



Why do students feel uncomfortable with each other?

Monday, March 9, 2009

PEOPLE, 14



Photo Courtesy of Hussein Fahema

Who are seniors Hussein Fahema (pictured) and Mara Perscheid?

NEWS, 7



Photo by Eric Kaha

What was the Fun Fly that the Engineering Club hosted this weekend?

SPORTS, 10



Photo by Michaela Accardi

Where are some students volunteering to coach local basketball teams?

OPINIONS,



Photo by Joe Burbank/MCT

When should Michael Phelps be allowed to swim competitively again?



Photo by Grace Powell

Club members donate their collected jeans at Aeropostale's store in Springfield Mall.

H-Project Completes Jean Drive

EMILY SMITH
MANAGING EDITOR

Every year, there is a rush of volunteers at shelters around Washington D.C. and Virginia. People come armed with food and goods between Thanksgiving and Christmas, hoping to help those in need during the holidays. However, for the other eleven months of the year, students, such as senior Grace Powell, gladly take up the burden to ensure that the less fortunate are not forgotten.

The summer before senior year, Powell traveled to Peru on a mission trip. Upon arriving home, she picked up a book called *Do Hard Things* by twin authors, Brett and Alex Harris, who were 17 when they wrote the book. *Do Hard Things* encourages teenagers to use their adolescent

years to challenge themselves to reach new goals. This was not the first "hard thing" the Harris brothers had done. By age 16, they created a blog and organized a grassroots campaign for Mike Huckabee that reached 200,000 people. After reading their inspirational story, Powell felt that she too could impact the world. "The book made me want to do hard things as well," said Powell.

For her senior project, Powell finally decided to start an organization to help the homeless. Thus the birth of the H Project, sponsored by English teachers Kimberly Thompson and Kelcy Pierre. "She approached me with the idea and I thought it was fantastic," said Thompson.

Thompson had Powell as a student for AP English Language. "She demonstrated

See Jean Drive, page 5

Student Gov. Creates New Position

MICHAELA ACCARDI
News Editor

Leadership class teachers Alexander Case and LaTrea Rich recently created a new position in the Student Government Association (SGA) and brought back an application process which is required in order to be a member of the "Leadership Training" class.

The new class officer position, "senator," will

be available for two students from each grade to replace the former "Class Representative" position. "The senator position is a very common one in SGAs throughout Fairfax County," said Case. This makes a total of six elected positions available for students including president, vice president, treasurer, secretary and the newly created two senators for class government.

Additionally, elected class officers are no longer required to take the class with the exception of the senators, as the primary job of a senator is to serve as a link between Leadership class and the grade level itself. They are to report what is happening at a school-wide level and communicate that information to class officers. "We believe in separating the SGA workload from the class officer workload so that each gets the time and energy it should be afforded. Senators are the only class officer position guaranteed a seat in the Leadership class by virtue of election, so we presume they have good human relation skills (since they got elected) and can handle this difficult



Photo by Mariya Ilyas

Leadership teacher Alex Case reviews next year's student applications to determine who will join the Leadership Training class and Student Government Association (SGA).

See New Position, page 6

Community Meeting Held to Discuss FCPS Schedules

STEPHEN HOWELL
LAYOUT/NEWS EDITOR

The issue of changing schools start times to better fit adolescent's sleep schedule was discussed at a community dialogue meeting last week.

Walt Whitman Middle School hosted the community dialogue on February 26. All 24 tables of 12 people were packed, and each table discussed amongst itself its views on the late start proposal. The SLEEP proposal would move nearly every school's start time, with most high schools moving from a 7:20-2:10 schedule to a 8:30-3:20. "We heard overwhelming support for

See SLEEP, page 5



Photo by Barbara Hunter

Mount Vernon School Board Representative and Chairman Dan Stork (center) talks to community members during the meeting last week.

Punishment for Cross-dresser Raises Controversy

MARIYA ILYAS
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

"If music be the food of love, play on" begins the famous novel, *Twelfth Night*, by William Shakespeare. English teacher Jacqueline Livelli had her students study the famous play by doing an in-class activity.

Livelli got the lesson plan of cross-dressing from the book *Shakespeare and How to Cure It* by Ralph Alan Cohen, the Executive Director of the American Shakespeare Center. "Lessons are designed to make Shakespeare come alive," said English teacher, Colin O'Grady, who owns the book.

The play is a comedy about a love triangle of three different characters, male and female, disguised as someone else in the opposite sex, ultimately causing confusion in the plot. The project was "to discuss the plausibility of Viola pulling off Cesario [as a male]," said Livelli.

"That's part of *Twelfth Night*, you've got a girl disguised as boy and vice-versa," said O'Grady. Cross-dressing is "a fantastic way of bringing *Twelfth Night* to life."

Students were assigned to come up with lines a typical boy or girl might say and bring in clothes to dress as the opposite sex when presenting

See Dress Code, page 6

Abusive Violence Needs to Stop

Baby, baby, baby. Poor Chris Brown is singing the blues, but his whiny lyrics simply just do not cut it anymore. When the headlines came rolling, the reactions were synchronized, "Chris Brown beat somebody up... wait, he beat up Rihanna?" Let us get one thing straight, we all make mistakes and do stupid things, but this is inexcusable.

Many people were surprised when two of Hip Hop's most promising stars failed to appear at the Grammy Awards on February 8. When the media began frantically spewing rumors about a fight between Rihanna (21) and Chris Brown (19) the night before, it was quickly evident that both of their careers would take a sharp turn. Yet before we dive into all the he-said-she-said's, let us approach the heart of the matter: the not so sweet side of young love.

We will never know *exactly* what went down between Brown and Rihanna. Perhaps the only thing that matters is that it *did* happen. And while we may not know who sparked the flames or who is really to blame, one thing is clear: Physical abuse is never acceptable. Ever.

This incident brings up a touchy subject in our nation today. According to the CDC (Center for Disease Control and Prevention) "one in 11 teens report being hit or physically hurt on purpose by a boyfriend or girlfriend at least once in the past 12 months." Yet often, these acts of violence remain unreported.

Today, many teens treat relationships like a causal hobby. The "dating" definition has long since strayed from the *Guest Who's Coming*

to *Dinner* formality. Dating today can mean anything from the seventh grade writing notes and going to the movies relationship.

"Teen dating violence is an issue that impacts all schools and communities, including students here at West Potomac," said school social worker Carrie Jones. Just a couple of months ago, Sophomore Rafa Aziz said she noticed a bit of roughhousing between a couple. "He grabbed her arm. She was, like, small. He was big. He yanked her arm so hard and she was like 'ow!' and he was like 'no, you do not walk away from me!'"

Jones believes it is vital that individuals recognize and act upon the warning signs of abuse. "Nationwide, 1 in 3 teenagers report knowing a friend that has been abused by a boyfriend or girlfriend. It's important to remember that abuse can be physical, verbal, or emotional. Technology like cell phones and social networking sites can also be a form of abuse and control."

The bottom line is this: the violence has to stop. If that means choosing our relationships more selectively or not engaging in them at all, then so be it. If it means having the courage to speak up when we see a friend, or a friend of a friend, or even someone we do not know, in a dangerous situation, then let us have the courage to speak up. We are worth at least that, especially when our very lives may depend on it.

For more information visit: www.loveisrespect.org or see Ms. Jones in room 420. You can also talk to your counselor or call 1-866-331-9474.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

I have come to find the article written by Bryan Jacobs in the last issue of *The Wire* to project very bias views on a controversial topic. The ignorance reflected in this article proves that there was minimal research conducted. There is an absence of factual evidence, and an excess of non-factual evidence. Jacobs' article states that Hamas broke the cease fire when truthfully, it was broken by Israel on December 26, 2008. What about the fact that 12,000 civilians were murdered by Israeli attacks, while only one Israeli civilian has died in this latest struggle? Quoting is not quoting when it's not directly copied from the source, which is what has been done in this article.

Jacobs also refers to the Arab news channel (which, by the way is actually spelled Al-Jazeera) as the "Islamic news." This is equivalent to calling NBC as the "Christian News." I am an American, and I, unlike Jacobs, believe in a fair chance to everyone.

While Bryan is entitled to his opinion, the headline of his article, "Gaza is to Blame, Not Israel." Now this truly cannot be taken as unbiased.

The Palestinians have owned the land first; they are being murdered and have been for the past 60 years. The Israelis have burned Palestinian children alive and have dropped large amounts of white phosphorous meant to kill thousands. The whole world has seen the tragedy, and it's time for Jacobs to open his eyes.

By no means is Hamas in the right but who are we to call them terrorists for protesting their land and their people? Were we terrorists when fighting against Britain 200 years ago? Were the Indians terrorists when they attempted to protect themselves? Both parties are wrong in a war, so please don't point fingers because you end up looking like an idiot.

-Senior, AR Chouat

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*.

RANTS and Raves

A **RANT** for disappearing two NFL players.

A **RANT** for thrift store hats; they spread lice.

A **RAVE** for snow days; hopefully, we will get more.

A **RAVE** for Girl Scout Cookies.

CORRECTIONS

- The song "Good Riddance" was mistakenly referred to as "Time of Your Life" on page 10.
- The Report Card on page 3 was mislabeled "3rd Quarter." It should have read "2nd Quarter." Also on the Report Card, WePort should have been given a B+ and Athletics a B.
- Elsie Adjetej-Doka's name was misspelled on page 5 and Laura Magnoo's name was misspelled on page 9.
- In the Katy Anderson profile on the back page, there is no island of Iolania in Hawaii. The island is Oahu, the city is Honolulu, and the K-12 private school is Iolani.

THANK YOU WIRE PATRONS

PLATINUM: Jim & Gayle Alexander, Julie Ann Chavis, Jack and Suzy Coffey, Ann Ebberts & Alan Evans, Tony Fabrizio, Diane & Stan Grace, Emily Griffin, Karen Hayes, John & Gina Howell, Barbara & Peter Jacobs, Mark & Jennifer Jones, Kathy & Tom Lehaer, Fox Parker, Terry Stott, Glenn & Theresa Smith, Ted & Karen Stone, Mr. & Mrs. R. D. Lazenby Jr., Kathryn Valdez.

GOLD: Vincent Accardi, Ronda Drucker, Mr. & Mrs. Brian Frydenlund, David & Becky Hebert, Marjy & Skip Jones, The Kubbach Family, The Micale-Fishel Family, Miranda Padilla, The Pierre Family, Susan Rehe, Donna & Frank Tse.

SILVER: Peter & Maureen Adams, Jacob Alexander, Jim and Fay Alexander, Rebecca Brady, Brendan Bradley, Catherine Bradley, Mary Bradley, Jeff Butchko, Nancy Butler, Rene & Mary Belanger, Joe & Barbara Bradley, Paul & Susan Cambon, The Carmichael Family, Cindy Carriker, Susan Carter, Don and Woodie Coffey, Mark & Anne Marie Coggins, The Collett Family, Jennifer Collum, Kenny Dahl & Celia FlorCruz, Lt. Gen. & Mrs. Joe Dunford, Julie Friederich, Joe & Paula Garrity, Lee Harrington, Jenn Hoffman, Diane Hohman, Laura Howell, The Ilyas Family, The Jackson Family, Jean Keenan, The Kempson-Brooks Family, Rev. Keary Kincannon, Elisabeth Lardner & Jim Klein, Ruth Lescher, The Leveridge Family, Barbara Liggett, Donna & Norman Linnell, Harrin Living, Tawanda Loney, Joe Mattis, Mable R. McLendon-Tokgoz, Anna Miller, Allison & Tom Niedbala, Deirdre & Steve Parker, Kay Parker, Louise Pino, The Powell Family, Julia Rice, Richard Family, The Royka-Theodore Family, G. Sid Smith, G & T Smith, Jayne Somes-Schloesser & Lynn Schloesser, Steven Stebbins, Anne W. Stewart, Tania Voss Ryan, Josh Weeney, Julie Wilkinson Gallagher, Lois Williams, Elizabeth Wilmot, Bonny and John Wood, Wright Family, Gerard Zitnik.

BRONZE: Julie Al-Saadawi, David Anderson, Patricia Axelrod, Carol Baca, Brodie Family, Lucy Civitello, The Constables, Leslie Edgar, Cheryl Ellsworth & Thomas Pardini, Eve Feinstein, Kathryn Gaddy, Charles & Gloria Gee, Connie Gerow, Gayle Gilmore, Bill & Lorraine Gordon, Joseph Harder, Nancy Harder, Beth Hershner, Bob & Amy Hurd, Erwin Jacobs, Grace Link, Peggy Lyon, The Martins, The McCalmans, Jeanne O'Hara, The O'Sullivan Family, The Law Office of John K. Pike PLLC, Kenneth & Jesnette Powell, Dot & Phil Smith, Caitlin Smith, Mike Smith, G.P. Smith, Teresa & Scott Taylor, Cindi Tepper, Joan Weber.

BLUE: Rafael Centeno.

GREY: Emily Smith, Gretchen Walzl.

Want to become a WIRE Patron?

For more information, call (703) 718-2572 or e-mail laura.zitnik@fcps.edu

THE WIRE STAFF

West Potomac High School
6500 Quander Road
Alexandria, VA 22307
Monday, March 9, 2009
Volume 424 Issue 7

EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

Mariya Ilyas
Grace Powell

OPINIONS EDITOR

Lucas Alexander

POLL EDITOR

Rachel Martin

MANAGING EDITORS

Michaela Accardi
Emily Smith

FOCUS EDITOR

Alex Fabrizio

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Erin Parker
Tidax Johnson

SPORTS EDITOR

Bryan Jacobs

ONLINE EDITOR

Aasma Ahmad

LAYOUT EDITOR

Stephen Howell

STYLE EDITOR

Victoria Narine

COPY EDITOR

Gwen Finkel

ASSISTANT STYLE EDITORS

Emily Giffin
Madison Miller

REPORTERS

Catherine Bradley
Karla Cruz
Peter Coffey
Megan Haley
Rachel Martin
Jessica Taylor

NEWS EDITORS

Michaela Accardi
Stephen Howell

BUSINESS MANAGER

Zach Feinstein

ADVISER

Lauri Zitnik

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

Closing 'Gitmo' a Good Idea

ZACH FEINSTEIN
BUSINESS MANAGER



One of the first steps taken by the Obama administration was to close the Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp in roughly one year's time. Even though the infamous prison camp will eventually close due to President Barack Obama's executive order, is this the right decision for our nation's security?

Guantanamo Bay, or "Gitmo" as it is nicknamed, has been a hot topic issue for quite some time. Was it right for the United States to keep it open and to house suspected terrorists? Most Republicans view it as a necessity to keep Gitmo open so suspects can be interrogated about terrorist activity. On the other hand, most Democrats support Obama's decision to close the prison camp because of the poor image it gives America abroad and of the allegations regarding abuse of prisoners. Gitmo has been a public relations nightmare for the United States in Europe and especially in the Middle East, where many believe it is used to torture suspected terrorists.

Another complaint that many have with Gitmo is that the prisoners there are supposedly not given the right to a fair trial, or any trial at all. All people should be entitled to the right to having a lawyer and

being given a trial until proven guilty. This applies to everyone, including suspected terrorists.

A problem arose with the president's order as to where the prisoners, many of whom are in fact terrorists, should go. From all of the information on Gitmo, it needs to be closed, but in a safe and slow matter.

First of all, we must find a country to host these prisoners. We should not just take all 245 prisoners out of Gitmo and drop them in the first prison that a friendly nation offers to us. Recently, the United Kingdom prepared to take custody of a British suspected terrorist who was in Gitmo. Other countries, specifically in the European Union, such as Lithuania, have expressed interest in accepting some of the prisoners. The process to find them another prison and to eventually try them should be a slow, deliberate process, which assures that they receive the same rights as normal Americans. The process should also be slow

and deliberate to prevent any attempted escape of the prisoners.

No matter where these prisoners are moved, the safety of the United States must always be protected from this decision. That is why the process for finding all of these prisoners a future home should be a very slow and detailed process. We do not want another attack on the United States to happen. No matter what the outcome of this saga is, the interests of the United States and the universal rights of the suspected terrorists should be paramount.

zfeinstein@wpwire.com

“From all of the information on Gitmo, it needs to be closed, but in a safe and slow matter.”

P.C. Is Probably Confusing

GWEN FISHEL
COPY EDITOR



"Look at her. She is so fat."

In recent years, comments like this have come to edge the issue of political correctness out into the limelight of political and social debate. The idea of political correctness is everywhere, and most educators try to teach its guiding principles such as not offending a particular group of people by referring to them by names they do not call themselves or want others to call them.

However, most teenagers tend to rely on pop culture for what is acceptable. Many objects in pop culture unfortunately go against these ideals, as evidenced in the release of movies such as *Tropic Thunder* and *Pineapple Express*.

Many phrases, including nicknames for ethnic or racial groups as well as people with mental or physical disabilities, were commonly used and rarely questioned in the "olden" days, but are now deemed politically incorrect by society. Media outlets are prone to comply with these new standards and thus, "cultured" people find many formerly acceptable words offensive. Today, it is no longer socially acceptable to use words like "retard," "fat," or "double wide." The correct terms are now "mentally challenged" or "overweight."

This insurgence of political correctness began in the late 70s, and has carried on into today's society. Politicians initially used political correctness as a way to play with one another, and make sure that opponents were always on their feet.

While political correctness may have started as a joke, it is of the upmost seriousness today. Celebrities have to be extremely careful of that which they say, for fear of being politically incorrect, or "P[O]C," its popular nickname, christened shortly after birth in the 70s.

For example, golf pro Tiger Woods was forced to publicly apologize for the following comment: "I putted atrociously today. Once I got on the greens, I was a spaz." Because of the medical condition where people have spastic paralysis, this term is

politically incorrect. Woods' usage of the word was not meant to offend anyone. However, because of political correctness, using a word such as "spaz" is completely unacceptable by today's standards.

Another common example is the movie *Tropic Thunder*, in which one of the main characters makes derogatory jokes and comments about people with mental challenges. He uses the word "retard" more than once, and the tagline for the movie within a movie is "Once Upon a Time, There Was a Retard." In response to such outright political incorrectness, there were large-scale boycotts against the movie and its offense content, according to *The New York Times*.

“While political correctness may have started as a joke, it is of the upmost seriousness today.”

Ironically, however, there was little to no controversy about the fact that Robert Downey Jr. played his character in black face.

In today's world, while it is very important to remember that language is offensive and can be construed to be hateful, I believe political correctness

is confusing. With the recent election of President Barack Obama, many political panels discussed how many people now find it offensive to use the word "black," but not African-American. However, not everyone who is "black" is from Africa. Some are from the islands as well as other many other parts of the world that are of color.

There are so many words these days that are considered politically incorrect. Does one use "Asian" or "Oriental?" How about another difficult one: does one use "Hispanic" or "Latino?"

So, what exactly is politically correct in this situation? Who knows; people cannot agree. Sometimes the people who these names are directed at cannot even agree on "correct" terminology among themselves, which is analogous of saying "good luck figuring that out" to the rest of us who want to embrace political correctness.

The legacy of PC lives on and we are just going to have to swim through its confusing pool of terms, sometimes with the disadvantage of a blindfold.

gfishe@wpwire.com

HANGING OUT WITH THE HEAD HONCHO

MARIYA ILYAS
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Photo by Lucas Alexander

The diameter of the Earth is exactly twelve thousand, seven hundred fifty-six point two kilometers. And no, I do not attend TJ.

Established in 1985, Thomas Jefferson School for Science and Technology (TJSSST) — more commonly known as "TJ" — is the result of a partnership of businesses and schools created to improve education in science, mathematics, and technology, according to the school's website. In other words, TJ was built for "smart kids" who are expected to invent a human robot.

When asked if magnet schools like TJ snatch the best students out of regular public schools, TJ's former principal, Elizabeth Lodal, told the *Washingtonian* on September 1, 2006, that "we've been missing many of the best and brightest students in this region." I believe that is a common misunderstanding and ignorance. In addition to being demeaning to other students in the county, the phrase "best and brightest" implies that TJ is the only powerhouse to produce such kids. I disagree.

For two years in a row, *U.S. News & World Report* has ranked TJSSST as number one on the list of America's Best High Schools. The *U.S. News* examines more than 21,000 public high schools across the nation, according to its website. First of all, TJ should not be considered a high school, and secondly, it is certainly not public.

Let us do a little math. The acronym FCPS stands for Fairfax County Public Schools and the *Hughston Maffei Student Dictionary* defines the word "public" as "open to the people... not private." Since TJ is not open to all people, then by the transitive property, TJ should not be a part of Fairfax County. Since when do people apply to attend a public high school?

"Students are selected for TJ through a competitive admissions process," as stated on the TJ Admissions website. Those seeking admission must be enrolled in Algebra I or a higher level math in middle school, complete a one-page application form, pay a processing fee of \$90 (more than a typical college application fee), and take the Thomas Jefferson Admissions Test, which is a standardized reasoning test that includes writing two essays (just like the SAT Reasoning Test). And that is just "part one."

"Part two" requires semifinalists—those with a GPA higher than 2.67 and a test score higher than 60%—to submit three letters of recommendation as well as an information sheet, which "requests that the student list and describe his/her four most important academic, and four most important after-school or out-of-school, interests, activities, and accomplishments," according to its website. Did I mention the information sheet requires a personal statement?

That sounds like a lot to go through to attend a "public" high school. Heck, it sounds as miserable and horrendous as the college application process! A school that requires such an extensive application is definitely not a public high school; it sounds more like a pre-college institution. Why is it funded by Fairfax County, then?

In the midst of an economic downfall where all budgets are tight, Fairfax County should consider eliminating bus services to TJ students, who are transported from all over the county. (Talk about saving money on gas.) Perhaps parents—the arrogant ones who feel proud and elated about their kids attending TJ, the ones who pompously say "My child goes to TJ" in a social setting—should hit the road and drive their children to school themselves. It is only fair.

School Board Chairman Dan Stork himself told me, "I'm glad we have it [TJSSST], but I'm not interested in creating another one." Good, because I already disapprove of the existing one.

Former government teacher, Mr. William Rhatigan, calls our school the "best kept secret in the country." I consider myself very fortunate to attend the most diverse high school in all of Fairfax County. We may not have the highest test scores and we may not win every scholastic competition, but we are proud of our students, their many accomplishments, and our outstanding faculty. We are proud of our "public high school" status.

Ironically, Thomas Jefferson wrote that "all men are created equal." With a pre-college institution like TJ under the umbrella name of "public high schools" that receives one of the largest budgets from Fairfax County, one is left to wonder exactly how "equal" the opportunities and resources other students have to perform at their highest potential. (That is to say, as far as building a human robot is concerned.)

milyas@wpwire.com

Michael Phelps: Not a Hero



MEGAN HALEY
REPORTER

The U.S.A. Swimming and the Olympic Committee have a four-year no tolerance policy for drugs used during competition time. However, when athletes are not subject to testing, for example, being out of season, they cannot be punished. Apparently, Michael Phelps took this loophole and ran with it. As a 14-time Olympic gold medalist in one of the most demanding athletic venues in existence, one wonders what on earth he was thinking.

Recently an incriminating photo of Phelps surfaced and he was given a three-month ban from the U.S.A. Swimming team, not because this was against any rules, but because it wished to "send a strong message" to Phelps. Since the only evidence police have



Photo By: Erich Schlegel/ MCT

against him is this photo, they cannot press charges without receiving substantial evidence (i.e. possession) that he was doing drugs. It has been questionable whether he would have a full schedule in the 2012 London Olympics, and further questionable whether he should even receive the opportunity. Only *Kellogg's* pulled out of their contract with Phelps, stating that he "no longer represented their image." The rest continue to stand behind him.

Since there is no "professional" swimming league like there is for basketball or football, swimmers who make the choice to go pro depend on sponsorships to make a living. Phelps made an estimated five million dollars a year in endorsements ranging from *Mercedes* in China to *Speedo*, a popular swim apparel brand. With his face literally plastered all over the world, his image is important, to say the least.

As a role model for millions of young swimmers worldwide, Phelps should constantly be aware of his actions and consider them wisely, something it seems he has trouble doing. At 15, shortly after his first Olympic appearance (Sydney, 2000), Phelps decided that he was "too good" to compete with collegiate level swimmers and would rather go pro. He attended the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, alongside his longtime Northern Baltimore Aquatic Club (NBAC) coach, Bob Bowman, because that was his only way to be a professional and still go to college.

At 19, Phelps was issued a citation for driving under the influence (DUI), and plead guilty. He insisted, however, that it was an "isolated incident" and it would never happen again. The swimming world was shocked by his inappropriate and illegal behavior and it was surprising that people were able to forgive him and move on.

However, once again Phelps let his fans down when this "bong" photo surfaced.

People make mistakes; that is what makes them human. However, professional athletes should not be getting caught up with drugs. If they actually care about what they do for a living, then they would know that drugs and alcohol screw up their bodies when it comes time to perform.

Articles surfacing all over since Phelps' incident have attempted to tell kids that people make mistakes, and he should be forgiven. His mistakes are unforgivable. How can someone sit there and try to tell kids to look up to people like Phelps and Michael Vick, when they break the law? That is not okay, no matter who it is. Phelps should never be looked back on as a hero. He may have been the greatest Olympian in history, but he is not, and never has been, a hero.

mhalley@wpwire.com

"History is an important class because of the skills it teaches, such as writing and thinking critically."

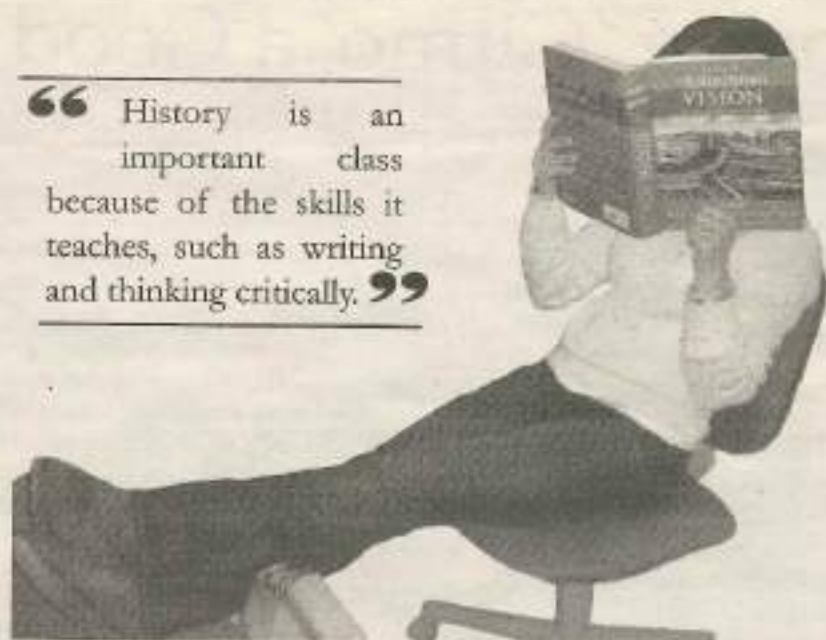


Photo by Lucas Alexander

Is History Really Necessary?



RACHEL MARTIN
REPORTER

"When will I ever use this in real life?"

This is a complaint of many high school students when speaking about many of their classes, especially in regard to history. In some respects, they do have a point; an accountant, lawyer, or doctor does not need to know exactly how the Roman Empire fell. In fact, the only careers where this specific information is important are historian or history teacher.

However, history is an important class because of the skills it teaches, such as critical writing and thinking. Historical information can also be relevant to current affairs and conflicts.

History classes at our school are notorious for their many essays. Document-Based Question, Compare and Contrast, and Change Over Time essays are the bane of existence for many AP (Advanced Placement) history students. While many of these essays may seem pointless, learning how to write—especially how to back up a thesis with evidence—is vital for many careers.

Lawyers write their briefs in order to convince the jury of their point of view, similar to how arguments are made in history essays. Businessmen and women need to know how to write in order to make reports on progress, and to make suggestions for effectiveness and prosperity

in their firm. Scientists make regular reports on their research. In this way, history prepares students for real life in ways that are at first not obvious.

Even in everyday life, thinking like a historian is useful. History is not just the memorization of names and dates, although that does come into play. It also involves analyzing information given in order to form opinions on historical events. This kind of thinking is important in making informed decisions, as an adult and as an informed citizen. A responsible citizen should have a thorough understanding of history, in order to make educated votes and contribute their input into society.

Knowledge of history also gives a more thorough understanding of the world around us. Many of the issues that our country faces today have their roots in ancient history. A lot of the knowledge that we now have today is built upon research and information done in the past. For instance, where would our understanding of motion be if we forgot Newton's Laws?

Lastly, those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it. As cliché as it may sound, it makes sense. While there are specific situations that will hopefully never happen again, like World War I, we can probably learn from the things that do not change, like the way humans behave. Hitler turned his back on his best ally, Russia, and he ended up losing the war. There are lessons readily available to learn from in history books, if only someone is there to look.

martin@wpwire.com

The Unknown Importance and Benefits of Fruit



ALEX FABRIZIO
FOCUS EDITOR

Many things in life are underrated. Fruit, for example, is one of them.

Fruit is something that should be consistently eaten to have a nutritious diet. Most people think that this is something worth laughing

about, but in reality, it is not.

According to the food pyramid, adopted by the United States' Department of Agriculture in 1992, teenage males should eat two cups of fruit per day and teenage females should eat one and a half cups of fruit per day. Thefruitpages.com, a website dedicated to fruit, said that fruit stimulates memory. According to the site, fruit has "miraculous healing powers," among other reasons why people should consume fruit daily.

Some diets tell the dieter to not eat fruits because they are

filled with carbohydrates and fats and sugars. Although these diets are right that fruit does have all of those things, they are wrong in telling the dieter to refrain from eating them. Many

fruits are "negative calories" meaning the amount of calories burned in their digestion is roughly equal to or more than the amount of calories they have. Instead of eating three eggs for breakfast, two or even three oranges could suffice, especially when the rest of the meals that day are heavy in protein. The oranges are less caloric and have more vitamins.

"Fruit is something that should be consistently eaten to have a nutritious diet. Most people think that this is something worth laughing about, but in reality it is not."

Lastly, there are so many types of fruit in the world that it should not be too difficult to find one that is appealing. Fruit is so diverse that cravers have different tastes to choose

from including sour, sweet, bitter, juicy, dry, etc. They do not have to be eaten ripe either, but rather to taste. Buy them still firm and unripe, ripe, or even mushy and overripe if that is what is preferred. They are so varied that anyone can find their favorite type.

Besides, fruit is just natural candy. Fruit has a form of sugar in it that the body needs and is actually essential. This helps it both taste good and benefit your body at the same time.

Because of this, fruit is by far the best part of the food pyramid, and should be consumed frequently.

afabrizio@wpwire.com

Stork: "I Do Not See This Proposal Going Forward"

Continued from page 1

support for the fact that teens need more sleep and that later start times can help," Evans said. Many parents at the meeting had issues with the draft of the county's new start times and its effects. Specifically, some had problems with elementary school's starting on the outside times of 7:50 and 9:20, and the effect the start time would have on after school

activities.

Both the majority report and SLEEP cite symptoms many teens face as a result of sleep neglect. The symptoms it identified include increased irritability, impairment of the immune system, hyperactivity, and lower academic performance. "Teens generally don't get anywhere near the 9.25 hours a night they need to be at their best physically, mentally and academically," SLEEP cofounder Sandy Evan said.

Evans also cites a survey the organization conducted that found that 55% of students fell asleep in class at least once a week, including 20% who fell asleep daily. If start times were changed, Evans would expect teens to be healthier, more alert, and safer. "If other jurisdictions are any guide, they would participate in sports and extracurricular activities as much or more, there would be fewer discipline issues at school, and relationships with other students and parents would improve," said Evans.

"The meeting was a manipulation," said English teacher Bernard Cabral who attended the meeting. "They were trying to collect data."

However, many are still not convinced that a change in start times will have a positive impact. "If you change something like this there is going to be losers, and I'm not sure there is even going to be

winners," parent Matt Murray said at the meeting.

"I came out today to hear if what they had to say could change my mind about this damn idea," said the school's baseball coach, Jim Sullivan. "It won't affect me as much as ball players and their families."

Sophomore Adrienne Hampton is also not sure the change will benefit her or other students. "I would oppose a later start to the school day because I think things are fine the way they are. I like getting out of school early so I have the rest of the day to play school sports and relax," Hampton said. Hampton also noted she would not be able to work as much after school.

"They should have taken a vote because that's why people were there," said Cabral.

The School Board will decide at a work session on March 9 on where to go with the issue. "I do not see this proposal going forward," Mount Vernon School Board representative and Chairman Dan Stork said. "The clear majority of opinion we are getting is that they do not support the proposed schedules because it adds to the frustrations of the current schedules," said Stork. Stork receives around 100 emails a day, a vast majority of which deal with the late start issue. According to Stork this issue has been present in the county for over two decades.

Evans also does not expect the change to be made this year. "With the various problems identified in Iteration 3, it's pretty clear that we won't be able to change high school bell schedules this fall. But we hope they will consider how to resolve problems identified in the latest staff draft and move forward on this issue," Evans said.

There is currently an online survey on Blackboard that over 80,000 residents have taken. "I think they are definitely leaning to change," said Sullivan.



Photo by Barbara Hunter

County residents of all ages packed into Whitman Middle School's cafeteria last Thursday to discuss the new proposal of changing school start times.

Student Collects Over 600 Used Jeans for Senior Project

Continued from page 1

leadership," said Thompson. "She plans ahead, gets [a] consensus from the entire group, and initiates conversation."

"The H Project is the result of me not being able to think of a name! But it turns out that the H can stand for many things like homelessness, hope and humanity," said Powell.

One of the first projects started by this burgeoning club was the Teens for Jeans drive, which lasted until February 20. The goal of the H Project members was to collect 1,000 jeans from around the community. If they reached this goal, Aeropostale, in cooperation with DoSomething.org, would donate a \$500 gift card to our school, which Powell would use to assist the homeless children at our school to buy clothing.

Powell used many forms of advertising to spread the word about the drive. The H Project club decorated boxes and placed them in history classes, the cafeteria, and the main office. They also hung colorful flyers around the school and the community, including places like the local library and churches. Powell created a Facebook group and sent regular

messages to communicate updates to its members. "A couple of us asked our elementary schools to donate jeans as well," said Powell.

Seniors Eric Rehe and Andrew Nielsen helped the H Project advertise as well. Together, the seniors wrote and filmed a rap video, along with junior Laina Schneider, encouraging students to donate jeans and informing them of where to drop them off. Their video was shown on the daily news.

On Friday, February 20, members from the H Club dropped off over 600 pairs of jeans at Aeropostale in Springfield. Although they did not meet their goal of 1,000 pairs, the Aeropostale staff members congratulated them on donating the largest number of jeans so far. Since the H Project donated more than 500 jeans, the club will be awarded with a banner.

The jean drive is only the beginning of Powell's vision. Her future plans include a walk-a-thon to raise money and awareness for the homeless, and to actually work closely with the homeless, to discuss their lives, and what they need help with. She enthusiastically said, "I

am really excited about the future of this club."

Thompson said, "I have found Grace and the H Project members pretty inspiring."



Photo by Tracy Powell

Seniors Ash Elmelik and Gloria Powell, and junior Michelle Arleth assist in counting jeans from the drive.

District's Youth Mobilize for Activism on Social Justice Issues

EMILY SMITH
MANAGING EDITOR

"I'm 17, I can't vote," said junior Paul Funkhouser of St. Stephen's & St. Agnes School. But this does not stop Funkhouser from making his presence known as an activist in the Washington area.

Funkhouser, seniors Andrew Wyse and Emma Eagle of T.C. Williams, and senior Stefan Koester and junior Ariana Meltzer-Bruhn of St. Stephen's & St. Agnes School are the leaders of the organization, District Youth Mobilized (DYM). Wyse, an active member of his school's Young Democrats, wanted to create a club to consolidate resources from T.C.'s Young Democrats and SSSAS's Young Activists.

In 2008, the students' goal was achieved when District Youth Mobilized was created to "give young people a visual and vocal role in the community," said Wyse. DYM "advocates Washingtonian young people's meaningful participation in expressing, executing, and protecting their democratic rights," according to their website. Wyse's goal is for DYM to have "a presence at large scale activist organizations, making sure that high school isn't left out of something that is usually monopolized by college students."

Originally a club organized and attended by students from only two schools, DYM is expanding to other high schools in the Washington area. A meeting in Beasley Central Library in Alexandria on Thursday, February 5,

was planned to encourage participation from students at our school and from Thomas Jefferson High School of Science and Technology. Although the turnout was smaller than the leaders had expected, they are not discouraged. For them,



Photo Courtesy of District Youth Mobilized
The above poster advertises the new organization, District Youth Mobilized (DYM), found on their website.

getting in touch with students is just part of the project.

For the activist group, past "Scheduled Events" and "Potential Mobilizations" have included anti-war protests, support of humanitarian aid, a call for the end of violence in the Congo, and a benefit for Gaza. Their most recent event was a presence at a civil disobedience on March 2 to protest "dirty energy" at the Capitol Power Plant, a protest organized by Capitol Climate Action.

Funkhouser wants

to unite students from different political parties and "to take people of all ages." This entirely youth-run activist organization works to provide a direct democratic means to represent youth opinions rather than solely through the Democratic Party. DYM does not wish to cater to party organizations, but instead, to assist those in need of support. "Political unity isn't a part of it. We're not Young Democrats. We're not the Democratic Party." However, their slant is decidedly liberal. "We cover a variety of issues. Protecting democracy, protecting the rights of minorities... and spreading the representation in government to the masses," are interests of DYM members, according to Funkhouser.

Clubs run by upperclassmen die out as the leadership changes, but "we hope to be around for a long time," said Funkhouser. "West Potomac kids seem to be really interested in the kind of activities we have been doing," said Funkhouser. In addition to our school, DYM is recruiting students from Episcopal, TJ, and from D.C. schools, including Washington International.

Because DYM's members are spread over a large area, the group communicates about its meetings and rallies online. Facebook and a blog show the group's awareness of members' ties to technology.

For most high school students, voting is not an option for another few years. DYM is working to persuade students that even though their opinions can not be expressed on a ballot, there are other ways to get their point across.

Academy Creates Pro Graphic Website

RACHEL MARTIN
REPORTER

Art classes draw and paint, computer graphics classes teach the mastery of Photoshop, but exactly what does the Graphic Pro class do? Now, it is easy to find out.

The Graphic Pro class has recently launched a new website, freshpickedstudio.com, in order to educate interested students about the class, as well as show off the work that students do in the class.

According to Natalie Eppolito, who teaches Pro Graphic Design, "we wanted to make a website that kids would get excited about, and get excited about design."

This website was made by several students already taking the class, including seniors Taketra Wilkins, Nick Fulcher, Jesse Schiffres, Darryl Sharp, and Eugene Vinogradoff. Though Eppolito helped supervise the creation of the site, the work was done by the students. As Vinogradoff, who works on public relations for the class, said, "We basically put the whole thing together; it was a student project type of thing."

On freshpicked.com, there are several opportunities to learn more about the class. One element of the website is the featured artist page, which shows off the work of a single artist. The current featured artist is senior Nick Fulcher, one of the makers of the site. Another aspect of the site is

one students may already be familiar with. The class was assigned to make posters advertising the class, including Sharp's Uncle Sam-like recruitment poster, "Sharp wants you for Pro Graphics Studio." "We also have on the website places where you can buy some of the art if you really like someone's stuff and also there's blogging there," said Vinogradoff. In addition to the blog, there is a forum available for visitors to leave comments and feedback.

So what exactly does the class do? "We not only work in computers, but the kids learn to use the programs that you would use in [a computer graphic's class], except we take what we learn on the computer and find ways to apply it to physically make things that [people] can use everyday," said Eppolito.

For instance, the students completed a project on printing t-shirts recently. In fact, featured artist Fulcher has created a company, Eyebone, which sells the shirts he designs.

The class is different from many other art courses available at this school in the sense that not only teaches the skills needed to be a designer, but the professionalism needed to work in the designing world. According to Vinogradoff, "[they] do professional graphics things to prepare us for later in life, print t-shirts, do other graphics work that is how you would see it in a real world environment like you were working in a graphics firm;

our projects are presented to us in that fashion."

The class can also give students help in getting started in the design industry, just as Fulcher is already selling the clothes the designs. "We partner with a lot of people in industry; we're able to give the students the connections they need to get out into the real world, and to get good internships," said Eppolito.

Students encourage others interested in this class to check out the website to see if the class is something they might be interested in, especially those who are creative but are unsure about what kind of art they are interested in.

As Vinogradoff tells interested students, "if you really enjoy art this is really broad range, we deal with a lot of different things like t-shirts, three-d modeling, we work with the computer a lot also, and we're going to

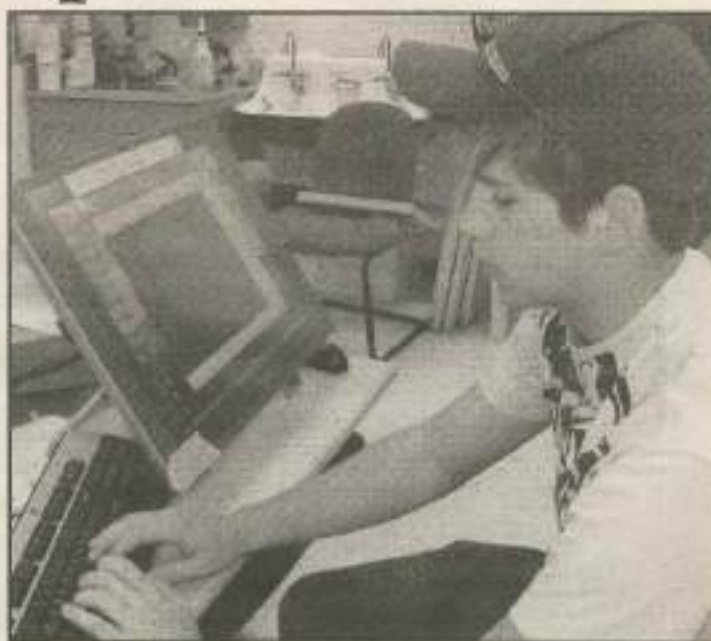


Photo by Erin Parker
Senior Jesse Schiffres, a student in the Computer Graphics class in the Academy, works on the computer.

start with a lot of physical sculpture type of stuff soon, so if you're not really sure what you want to do, it's a really good mix." Indeed, enrollment in the class has already increased from last year, which was Eppolito's first year teaching the class. "Last year we had about twelve students," she said sheepishly. "But this year enrollment went up and we're hoping to boost our numbers even more."

Dress Code is Questioned

Continued from page 1

the lines in class. Students who did not feel comfortable with dressing up had the option of an alternative writing assignment.

"Shakespeare wasn't meant to be read, it was meant to be performed," said O'Grady.

Sophomore Greg Savage, who is in Livelli's seventh period English class, came to school dressed up in a "very elegant black gown," said Livelli. Savage wore a v-neck black dress and carried a purse. "I thought it would be of greater effect if I wore it the entire day," said Savage.

Before the school bell rang that day, Savage

was stopped by the security for causing a "disruption to the school environment." He was called for a conference with the security and the administration about his outfit. "I thought it was absurd!" said Savage. "They said that I was not allowed to wear that outfit and couldn't have so much as a purse on." Savage was asked to change his clothing, and he dressed into his shorts and a tee-shirt.

"In that particular situation, it was a question of whether or not it was disturbing to the school environment," said Assistant Principal, Bruce Jankowitz.

"I think he [Savage] was treated very disrespectfully," said O'Grady.

Regulation 2601.22P, Section D, found on page 11 of the *Student Rights & Responsibilities* booklet, describes the dress code expected of Fairfax County students as "any clothing that interferes with or disrupts the educational environment is unacceptable." Savage was pulled by the security for violating this part.

It specifies that "clothing with language or images that are vulgar, discriminatory, or obscene, or clothing that promotes illegal or violent conduct, such as gang symbols, the unlawful use of weapons, drugs, alcohol, tobacco, or drug paraphernalia, or clothing that contains threats is prohibited." Clothing that exposes cleavage, private parts, the midriff, or undergarments, or that is otherwise sexually provocative, are also prohibited.

"By not mentioning it [dress code for students who wish to cross-dress], it leaves

for freer interpretation," said senior Allison Cappelletti, Vice-President of the school's Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA).

Savage's female classmates wore men's suits for the cross-dressing project. "I don't see how they could wear a full suit and I couldn't wear a dress," said Savage. "No one pulled them aside."

"I thought it was sexist, extremely sexist," he said. "They made me feel very uncomfortable."

Livelli never thought that there would be any disciplinary action taken for such an assignment. "What if a kid is transgender?"

The SJR&R does not specify the dress code for students who may be transgender and may wish to wear clothing of the opposite sex. According to Jankowitz, each situation is different. "We have to take it case by case," he said.

"I don't see how it would be disturbing to people," said Cappelletti.

In years past, the school approved of Powder-puff Day as part of the Homecoming Spirit Week. On that day, girls come in dressed as guys, and guys come in dressed as girls. This year, Powder-puff Day was not approved "because it has made some students uncomfortable," said Jankowitz. "A few students expressed displeasure about it."

In 1969, three public school students in Des Moines, Iowa, were suspended from school for wearing black armbands to protest the government's policy in Vietnam. In *Tinker v. Des Moines*, the Supreme Court ruled that "A prohibition against expression of opinion, without any evidence that the rule is necessary to avoid substantial interference with school discipline or the rights of others, is not permissible under the First and Fourteenth Amendment."

"I don't think that anybody wearing the opposite sex clothes is as disruptive as wearing a war band," said O'Grady. "That's discriminatory in every sense of the word."

Continued from page 1

job," said Case.

Widely unknown, the application for Leadership existed before this year but was not passed on to Rich and Case as they were both hired over the summer. "We had to recruit for the class this year based on people who engaged us about the status of their applications, those who had previously been in Leadership, and those who were recommended by teachers, administrators, and counselors over the summer," said Case. In addition, applications were deemed as a fair way to allow anyone interested in joining the class to do so according to Case, who said, "with the budget being what it is, getting accurate numbers for elective courses is critical."

Though an attempt to implement an application system began late last year, the process takes full effect this year. Created by senior Mariya Hyas, the extensive application packet requires the applicant to complete an activity record, answer short questions, write an essay, and have two teachers fill out a recommendation form on their behalf. Based on the applications, selected members are invited for an interview with Case, Rich, as well as senior SGA members. The purpose of the interview is to evaluate the applicant for his or her personality and determine if he or she would be a good fit for the class. The students will be ranked democratically by a points system to ensure that the students are chosen fairly.

Due to the selection required for membership, some view that taking Leadership Training has now become a more impressive addition to a student's transcript and competitive class such as students that are current members of the class like senior Michael Condon. Condon said, "It [the application] will let people know that it [Leadership] is not just a class to fool around in."

With the addition of senators to help strengthen the relationship with class officers, both teachers look forward to another year of SGA and Leadership ahead of them as they hope to achieve the diversity and communication they have struggled with in the past.

There will be an interest meeting on Wednesday, March 25, for anyone interested in running for student government office.



Photo Courtesy of John Rice

Senior John Rice is cross-dressed to participate in the "Powderpuff Day," which was approved by the administration in previous years. This year, it was not approved because it made some students feel uncomfortable, according to Bruce Jankowitz.

Engineering Club Grows, Hosts Fun Fly

STEPHEN HOWELL
Lynchburg News Feature

The Engineering Club is growing in both size and popularity. The club hosted a Fun Fly last weekend, with builders, students and professionals coming from all the around the area to fly their self-made aircraft, as well as to learn about what others had to make.

The Engineering club is in its third year. "We have more people [this year] than we've ever had before," club President Eric Rehe said. The club's sponsor, Research and Development Engineering teacher Joe Franco, has been leading the club for all three years.

The Fun Fly took place on Saturday, from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. There were over 40 participants and 40 spectators, along with 20 volunteers, who attended the event in the small gymnasium. Participants designed and flew remote controlled and rubber band powered aircraft to fly around the gym. The event was not a competition, but instead a fundraiser for the growing club. "[The Fun Fly] was good. It was a lot of work to set up and clean up, but it turned out to be very successful," Rehe said. Franco has not reached a final tally on the money raised, but he expects it to be between \$250 and \$300 dollars. The money will go to purchasing new plane kits, so every student can have a chance at flying their own aircraft. A similar

event was hosted at the National Building Museum, however, their crowd was not as large as the one at our school.

The club will be competing in the NeXT Challenge at Robinson Secondary School on March 16. The team will design robots that can navigate a course, find different color balls, and then drop them in a basket without being controlled. Programming the robots to do such a task takes around three months. In June, the club will also be participating in a competition, involving only cardboard and duct tapes. The teams must design a boat that can hold two students, who will paddle the craft through a course.

The Research and Development Engineering class boasts a new three-dimension printer. "Anything students draw on their computers can be printed," Franco said. The printer takes forms powder in consecutive layers with glue. The final product can be painted, displayed, or used. So far, students have printed an array of three dimension objects, ranging from a human face to a miniature army tank, to scale. The printer is one of only three in the county. The other two are at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology and West

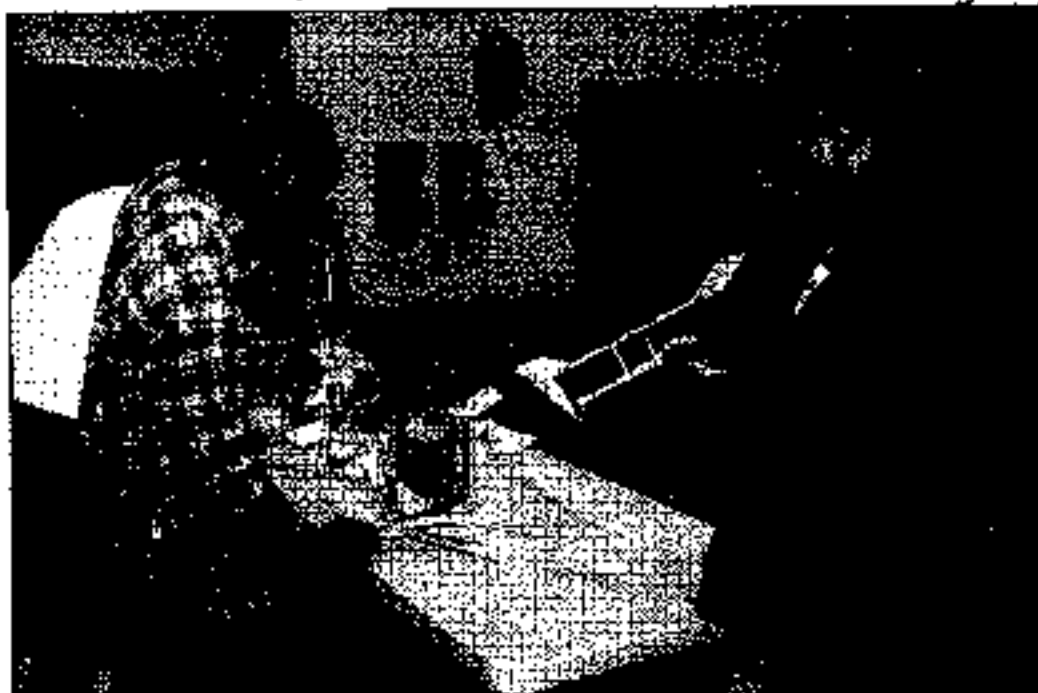


Photo by Eric Rehe

Engineering students prepare their aircrafts for the Fun Fly.

Springfield High School, which has over 400 technology and engineering students. The printer was bought by the Carl Perkins fund. Our school was chosen as a recipient, because of the growing engineering classes.

Franco notes that the class is not all about flying and printing. "We do the whole design cycle from brainstorming to prototyping,"

Franco said. The club does more extensive work and competes in competitions. They meet twice a week on Monday and Wednesday. Franco and Rehe recommend any student who is interested to stop by their academy classroom and ask questions. "The whole idea is to introduce [students] to the world of engineering," Franco said.

International Night Organized

ASMA AHMAD
ONLINE EDITOR

30 different countries, 35 different languages. One night to show it all off.

The Student Government Association (SGA), a coalition with the Latino Leadership Coalition (LLC), the Black Cultural Alliance (BCA), the English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and World Languages Department at our school will be sponsoring International Night on March 20 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. For the first time since 2005, students from diverse backgrounds will be able to come together to show off their cultural talents, festive outfits, and authentic foods with the school community.

Unlike previous years where the Foreign Language Department, now renamed as World Languages Department by Fairfax County, held a "Foreign Language Night" to commemorate the various languages offered at our school, International Night will include many cultures from all over the world, not just those countries whose languages are studied at our school. Several students and faculty have been working hard to make this cross-cultural event a success.

"We hope this year we can pull out a moderately sized event where people from all over the school and the community come together to enjoy good food and performances that highlight West Potomac's diversity," said Victoria O'Connor, Spanish teacher and the World Languages Department chair.

The entrance fee for the event will be one dish per family. The dish must be labeled with its name and ingredients so that those enjoying it are aware of what they are consuming. It is asked



Photo by Marissa Hines

Senior Rashida Moore, juniors Abigail Koduah and Abena Boateng, and sophomore Nyku Wollar practice dancing in preparation for International Night on March 20.

that the dish serve at least ten number of people being brought to the event.

Senior Rashida Moore, a member of the SGA, was motivated to organize the International Night, after noticing how diverse our school is. "Having an international night recognizes all the amazing and unique people at our school," said Moore. "It also helps to educate others about the different and fascinating cultures of all our students."

There is much planned for the night. Former student Amazing Grace Dumas is invited to read an excerpt from her newly published book, *Bound by Faith*. The Muslim Students Association (MSA) will also be selling halal snacks during the first half of the event, and students like senior Abigail Koduah will share performances from their respective countries.

"I am excited about dancing with some of my friends on International

Night and I am sure the richer performances are going to be great," said Koduah. From singing, to playing an instrument or reading poetry, there will be lots to keep the audience entertained. A number of cultural outfits will also be showcased during the fashion show taking place at the end of the night.

The event is also an opportunity to learn about the various cultures that students at our school still identify with. "I want everyone to realize that taking the time to learn about others' culture can really change your outlook on many things," said Moore.

With International Night just a couple weeks away, the entire community is invited to attend a night full of traditional foods, student performances, and a student-led fashion show. Food will be served in the cafeteria and the performances will take place in the Kogelman Theater.

Congratulations Scholastic Regional Winners!

Each year, thousands of students throughout the nation (in grades 5-12) submit their work to The Scholastic Art and Writing Awards. At the regional level, awards are given in the following order: Certificate of Merit, Silver Key and Gold Key (the highest award). The following students have received recognition for their art submissions.

Gold Key (Gold Key Awards will be forwarded to the national level for evaluation):
Katherine Crawford (Painting, Photography)
Michael O'Keefe (Analog Photography)
Paige Fisher (Digital Photography)

Silver Key:
Alexander Harris (Computer Art, Certificate of Merit)
Leigh Blakely (Design)
Victoria Batjes (Drawing)
Audrey Cate (Digital Photography)
Danielle Davis (Analog Photography)
Kathleen Dandford (Drawing)
Ginger Kitchen (Photography Portfolio)
Elizabeth Allen (Mixed Media)
Darilyn Blake (Art Portfolio)

Certificate of Merit:
Alexander Harris (Computer Art)
Paige Fisher (Analog Photography)
Audrey Cate (Photography Portfolio)
Mary Lervoye (Analog Photography)
Kathleen Dandford (Drawing)
Suzanne Kirby (Analog Photography)



Chloe Kougias (Photography Portfolio)
Abi Memmen (Mixed Media)
Liana Pardini (Computer Art)
Darilyn Blake (Computer Graphics)

Spill the Beans

Organic Coffee & Chat House, LLC

1900 Elkin Street, Suite 4

Alexandria, VA 22308

703-780-3361

spillthebeansva.com

spillthebeans@cox.net



Raise the root of your educational success!

We provide highly individualized, one-on-one tutoring in the comfort of your own home. Experienced tutors are available in the D.C. metro area for any subject and any age!

Contact us today!

www.raiseyourroottutoring.com
info@raiseyourroottutoring.com
703.619.5573

west "meltin pot-oma div

GRACE POWELL
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

We are diverse. That is what this school is. A nation of people. Not just Caucasian, African, Asian, anything you can think of. We are many and races. We each have unique backgrounds. But, does this "diversity" really matter? If not, and past the mere fact that we are diverse, we will mention our cafeteria. The cafeteria is together and divided. Let us be blunt. We sit at tables. And while this does not prove we don't know each other. Perhaps we just don't. *The Wire* wanted to know whether or not they felt about this issue.

Do you feel that
certain

Yes: 80%

Do you have

Yes: 70%

Do you feel
classmates
outside

Yes: 80%

Do you feel
are targeted

Yes: 60%

Percentages

Who are we?

Asian	8.14%
Black	24.68%
Hispanic	19.36%
White	43.42%
Other	4.4%

Percentages from FCPS

g" C? ersity

bout, right? The fact is that in one single day, we encounter a
merican and Hispanic, but Asian, Middle Eastern, African, Euro-
a block of ethnicities, but a mixture of many different cultures
nd compelling stories to share if anyone chooses to listen.
ok past the sea of different faces that gather at our school,
at is left? Every year, in some form or another, an individual
haps the one strand of evidence that visually proves we are
in practically point out the "White," "Black," and "Hispanic"
re are separated, it does say something. Maybe we really do
h against each others' shoulders without actually interacting.
re truly diverse. We conducted a survey asking our peers how

AP/Honors classes attract
es more than others?

% **No: 20%**

diverse group of friends?

% **No: 25%**

comfortable approaching
of other racial groups
school to say "hi?"

% **No: 14%**

certain racial groups
disciplinary action?

% **No: 38%**

d on a survey of 64 students

Photos by Gwen

Coffey Talk

Keeping
You
InformedPETER COFFEY
Reporter

March Madness is back and we have our sports teams for this year. Our college basketball fans will see 17 (AMERICAN) and 16 (MAJOR) teams, while the women's team will see 16 (MAJOR) teams. The winning team will be crowned champion (SWEET) and the losing team will be crowned champion (SWEET).

However, for one sports team, there might not be a next year. It is the gymnastics team.

But there is hope for the team. The team will be back in the gymnasium for the first time in 10 years and in the meantime, it is the last going to be the last time as well.

One school has been in existence for 23 years and every year one of those years, our gymnastics team had never competed outside of the district. Finally, when things start looking good for our gymnastics team, our coach is in the corner and says the capital team leader, "It's time."

Parkway County has three budget proposals to help save money and gymnastics is on the list for all three. Unless someone decides they want to donate a few million dollars, we are going to have to say "no" to the gymnastics program. But even with the knowledge that there might not be a next year, the gymnastics team is still going to be the last time as well.

It is amazing that we made it this far. I'm so proud of the team. We have worked so hard to make it to Nationals. We also had three last dancers qualify: Ms. Sarah Woodward and Julie Richardson. After they qualified, we made it. I usually had been looking down my nose at everyone, but now I see the possibility of being a champion. And I'm so proud of the team. We made it to Nationals.

The girls thought they had a very good chance of making it this year, but they knew they needed to work hard to achieve their goals. They did exactly that, and it paid off. This is the best gymnastics team we've ever had and we're all proud of each other. And we're all proud of the team. We made it to Nationals.

The coach is the best throughout the country. He is the best throughout the country. He is the best throughout the country.

With gymnastics being cut, students who were to sell tickets will have to pay them. It is a sad day for the team.

But if gymnastics is going to be cut for next year, it is a sad day for the team. It is a sad day for the team. It is a sad day for the team.

The Annual March Madness Causes a Stir

ERIN PARKER
Photographer

The NCAA March Madness tournament is what every college basketball fan breathes for. The Sweet Sixteen, the Elite Eight, and the final four leave fans gasping their seats all month long. This event is long anticipated by all college basketball fans, especially since many of the local teams have advanced far in the tournament. This year, the NCAA March Madness Tournament will be hosted in Detroit, and the women's in St. Louis. This year will also be very competitive.

ESPN and CBS will broadcast Selection Sunday on March 15th, where 65 teams will be chosen to participate in the March Madness Tournament.

The thirty teams that get an automatic bid must do so by winning their conference, while the other 35, also called the "best of the rest," are chosen by a ten member selection committee appointed by the NCAA.

The point of this committee is to ensure that major and mid-major, such as the George Mason Patriots, programs are represented throughout the tournament.

Every Division I conference has at least one team placed in the NCAA tournament.

The 65 teams are then placed into the appropriate conference, depending on their Divisional conference.

Once the teams are organized into the East, South, West, or Midwest conference, they are seeded one to 16. A team's seed is decided based on their record, strength of schedule, the Ratings Percentage Index (RPI), and overall performance in recent games. This process is called "Bracketology."

After the teams are selected and seeded, fans can print out the brackets and fill them in to predict who will win the tournament.

The 11 seed is typically a place given to mid-major programs in order to allow them the chance to advance in the tournament.

When a mid-major team goes deep into the tournament, their season is called a "Cinderella Story" for obvious reason.

The 2009 March Madness tournament is an example of the 11 seed "Cinderella Story."

Led by Coach Jim Larranaga, the George

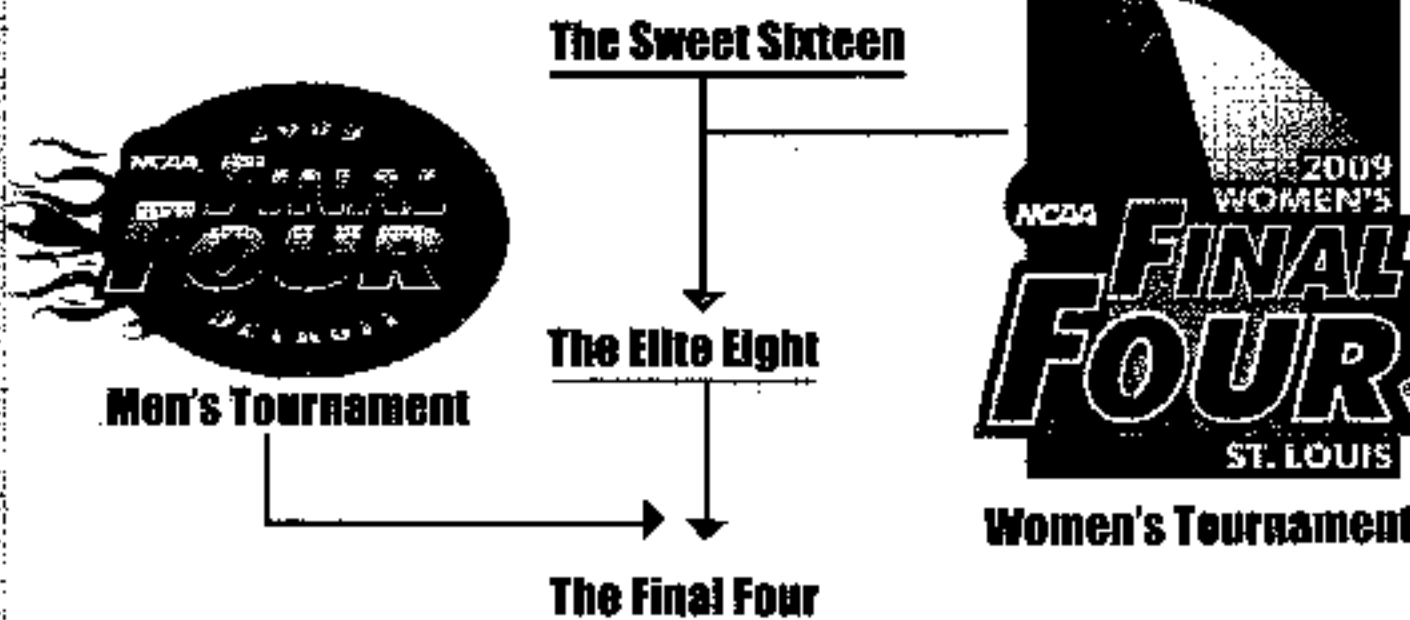
Mason Patriots men's basketball team made their way past Michigan State Spartans, Wichita State Shockers, Connecticut Huskies, and the defending champion North Carolina Tar Heels to end up in the Final Four in Indianapolis.

Through their "Cinderella story" ended when they lost to the eventual national champion Florida Gators, the George Mason Patriots brought hope, excitement, and buzz to not only the Northern Virginia area, but to all the mid-majors in the country.

This year, the close-to-home mid-major team, the VCU Rams, are expected to be the "best of the rest" in the tournament bracket.

Though they are not expected to advance far in the tournament (if even selected), Virginia college basketball fans can cross their fingers and hope to see another "Cinderella story" happen before our eyes.

March Madness gets madder every year. College basketball fans alike get together for a whole month to witness history. They can only hope that this post-season will be as much of a nail-biter and shocker as past years.



Wolverine Students Lend a Hand to Local Teams

MICHAELA ACCARDI
News Editor

While some students play high school winter sports, others choose to volunteer at the local youth sports organization, Fort Hunt Youth Athletic Association, by coaching elementary age students.

Junior Meredith Ryan and sophomore Lizzie Persekan are two of these students. Ryan is coaching for her second year, with experience in fifth through eighth grade girls. Not only do both Ryan and Persekan play at their own age group for Ft. Hunt Basketball, they add more to their heavy workload by coaching seventh and eighth grade girls.

"I get satisfaction out of both [playing and coaching]. Nothing beats the physical part of the sport and hanging out with friends, but at the same time seeing young kids have fun and watching them improve is rewarding enough, win or lose," said Ryan.

With a strong record last year, the girls hope to continue their dominance in "house" basketball and seem to be doing so, with nine wins and three losses. "We gossip and try to make them look forward to high school as much as possible. We try to incorporate the fundamentals of basketball into as much fun, kid-like stuff as we can," said Ryan. Although parents may

sometimes be concerned for their daughters coached by teenagers, with coaches Ryan and Persekan, there is no need to be concerned. "We just know our kids are having much more fun than their [adult coaches] kids, and when we beat them it's the best feeling ever. Fathers and mothers who coach, may have more experience, but place a child in a fun atmosphere, and they are likely to succeed," said Ryan.

Both girls enjoy not only playing their classmates but also coaching against their

younger siblings. They coached the sister of junior Matt Cunningham, a friend of both girls as well as classmate junior An Linderbaum's sister and have also coached rising freshman.

When asked if the girls would coach next year, there was no hesitation with an immediate "yes." Along with numerous other students at our school, Ryan and Persekan coach together voluntarily and have found a fun way to give back to their community.

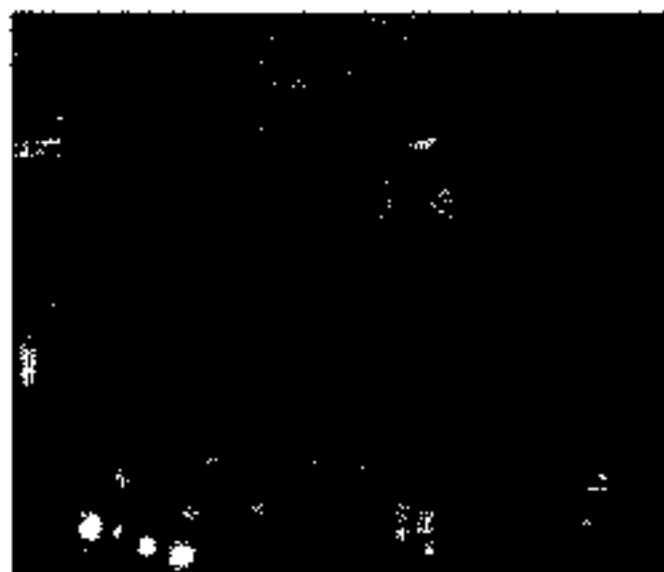


Photo by Michaela Accardi
The Miami Hurricanes take on Wake Forest in Fort Hunt basketball.

County School Board Cuts Sports

Gymnastics is the first on the table to be cut

EMILY GRIFFIN
ASSISTANT STYLE EDITOR

Next year many athletes will be searching for new sport teams to join because of the budget cut. The real question is: what will the athletes do?

Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) Superintendent Jack D. Dale created a three-tiered plan of budget cuts that will allow the school system to deal with having a lower budget in the 2010 school year. The first tier contains budget cuts of approximately \$43 million. The second tier adds money to the schools' budget to add 5,000 more students to enroll in FCPS for the 2009-2010 school year.

This should make up for the decreases in school funding which is anticipated to be nearly \$50 million. This tier also requires a cut of \$123 million and a reduction of more than 775 positions.

Lastly, the third tier will increase the transfer of county funds and reduce the budget by \$219 million as well as positions by 1,500. This budget plan was presented to the FCPS Board on November 10, 2008, and to the Board of Supervisors on November 14, 2008.

According to fcps.edu, Dale said, "We went through our budget line by line to look for possible efficiencies and programs where we would do the least amount of damage. Whether you're cutting tens or hundreds of millions of dollars, you cannot avoid having a negative impact on students, school services, and jobs for community residents. Implementation of these cuts has the potential to affect student performance, services for all students, and the community as a whole. Central support will be reduced

by \$29 million, but, even with those cuts, we will still be unable to cover the deficit without affecting instruction." If put into action, the Tier One cuts would eliminate the girls' gymnastics program in high schools and reduce funding for middle school after-school initiatives.

The Changing Education through the Arts program and the Mentor Works program would also be eliminated, as expressed by fcps.edu.

According to fcps.edu, in Tier Two, class sizes would increase by .5 students in elementary, middle, and high schools, and school planetariums would close. Printed copies of the Family-Gram newsletter would no longer be available, and elementary school magnet transportation would end.

Tier Three would be the deepest cut, by increasing class size by 2.5 students, discontinuing transportation to high school academies with buses that currently serve five or fewer riders, as well as increasing rental rates for schools as community-use facilities by 15 percent. Salary step increments for employees would be delayed by six months, employees would be furloughed for one day, and bus service to gifted and talented centers would be reduced, as stated on fcps.edu.

Director of Student Activities, Aaron Helmick, thinks that the last thing that should be cut is the student sports and activities. He said that "other areas of the school system should be looked at first. Extra-curricular activities and sports give students a new way to learn and encourage team building."

It is still up in the air if student activities, such as some sport teams



Courtesy of MCT Campus

The School Board proposed for gymnastics to be the first sport cut.

should be cut as well. Helmick said that "there have been discussions if further student activities' budget cuts are needed."

According to Helmick, the succession of activities to be cut is in the following order: freshman sports, winter track, swim and dive, as well "coaches' and sponsors' stipends by 3%."

Helmick then mentioned that "the budget planning and approval is a very long process and won't be finalized before May."

Sophomore Tayler Aitken, who is part of the gymnastics team, knows that the FCPS Board is "leaning to cut gymnastics, but I hope they are just considering it." Aitken commented that if gymnastics is cut that she and some friends will create a gymnastics club, like crew. Winter track member, sophomore Max Jones, hopes that "they will not cut winter track, because so many athletes run winter track." Jones said if they end up cutting winter track, he will then start doing winter conditioning for crew.



Photo by Erin Parker

Rifle Team Aims High

JESSICA TAYLOR
REPORTER

Offering a wide array of school-sponsored and club sports, ranging from cross country and track to an ultimate frisbee club, our school has a diverse selection that allows virtually anyone interested to find the right sport for them. By far, the most obscure sports offered here is the rifle team.

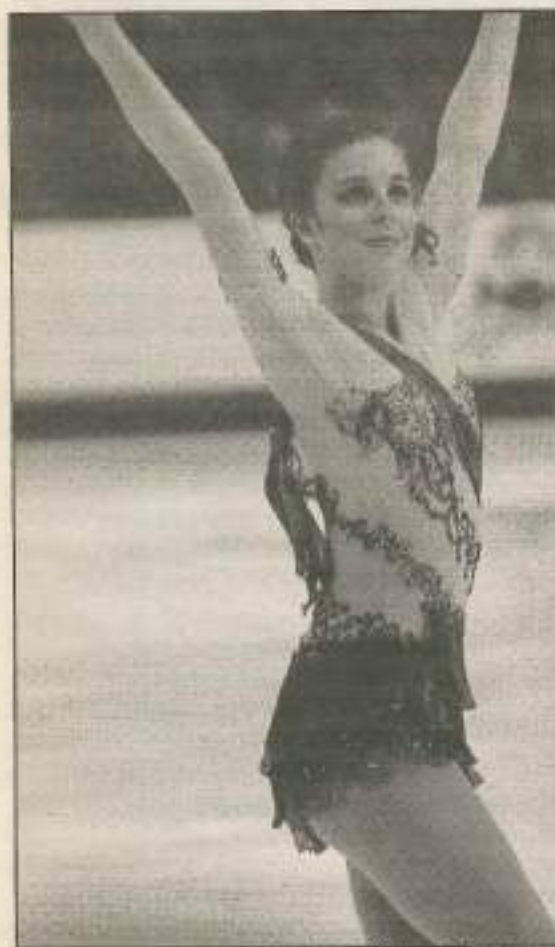
Formed in the 2006-2007 school year after 2007 graduate Emily Echols learned about other rifle teams while visiting schools, the rifle team has been active and growing ever since, having just wrapped up its third season this past February. "West Potomac used to have a rifle team," said senior and co-captain of the team Brienne Wilson. "But there was little interest and so the team disbanded. Emily liked it so much that she reformed the team and it's been going strong ever since."

Wilson admits that the team is still very small and relatively unknown—twelve members currently—but with six of them new this year, Wilson sees this as a promising sign that the sport is picking up interest. Unlike most sports at the school, the rifle team is not school-sponsored, and members must pay for and raise all the money necessary for maintaining a team.

Coached by Echols' father, Alex Echols, the team started out struggling. "Initially our scores were bad," said Wilson, "but we are constantly improving as a team and getting better. We started scoring below 800 [where a score of 1100 is considered very good], but by the end of this season, we were reaching over 1000."

The rifle team's lengthy season lasts twice as long as an average sport's season, spanning from the beginning of the school year to the end of February, and the members had nine meets. The regional tournament took place on February 26. Practices were held Mondays through Thursdays from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. in the JROTC room, and competitions were typically held on Wednesday and Thursday evenings, as well as Saturday afternoons.

Wilson acknowledged that the sport is very difficult and might not be for everyone. "For 55 straight minutes, we have to focus on a target that's the size of a person's thumb and ten meters away," she said. "The bull's eye is just the size of a pinhole." Despite this, Wilson still finds it to be a very enjoyable sport. "It's definitely a unique experience," she said. "Getting a good score makes you feel like you've really accomplished something because of how challenging it is."



Courtesy of figureskating.com

Former student Ashley Wagner competes at the 2009 Nationals, eventually finishing third.

Past Wolverine Strives For Olympic Aspirations

Wagner goes from small town rink to nationally ranked

CATHERINE BRADLEY
REPORTER

What does it take to be an Olympic hopeful? Not many people know what it really takes, but senior Ashley Wagner has been preparing for the 2010 Olympics and knows the hard work that goes into it. Competing on a National level has been her pastime for a total of two years.

Wagner is a senior ladies figure skater who has competed at the national and senior level for the past two years.

She has learned that it takes more than hard work and that there are some things that must be given up in order to obtain her goal. One of these many sacrifices include her change of coaches and also moving to Delaware to further her competitive skating career.

At the end of the 2008 school year, Ashley decided that after six years with Coach Shirley Hughes, she was going to switch coaches to help her progress as a skater, ultimately seeking to gain a place in the 2010 Winter Olympics.

Wagner chose to work with Coach Priscilla Hill, the only problem was that Hill lives in Delaware and works at Wilmington Ice Arena...in Delaware. Wagner's initial plan was to commute back and forth between her home in Virginia and an apartment in Delaware.

After trying to commute back and forth Wagner and her family decided that she, along with her mom and brother Austin,

would move to Delaware while her dad remained here in Alexandria to continue working.

Soon after she began working with her new coach, Wagner decided that she would have to completely change her program if she wanted to be competitive at the senior level, taking her skating to the next level. Her first big competition of the season was her trip to Nationals where she was a favorite to finish in the Top 3.

Her first day of competition was a learning experience for the young skater; she made simple mistakes and finished the day in a disappointing twelfth place.

Although scoring only a twelfth place, she was complimented on all of her hard work to rank 12th out of the thousands of skaters across the nation.

Her next and final day of competition she came out more prepared and one the free skate but was so far behind after her first day that she finished in a disappointing fourth.

Wagner now has to depend on her fellow skaters to qualify the US team for the Olympics by finishing in a combined twelfth place at Senior Worlds.

If the team qualifies, then three skaters will be able to go to the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver. Trials will be held after Worlds in March. This trials have been Wagner's dream since her childhood and could be made a reality as she moves her way across the nation to the top ranks in skating.



Photo Courtesy of MCT Handout

The movie *Jonas Brothers: The 3D Concert Experience* gives the audience a behind-the-scenes look in the lives of the Jonas Brothers before a concert.

The Jonas Brothers' Hysteria Rages On

MEGAN HALEY
REPORTER

It is 4:31 a.m. and it is time for Big Rob to wake up the brothers. One by one, they crawl out of bed and make their way to the dining room. As they sit together for breakfast, talking about their plans for the day, Big Rob has to ask the help to leave; no one is privy to that information.

Next, they are driving around in the city when fans mob their car, forcing them to climb out of the sunroof and begin the chase scene. They run through the streets of New York City chased by teenage girls. And so begins the *Jonas Brothers 3D Concert Movie* experience.

The opening was somewhat dissatisfying because anyone who had watched *Disney Channel* would have seen the backstage filming of the scene and known that it was staged. Although it seemed enough to pump up the twelve and under audience for the opening song, "That's Just the Way We Roll."

Almost seamlessly, the movie advanced from one hit song to the next, in fact, more seamlessly than that of the actual concert. Lasting just over 75 minutes the movie did not waste any time. Nearly every song from the *Burnin' Up* set list made the movie cut and they had room for a new song and music video.

The backstage footage was more than enough to get the teenage girls screaming, especially when they saw the boys between a stage change, topless. Other behind the scenes included the brothers at sound checks and goofing around hitting golf balls off the stage at one venue, which is just what the audience wanted to see—the boys having fun and being themselves.

Special guests included opening act, Disney's *Camp Rock* star, Demi Lovato and Joe's then girlfriend, country/pop superstar Taylor Swift. Lovato performed a duet with the brothers and Taylor Swift sang, "Should've Said No," a "girl-power" ballad that was almost a foreshadowing to her painful breakup with Joe via text message. However, the audience did not pick up on such underpinnings and enjoyed the show nevertheless.

Overall, the movie was just what was expected, an up-close concert that saved its viewers expensive tickets (relatively speaking, the movie ran \$15) and gave all those fans who could not make it to the show a fair chance to see the concert.

Save for the sweet pyrotechnics, perfectly cued, and the amazing showmanship of the brothers, the movie was nothing special, given the choice, hands-down, being there in person, is unbeatable.

Reviewer's Grade: ★★☆☆☆

Shopaholic Shops Her Way to the Big Screen With Style

EMILY GRIFFIN
ASSISTANT STYLE EDITOR

Ever think shopping is highly over rated? Not according to Rebecca Bloomwood.

Confessions of a Shopaholic is a new movie based on one woman's inability to stop shopping, as her perfect world came crashing down around her. The movie had a fairly basic and average plot with a few scenes that had no relative point of being in the movie. Some of the acting was noteworthy while other parts were not worth seeing.

Local magazine journalist, Rebecca Bloomwood (Isla Fisher) lives with her friend Suze (Krysten Ritter) in New York City. Rebecca has always wanted to work at the top New York fashion magazine *Alette*. When walking to the *Alette* building for an interview, she passes a store in which mannequins come to life and convince her to buy an expensive green scarf. But there is a teensy-weensy problem: she owes thousands of dollars in debt and her credit cards have reached their limit, due to her shopaholic habits. She later buys the scarf with the money from a man who told her that "cost and worth are two completely different things." When Rebecca finally reaches the *Alette* building, she finds out that the job has already been filled.

When she gets back to the magazine she works for, she

finds out that the magazine has folded. She then must get a job and refrain from shopping; this does not go over well at all. When she gets a job at a financial investment magazine called *Savvy Living*, she starts a column called "The Girl with the Green Scarf" about buying only affordable clothes, which becomes an immediate hit. Her boss, Luke Brandon (Hugh Dancy), is the same guy who gave her the money to buy the scarf, and brings her to a financial conference in Miami. There is a ton of flirting between Rebecca and Luke,



Photo Courtesy of MCT Handout

Isla Fisher (above) portrays a typical shopaholic living in New York City.

but he ends up taking another woman named Alicia (Leslie Bibb) who works at *Alette* to the Miami conference ball.

Derek Smeath (Robert Stanton), is a bill collector and has been pursuing Rebecca for months about her excessive spending tries to confront her, but fails every time. While the fame of "The Girl with the Green Scarf" column soars, Rebecca and Luke's relationship goes to the next level. When they go to a morning interview together, Derek tells the audience about Rebecca's debt. Embarrassed and humiliated, everything then begins to fall apart in Rebecca's life.

The movie ends on a positive note, however. Rebecca stands on her own two feet and tries to fix her life. She pays off all her debt by selling her clothes. Things also work out with her relationship, as she makes up with Luke, who started his own magazine called *Brandon Communications*.

Isla Fisher delivered a funny, but safe performance throughout the whole movie as Rebecca. Many of her scenes were nicely executed, but they lacked spark, creativity, and originality. Hugh Dancy hit the mark on his character Luke; his performance was flawless and very subtle. However, the best performance came from Krysten Ritter, who delivered the role of Suze phenomenally well. Her quirky personality made the movie comical and interesting to watch.

Reviewer's Grade: ★★☆☆☆

It is Just Not That Bad

MARIYA ILYAS
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

You found your Prince Charming and shared the magic kiss. Life will be perfect forever, right? Wrong.

Not all stories end in a "happily ever after" because relationships are a complicated matter. That is exactly what the movie *He's Just Not That Into You* set out to prove, and definitely succeeded in doing so.

Directed by Ken Kwapis and written by Abby Kohn and Marc Silverstein, the movie tackles the dating game, exposing the various types of players and the rules involved. Based on Greg Behrman's book, *He's Just Not That Into You: The No-Excuses Truth to Understanding Guys*, the movie is about a group of interconnected friends and acquaintances in their twenties and thirties all tangled in complicated relationships, hoping they are the "exception to the rule."

Does marriage necessarily symbolize love? This was the argument between Neil (Ben Affleck) and Beth (Jennifer Aniston), who had been a couple for seven years. Neil's affection for Beth is endless and he wants to live with her, but without a piece of paper or a ring certifying them as a legal couple. Beth, on the other hand, fears that she will never get married and ends up going through a painful break-up.

Ironically, Janine (Jennifer Connelly) and Ben (Bradley Cooper) are an unhappy couple. Janine had forced Ben into marriage right after college, and they lead a normal life, lacking excitement and romance. Ben is a modest and faithful husband, but he becomes extremely attracted to Anna (Scarlett Johansson), after meeting her at a grocery store. Ben and Anna have an affair that neither of them expected. When their marriage fails, Janine divorces Ben and moves out.

Connor (Kevin Connolly), Anna's boyfriend, represents the hardworking businessman who also likes to have an exciting social life. Anna, however, fell in love with Ben, but was disappointed to know he was not fully committed.

Do you believe in love at first sight—I mean 'site'? Mary (Drew Barrymore), a typical working woman, has a lot of 'guy friends' on her Myspace page, but none that are willing to have a serious romantic social life. Via email, phone, and messaging, Mary is in touch with Connor, her client, about his ad that she designs.

Gigi (Ginnifer Goodwin)



Photo by Darren Michaels/MCT

He's Just Not That Into You honestly portrays the various types of everyday relationships that exist today.

Footloose Raises Many Questions as the Spring Musical Director's Choice Provides a Challenge for the Theatre Department

MEGAN HALEY
REPORTER

This spring, theatre teacher Melissa Christensen has selected *Footloose* as the spring musical, much to the surprise of the department. "It [*Footloose*] is a really big contrast to past shows," said junior Maddie Dahl, "however I think it is a really great chance to show that we can pull off a variety of shows."

The release of the *Footloose* was long awaited and Christensen would not even tell her Theatre 3/4 class what they would be performing, until she made a proper school-wide release of it on February 4.

At the interest meeting, it was announced that the auditions would be a little different this year. Each student hoping to participate would have to attend a workshop in order to learn the song and dance, which is not uncommon.

However, each student would be performing the same selected song, instead of his or her choice, which was a definite cause of some anxiety for students. "When everyone does the same song, you can really see the difference in skill," said Dahl.

Footloose is a much more 'rock 'n roll' show than the

department is used to. Usually, the plays involve jazz or tap, while this one includes neither. The singing is also out of the department's comfort zone. Since the majority of the singing parts go to those partly involved with theatre and choir, the students have been trained for a certain type of singing, not like that of *Footloose*.

On the bright side this brings in a new demographic to the theatre program, "[the show] is drawing in a whole new crowd," said Dahl. "I have never auditioned for the musical before, but was excited to hear it was *Footloose*, it's a fun one," said senior John Rice.

Despite not anticipating a show of this caliber, the whole institution of the theatre was built on pushing the limits and going above and beyond what is considered comfortable. Perhaps, Christensen understands this better than her predecessor and is hoping to bring out the best of a developmental theatre program, hence *Romeo and Juliet* in the fall.

Regardless of whether or not the selection was a good choice, the performance will no doubt be well worth attending. Having been to the preliminary dance classes, anyone would see the fun of the students that auditioned are having while trying to learn the steps. "I'm looking forward to the dancing in this show," said Dahl.

Even though the selection was a tad unexpected, most people are looking forward to the show. "I was happy with the choice because its fun and people are familiar with the show which means they are more likely to go and see it," said sophomore Callan Memmo.

On the other hand, a familiar show means that people will have high expectations, "a lot of people know it [*Footloose*] so its kind of all or nothing, it has to meet their expectations or it won't be successful," said junior Jacob Lawlor.

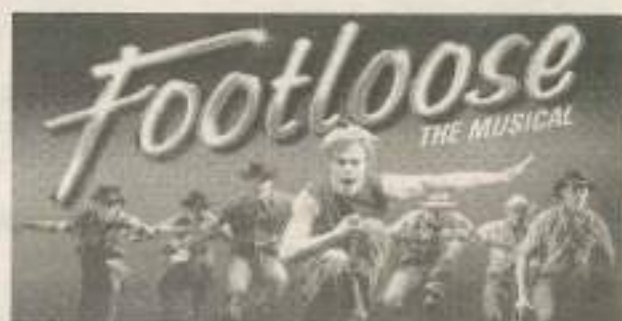


Photo Courtesy of Fusionmarketing.co.uk

The eighties are making a comeback in our school's version of *Footloose: The Musical*.

We No Music

ALEX FABRIZIO & GWEN FISHEL
FOCUS EDITOR & COPY EDITOR

Our blood, sweat, and tears went into handpicking these gems. "09 let's blaze."

SPRING FEVER

1. "Feelin' This" by Blink-182
We had to honor their marvelous return with a classic.

2. "Magick" by Ryan Adams
Whatever the mood may be, put this track on, preferably while in the car. Turn it up, and seriously, just jam! Do not be ashamed.

3. "I'm Glad I Hitched My Apple Wagon To Your Star" by The Boy Least Likely To

Okay, The Boy Least Likely To has seven adorably drawn animals engaging in "The Best Party Ever" playing instruments, like the glockenspiel, as their album artwork. Is more explanation really necessary?

4. "The Difference in the Shades" by Bright Eyes

Conor Oberst's incessant whining cannot hold spring back.

5. "Where You'll Find Me" by Neutral Milk Hotel

Instant picnic in the park; just add a basket.

6. "Handle With Care" by The Traveling Wilburys

Oh my! One praiseworthy mega band; this creation exemplifies the marvels of spring through a creative melody that echoes an aura of an optical illusion... in an extraordinarily crafted listening experience.

7. "Magical Mystery Tour" by The Beatles

Someone, a very long time ago, said that spring is magical, so hop on the tour bus. There may be many twists and turns, but it certainly looks promising!

8. "You Don't Know Me" by Ben Folds (featuring Regina Spektor)
Ben Folds' poppy nature obviously reflects blossoming flowers.

9. "Always in Love" by Wilco
Imagine a field of green and flowers of gold while running along a river of blue that flows.

Society of Righteous and Harmonious Fists said that is what is up.

10. "Roxanne" by The Police

Visit Youtube.com, and type in "RoxanneMicrosoftSongsmith," and all will be explained. Plus, nothing says spring like music making software.

11. "Chelsea Morning" by Joni Mitchell

A flower power song and flowers bloom in spring.

HOW TO GET FRIENDS

1. "All I Really Wanna Do" by Bob Dylan

A great man once said, "Is, baby, be friends with you."

2. "California Über Alles" by The Dead Kennedys

Everyone wants to be punk rock!!

3. "Paper Planes" by M.I.A.

This song fosters an adventure circa James Franco and Seth Rogen in *Pineapple Express*.

4. "White Houses" by Vanessa Carlton

Shout out to Stephen Howell. SUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUP?

5. "Wild World" by Cat Stevens

To inspire some deep philosophical conversations.

6. "Ocean Breathes Salty" by Modest Mouse

Get ready Hipsters, the BROcean might say something.

7. "Walcott" by Vampire Weekend

Nantucket Red shorts + Columbia degree = BFFZ.

8. "Cecilia" by Simon and Garfunkel

Simon and Garfunkel are almost too legit.

9. "Sheila Take a Bow" by The Smiths

Take the advice; "throw your homework onto the fire."

10. "Last Nite" by The Strokes

Last night, this may have happened to you. And guess what, no one understands.

11. "Lola" by The Kinks
Gwen Stefani can spell "bananas" and they can spell "Lola."

Broadway Touches the Reality of Life With a Dash of Humor and Vulgarity

JESSICA TAYLOR
REPORTER

"The sun is shining, / It's a lovely day, / A perfect morning / For a kid to play" the company of *Avenue Q* cheerily declares as the first act begins, but when they quickly inform the audience, "But you've got lots / Of bills to pay," the harsh realities of the adult world come crashing down.

Avenue Q, a 2003 Broadway musical which centers around an idealistic, yet naïve recent college graduate, Princeton (played by Robert McClure), presents itself as a humorous look into all the trials and disappointments of adult life. Modeled after the children's television show *Sesame Street*, *Avenue Q* follows a familiar tone for young adults who grew up on the show and provides them an entertaining glimpse into their quickly approaching adult life.

The musical begins with Princeton realizing that "Four years of college and plenty of knowledge, / Have earned [him] this useless degree." The rest of the cast first enter in the number "It Sucks To Be Me," where they each sing about a specific disappointing problem in their life.

Princeton ends up meeting the rest of the cast when, after beginning a search for a home on Avenue A, he realizes that every house but those in the rundown neighborhood of Avenue Q are out of his price range.

Princeton goes on to sing about his quest for a "Purpose," and the musical continues to follow this format of characters confessing their lofty dreams and then having life circumstances hinder them.

Soon, several characters, including Princeton, realize that life is not turning out the way they had once hoped when they perform the song, "I Wish I Could Go Back to College." The play ends

with all the characters attempting to comfort Princeton with the song "For Now," where they sing about how all his problems in life are just temporary obstructions.

Despite paying homage to the popular children's show *Sesame Street*, *Avenue Q* is an adult oriented musical and contains lots of strong language and adult themes. With songs ranging from "If You Were Gay" to "Everyone's a Little Bit Racist," *Avenue Q* offers an amusing take on adult topics such as homosexuality and racism that makes it decidedly not kid-friendly, though hilarious for mature adults.

The musical focuses on Princeton's quest to find a purpose in life until he eventually realizes that maybe he never will, but not to worry. The play ends with the entire cast converging to remind the audience that despite all the hardships of adult life the characters and audience might currently be facing "Everything in life is only for now."



Broadway's musical *Avenue Q* adds humor to the disappointment of typical adult lives.

Reviewer's Grade: ★ ★ ★ ★

Welcome to the Jungle Let's Talk About Sex

VICTORIA NARINE
STYLE EDITOR

While in office, former president George W. Bush required all visitors to the Oval Office to wear jackets. Visible shirt sleeves were taboo and looked down upon by all of Bush's cohorts. Bush's predecessor took a far more liberal approach in matters of proper dress in the Oval Office. Bill Clinton failed to enforce the jackets-only policy, and pants were purely optional.

Clinton's christening of the Oval Office stirred up the likes of both Democrats and Republicans. Hoping to exonerate the well-liked president, Republicans chose to put Clinton on formal trial under oath. When asked whether he had sex with his intern, Clinton coyly replied with a "no." Who said oral sex was sex?

Immediately following Clinton's explicit rendezvous with White House intern Monica Lewinsky, Republicans throughout the nation became obsessed with the affair. Ken Starr, the prosecutor for the highly-publicized trials, published the infamous Starr Report in major newspapers in the US. The Starr Report contained lurid detail about Clinton's sinful relationship, including illustrative blow-by-blows.

The Republicans' seeming obsession with Clinton's sex life escalated to constant coverage on Fox News and continual snide remarks by self-proclaimed "Head of the Republican Party," Rush Limbaugh. Judging by Limbaugh's unstable history and recent comments, the Republicans turned Clinton's single mistake into a convoluted tale about adultery and unorthodox sexual preferences.

Most enigmatic was the fact that Clinton was questioned about his extramarital affairs and, furthermore, impeached. The Republicans' infatuation surrounding Clinton's sexual history and the initial reason for being asked - under oath - about his sexual behaviors boggles the most perceptive Democrats.

Since Clinton's sex scandal, it has become evident that the Republicans are becoming more brutal. Maybe they are just bitter over the fact that Bush had a record low approval rating while Clinton had a 70% approval rating even after his bevy of extramarital affairs came to the surface. The American public would rather have a president with healthy sex life than an idiot who started two unnecessary wars.

While political drama has become more severe, some things concerning politics never change. Republicans, not surprisingly, love exposing the supposed bad habits of their political opposites. But Republicans and their proclaimed sanctimonious, righteous lifestyles are encircled with hypocrisy. They spoke out against gay marriage, and, better yet, gay rights, yet solicit sex from male officers underneath bathroom stalls. My personal favorite: Bill O'Reilly and his stimulating phone calls to a former producer. O'Reilly, the sex freak, was exposed. And then, but certainly not least, is the Palin clan. The most conservative Republican preaches abstinence and "wholesome" family values, yet her 16 year old daughter got impregnated by a boy named Levi. And to top it off, in a recent interview on Fox news, Bristol Palin a.k.a. the pregnant teen, said "abstinence is not realistic at all".

The moral of this story is to practice what you preach. Republicans should not criticize fellow Democratic politicians, even if we are the better half.



Photo by Joe Burbank/ MCT



Photos by of Michael Gauding, Leonard Ortiz, Hahn-Melinger-Orban/MCT Handout Photo Illustration by Emily Griffin

This year's Academy Awards had a variety of entertainment, including performances by Beyoncé Knowles, Vanessa Hudgens, Zac Efron, and Amanda Seyfried. There was also many memorable speeches by Sean Penn, Penelope Cruz, Kate Winslet, and many others.

ZACH FEINSTEIN
BUSINESS MANAGER

The 81st Academy Awards were held on February 22, in Los Angeles, California, and this year's renewal was just as exciting, with many surprises and a bittersweet tribute to actor Heath Ledger.

The host for this year's award show, Hugh Jackman, opened the show with a multitude of songs about all of the movies that were nominated for Best Picture. The theme of the opening number was the effects of the recession and how it had affected the budget of the Academy. In the middle of the song, Anne Hathaway joined Jackman on stage to help finish the opening piece.

The first award of the night, Best Actress in a Supporting Role, went to Penelope Cruz for her portrayal of a divorced woman still locked in a complex relationship with her ex-husband in *Icky Cristina Barcelona*. A very bittersweet award of Best Actor in a Supporting Role went to Heath Ledger for his role as the infamous Joker in *The Dark Knight*. Due to Ledger's death from an accidental overdose of "acute intoxication by the combined effects of oxycodone, hydrocodone, diazepam, temazepam, alprazolam and doxylamine" in January 2008. His mother, father, and sister accepted the award for him.

The most important and prestigious award of the night, Best Picture, went to hit movie, *Slumdog Millionaire*, a story about a poor boy who grew up in the slums of poverty-stricken India during a war, and is accused of cheating on the show "Who Wants to be a Millionaire." In addition to Best Picture, *Slumdog Millionaire* won a slew of other awards-altogether eight from its total ten nominations-including Directing, Music (Song), Music (Score), Film Editing, Sound Mixing, Cinematography, and Writing (Adapted Screenplay). The entire cast came up on the stage when *Slumdog Millionaire* won for Best Picture, including the young actors who actually live in the slums of Mumbai where the movie was shot.

In the Best Actress category, Kate Winslet finally won an Oscar for her role as a train instructor with a secret past who seduced a teenage boy in *The Reader*. Additionally, Winslet also won a Golden Globe for Supporting Actress for her part in *The Reader* and a Best Actress award for her other film *Revolutionary Road* in January.

The Best Actor award went to Sean Penn for his role as the late San Francisco politician Harvey Milk in the movie *Milk*. When Penn received his award, which is his second, (with his first being in 2003 for *Mythic River*), he opened by thanking the "Commie homo-loving sons of guns" who are his fans, and calling for an end on California's ban on gay marriage.

The mid-Oscar live performance with such household names as Beyoncé, Zac Efron, Vanessa Hudgens, Amanda Seyfried, Dominic Cooper, and host Hugh Jackman was a hit. The performance, directed by Baz Luhrmann, included many popular songs from throughout Oscar history. Each star had their own song to sing, so multiple songs were going on at once during the performance.

With Sean Penn being an exception, this year's Oscar Awards set a precedent by honoring actors not native to the U.S. Cruz accepted her award for Best Supporting Actress by giving a speech almost entirely in Spanish. Most notably, however, was the cast of the much acclaimed *Slumdog Millionaire*. The entire cast ventured across the pond from the slums of India to the glitz and glamour of Hollywood's biggest, classiest night.

This year's Oscars was just as exciting as last year's award show and filled with just as many memorable acceptance speeches from the winners. From Penn's moving human rights speech to Cruz's gracious Spanglish to Winslet's tearful acceptance, the Oscars surprised and astonished many viewers. Jackman also did a very good job in his role as host of the award show. Hopefully next year's Academy Awards will be just as interesting and memorable as they were this year.

Papa Bryan's Cooking Corner

BRYAN JACOBS
SENIOR EDITOR

Brimble Waffles

Welcome back to another edition of Papa Bryan's Cooking Corner. In this issue, we will explore the delicious taste of "Brimble Waffles".

As before, this is another breakfast favorite. The taste of these delicious treats can best be described as fluffy with a mildly crispy golden brown outside. The first time I tried these amazing pieces of deliciousness, I instantly feel in love with the flavor and texture.

Junior Jaron Drucker said, "I've

been eating these delicious little morsels for all my life. I would give the world for them." If enough syrup is poured onto the waffles, the taste is absolutely delightful and can make an early or late morning heavenly.

I would recommend these to anyone who has had a rough Friday night and needs a little lift by Saturday; it will get you ready for church the next day and then the week ahead of you.

Instructions:

1. Place 1 cup flour in a mixing bowl
2. Add 1 tsp. baking soda
3. Add 1/2 tsp. salt
4. 1 1/2 tsp baking powder
5. 1/2 cup oil or shortening
6. Add 1 cup buttermilk
7. Place two eggs in a separate bowl and beat the egg whites, add to mixture after all dry ingredients are mixed.
8. Fold gently and place in waffle maker until golden brown.
9. Add syrup as desired and enjoy your new favorite breakfast treat!



Photo by MCT Handout

Brimble waffles can be easily enjoyed with a glass of milk or with rich and creamy milk chocolate syrup.

A Day in the Life of...Jacob Glaser

The duality of the fluting athlete is exposed and takes us by surprise

BRYAN JACOBS
Sports Editor

Typically, you will either find sophomore Jacob Glaser in Springbank playing his adored flute or practicing baseball with his many cohorts during baseball practice. Both, he claims, are his "ultimate love[s]." These two aspects of his life define who Glaser is and will forever be.

Glaser was born on November 2, 1992. He attended Groveton Elementary and then later Carl Sandburg middle school. Glaser was a regular in the school's bands. He picked the flute and baseball as his two main focuses in life. Glaser began playing baseball when he was four years old; he learned to love the game from his father. Later, he picked up the flute when he was ten years old, to play in the Groveton Elementary band. He always found inspiration in the famous Scottish flutist Ian Anderson from the *Jethro Tull Band*.

Baseball and the Flute? "It has always been a struggle when playing the flute, I got a lot of teasing and ridicule because I played flute, and it just wasn't expected from a male," said Glaser. Glaser has always had to put up a fight when defending his love for the flute.

Whatever the struggle, Glaser continues to make many amazing achievements in our school and in the community, including his continued efforts to stretch the limits of flute playing, by beat boxing his flute. He even has videos of it on his Facebook page. Also, besides being in all pre-AP classes, AP World History, and practicing his flute for hours, he is also a member of the Symphonic Wind Ensemble, which is quite an accomplishment. It is surprising that Glaser even has time for his other passion: baseball.

This passion runs deep in his veins. Glaser practices close to three hours a day after school to better himself in America's pastime. Eventually, he hopes that he will make it to the Major League and continue his love for the game. He said, "I really would like to make it to that level of greatness, all I do is keep on practicing and maybe my dream will be a reality."

Often, his family members, who include his freshman sister Cara and his third grade brother Braedon, call him a "hermit" because of the amount of work he does behind the closed doors of his bedroom. These activities can range from intense homework sessions to, again, beat boxing on the flute. However, he does not seem to mind these comments and thinks himself as quite the opposite young man—with quite the social life.

Glaser comments that he has a large group of friends which can vary from the typical band members to other "interesting characters," he said with a full gleaming white grin. "To best describe my friends is to use the word 'diverse.'" This is exactly the word that many people at our school would also use to characterize Jacob Glaser.

Although Glaser seems to deviate from the norm ever so slightly, his future aspirations are all too predictable. An extremely diligent and studious person, Glaser strives for the best. Whether it be Most Valuable Player of a reputable major league baseball team or straight A's in the most challenging courses, Glaser will stop at nothing until he has reached the top.

Thoroughly confident about his lucrative future, Glaser hopes to attend either the University of Virginia or Virginia Tech. With a strong background and affinity for the math and sciences, Glaser hopes his analytical behaviors will make him an engineer. "It's my all time goal to become an engineer," said Glaser.

Even though his hopes and dreams may seem somewhat unattainable to the average person, nothing is impossible for the multi-faceted Jacob Glaser. His ability to remain one of the best flautists in the highest band in school is even more astonishing, when presented with his impeccable grades and spotless athletic record. But like any other laser, G-Laser is spot on.



Photo by Bryan Jacobs

Jacob Glaser was placed in the highest band as a sophomore; a privilege that is mostly left to upperclassmen.

West Potomac High School Presents:

SHOW YOUR
SCHOOL SPIRIT!



Spirit Week

Join the SGA for a week of fun-filled
events sure to cure the Winter Blues...

The Activities: March 16-21st

- Health Awareness Spirit Week
Monday, March 16th – Friday, March 20th
- Penny Piggy Bank Challenge
Monday, March 16th – Friday, March 20th
- PowderPuff Volleyball Finale
Monday, March 16th during FLEX in the Gym
- West Potomac Star Search
Wednesday, March 18th from 7:00-9:00pm in
the Auditorium
- West Potomac Film Festival
Thursday, March 19th from 7:00-9:00pm in
the Kogelman
- International Night
Friday, March 20th from 6:00-9:00pm
in the Cafeteria and Kogelman
- Tropicana Hot Dance
Saturday, March 21st from 9:00-11:59pm
in the Cafeteria

Spirit Days:

- 16th - "All American Day & PowderPuff" Championship
(Wear Red)
- 17th - Leadership Awareness (Wear Green)
- 18th - Broad/Classroom Awareness & Talent Show 19th - Film
Festival (Pink)
- 19th - Art Awareness & Film Festival (Orange)
- 20th - Asian Awareness & International Night (Royal
Blue)



MARIYA ILYAS
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Hussein Fahema

drip! Drop! Drop! Drop! Perhaps chemistry was not meant for him. Hussein Fahema and I closely eyed the Erlenmeyer flask as potassium hydroxide poured from the burette. We were waiting for the solution to turn pink.

As we completed our experiment, we divided up the cleaning tasks. I put the clean equipment back on the shelf and Hussein stood in the hood, whistling, while calmly getting rid of the used potassium hydroxide.

My eyes widened and I shrieked, "Hussein, what are you doing?" Immediately, Hussein turned tomato-red. He was pouring our used potassium hydroxide base into the bottle that contained hydrochloric acid! If there is one thing anyone learns in any science laboratory class, it is *never* to put any used chemical back. Ever. Hussein learned that the hard way.

AP Chemistry has always had the reputation of being a challenging course, but Fahema took it because "Mr. Relton made it really enjoyable for me."

When Fahema pulls up in the senior parking lot in his blue Oldsmobile Alero – which he has named "Prime" – it is not obvious that his favorite

team is the Redskins, or that his favorite cookie is warm chocolate chip, or that his favorite television show is "America's Funniest Home Videos." Perhaps it is even harder to guess that his favorite book of all time is the *Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger and his favorite food is the mini burgers from Ruby Tuesday.

"Sumo" is the name of his shitzu, which he adopted when the dog's previous owner died.

Aside from walking his chubby dog, Fahema works out to stay healthy. "It's a big thing of mine," he said. Like any other mischievous teenager, Fahema has also had his share of typical "fun," such as climbing to the very top of a huge tree in his front yard or shooting food from running squirrels' mouths with homemade bows and arrows.

Look closer and perhaps one will notice that Fahema is the offspring of a Catholic Peruvian and a Muslim Libyan. "It is a lot of fun having family from all over the world," he said. Although born and raised in the United States, Fahema enjoys visiting Peru and being a part of another culture.

When Moammar Gadhafi came to power in Libya, private businesses were banned and Fahema's dad had to give up his architecture firm. No longer willing to live under Gadhafi's dictatorship, Fahema's parents escaped to the United States. In the process, the young couple lost a lot of money, as they had to go through the Arab currency conversion to

dollars. His parents' "highs and lows" have influenced Fahema greatly. "They've been through a lot, but have been able to maintain a house and send kids to college."

Squint a little harder, and you will find a football player who has played for the school's team for four years. "It was a team experience I wanted to be a part of," said Fahema. When the team wins, "you feel proud of yourself and the guy standing next to you." His passion for football does not hinder his academics, though. Senior Daniel Elias, a close friend and teammate, said Fahema is "the only person I know who is the captain of the football team, and can maintain excellent grades."

"Go big or go home!" said Fahema with excitement. He enjoys competing with words. Thus, it is no surprise that he is a member of the school's debate team led by debate teacher Julian Dotson. "It's a wonderful field of competition," he said. An active member of the team, Fahema has participated in many debate tournaments, including the championships at the University of Virginia earlier in January.

Senior Courtney Walker, Fahema's policy debate partner, described working with Fahema as "really fun because we spend time with each other outside of class." Walker shared, for example, that they spent eight hours straight one weekend preparing for one of their debates.

"He [Dotson] has put me in tough, embarrassing situations where I was not the least bit prepared at all, but that's water under the bridge," said Fahema.

Fahema's modesty often goes amiss because of his excessive playful sarcasm. His friends easily attest to his honesty. "He tells it like it is and that's one of the main reasons I respect him so much – his honesty," said senior Eldar Loncarevic.

"No matter what, he's not afraid to be honest," said Walker.

When asked what his most memorable high school moment was, Fahema chewed on his Starbucks straw, stared out the window and chewed some more. After a long while, he finally spoke. "Celebrating my victory after the Patriot District Policy Debate Championship," he said, smirking. But the best part was the dinner after the tournament. "It was *the* best turkey sandwich I've eaten in my life!"

And his worst moment? Let us just say, he hates free throws.

Besides his talent on the field and in school, Fahema has been playing the violin since fourth grade. "I enjoy it," he said. "When all the sounds of the orchestra come together," it is harmonious. "You can't achieve something like that on your own." While becoming a violinist is not something Fahema plans to pursue, "it's definitely something I want to keep in my life."

Ironically, Fahema hopes to become a chemical engineer or to go into the field of pharmaceuticals. "AP Chemistry was one of my favorite classes," he said. "I like the crazy stuff that goes on in a chemistry lab."

Perhaps chemistry *was* meant for him after all.



Photo Courtesy of Hussein Fahema

MARIYA ILYAS
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Mara Perscheid

there would be bright lights and large crowds cheering endlessly. When U.S.A. is called, she would walk out proudly with the American flag wrapped around her. In 2012, that is exactly where one can expect the 5-foot, 3-inch tall Mara Perscheid to be for taekwondo at the world Olympic Games.

Inspired by older brother, Paul Perscheid, Mara Perscheid took up taekwondo at the age of four, and has been participating in the sport for 14 years. "My brother started taekwondo a year before I did and I used to watch every single class," she said. "And by the time I was old enough to start, I couldn't wait."

Perscheid also used to play baseball, but juggling the two schedules "got too complicated." She chose the sport "that... was more realistic for me." Although she mimics baseball, "[she] knew taekwondo was where [she] belonged more." "Both my parents are really supportive and they have been for the past 13 years of my life with this sport," said Perscheid. Her dad has been to every tournament and is "the designated video camera guy."

Perscheid's mom has never seen her daughter fight at a tournament "because she gets too nervous," explained Perscheid. "She can't stand seeing me get hurt; it's bad enough that she has to hear about it over the phone."

Perscheid's top honors are evidence of the hard work she puts into the sport. She is the first woman to ever receive gold medals in both the Senior National Taekwondo Championships and the U.S. Junior Olympics, all in just one year. She is a fourth-degree black belt, the highest rank possible.

Perscheid also qualified to compete in the 2008 Olympics, however, could not compete due to a foot injury. This did not stop her from preparing just as hard for the 2012 Olympics. However, making the U.S.A. four-member team in taekwondo is not an easy process. "It's really complicated," she said.

First, one must qualify for the 2012 Olympic Trials. "No one's guaranteed a spot at Olympic Trials, everyone has to earn their spot," said Perscheid. The easiest way to qualify for Trials is to win a spot on the U.S. National Team. Perscheid will be traveling to Austin, Texas in April to fight for her spot. "If I win, I'll be going to Copenhagen, Denmark in October for the 2009 World Championships, which is the biggest title you can earn in taekwondo, besides the Olympics," she said.

But it doesn't end there. After Nationals, one must declare which weight division they're going to fight in. Because the Olympic Team for taekwondo can only consist of four people at max, two guys and two girls, only two weight divisions out of eight are chosen to represent the U.S.A. Throughout the four

years leading up to the Olympics, teams compete in international tournaments to earn points.

For Perscheid, competing in taekwondo tournaments has many perks, including a chance to travel around the country – and the world – for various tournaments. "I really like traveling and getting to go to new places is exciting," she said. Earlier in February, Perscheid traveled to Las Vegas, Nevada for the U.S. Open. "That place is crazy," she said. "I didn't need to go sightseeing there, the sights came to me."

There is more to Perscheid than meets the eye. Adopted from Korea when she was only four months old, fitting in was not an issue. An honor student at her school, she achieves high grades in all her classes. And just like any other typical senior, Perscheid's favorite part of senior year is "knowing that we get to go to college." Perscheid hopes to attend University of Southern California or University California-Los Angeles to become a physical therapist.

However, the best part of the past four years was "meeting all the great friends in my life and being able to share the high school experience with them."

Senior Ellen Pedersen said of her friend, "Mara is one of the nicest, most intelligent, and most deadly people I've ever met."



Mara Perscheid standing with her coach, Jason Yoo, in front of the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, CO prior to competing in the 2008 Olympic Team Trials.

Photos Courtesy of Mara Perscheid