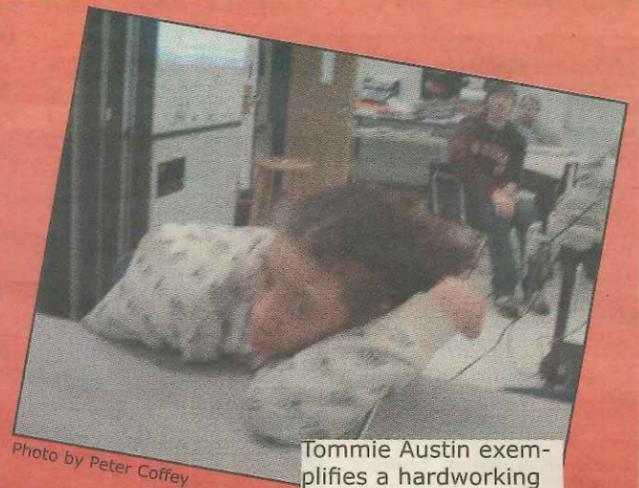


Photo by Peter Coffey

Tommie Austin exemplifies a hardworking student. His active persona is apparent.



Photo by Bryan Jacobs

TOMMIE AUSTIN IN ACTION

Through stealth and mild abrasiveness, photographers were able to capture the bashful Tommie Austin. We apologize for our disruptiveness, Mr. Dunlap.

STEPHEN HOWELL
LAYOUT/NEWS EDITOR

Subohi Naeem

Strives For The Best



Photo by Stephen Howell

Subohi spends her free time volunteering at Frog Pond Learning Center. She hopes her long hours will lead to a successful future.



Photo by Stephen Howell

Subohi Naeem wants to be a dentist when she grows up because of the salary and her current teacher, Ms. Regina Weems, who got her interested in dental work. While she "loves" her Dental Care class, Subohi also enjoys her English and math classes. She is currently applying for college to become a dentist and her top choices are George Mason and VCU. Subohi volunteers during the week at Frog Pond Learning Center, where she has been an assistant for over a year. For Subohi, teaching and getting to play with kids are the best perks of the job. She is also an active member of the Muslim Student Association.

Subohi came to America when she was eight years old to live with her dad, an engineer, who was also her sponsor. She had seen America before on television but still had no idea of what to expect of the people here. "I was thinking about how people were going to react...but it was cool," Subohi said about the transition. English was her first language, but she can still speak Urdu, the official language of Pakistan. While she misses the Muslim holidays celebrated in Pakistan, Sabohee and her dad and sister

still celebrate the major ones, including her favorite- the end of Ramadan celebration, Eid.

She misses her friends in Pakistan. Many of her friends are already in college; in Pakistan, it is typical for a student to graduate after tenth grade. However, she still maintains contact with many of her old friends by using the social networking site Orkut.com. "I miss my friends I grew up with a lot," Subohi said. Her last visit to Pakistan came two years ago when Subohi went to go see her sister, Natash, get married.

Subohi has three siblings, all of who are married and currently studying overseas. She passes her free time like most teenagers, surfing the internet and watching T.V. Her favorite show is NBC's *Deal or No Deal*. "I get so nervous. Sometimes I shake," Subohi says of her experiences watching the show. She also enjoys cartoons and frequently wakes up early on Saturdays to "catch the best ones." Her favorite movie is the *Kite Runner*, but any movies with a moral message behind it that teaches people a lesson are also her favorites. She enjoys reading, including the book version of *The Kite Runner*, as well as *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *The Crucible*. Her favorite food is Biryani, a chicken and rice dish, and her favorite drink is Mountain Dew.