



West Potomac High School  
6500 Quander Road  
Alexandria, VA 22307  
Volume 20 #3

# THE WIRE

WEST POTOMAC HIGH SCHOOL

Friday, November 19, 2004

## New Traffic Plans are Slowly Being Accepted

Ansley LaBarre

Editor-in-Chief

It is seemingly faster to walk to school than bother with a car. The traffic stretching down Quander Road each morning is the source of many unexcused tardies and disgruntled drivers. The school has decided to change the traffic pattern, leaving faculty and student drivers hopeful the morning commute will no longer ruin the day.

Fairfax County Public Schools' Department of Safety and Security has observed the morning back up over the past month. They suggested, and offered to provide funding for, the following changes:

1. Leave the current gate open at all times, closing only the left half at the end of the day to prevent left-hand turns after school.
2. Paint a lane on the right side from the right entrance dedicated to buses only.
3. Create a two lane space between the Quander houses and the island of the rock, one for kiss and ride, the other for thru traffic.
4. Open the left entrance in the morning, so all parkers have the option of quicker access to the lots.
5. Place a gate at the senior parking lot entrance closest to the main road, which will be closed during the day and open after the departure of the buses.

The objective of the plan is to split up traffic for a safer and more efficient route for cars and students walking to class. The number of security guards working traffic in the morning will remain at two, as one is necessary at all times in order to direct buses and drop off cars against the parkers who are making the ominous left hand turn into the lots.

The new pattern is planned to begin on January 1, 2005, depending on the weather. The county requires a few dry days for paint jobs and sign replacements, therefore if snow is a

problem, the next deadline will be the week following Spring Break. At worst, the county would have to wait until the next school year.

No parking will be hindered by the new pattern, although teachers in Gunston will be assigned parking spaces. Principal Rima Vesilind is optimistic towards the new pattern, "it can't get any worse than it is now."

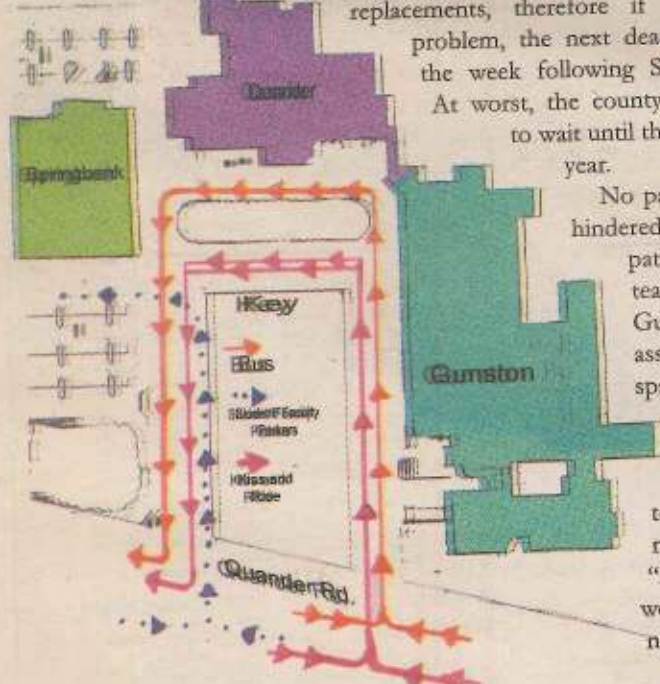


Photo Illustration by Evan Dobbs



Photo by Rick Regensburg

Freshmen Elizabeth Heath, Brooks Regensburg, and Rachel Storey, juniors Elise Bender and Amara Lewis, and seniors Laura Regensburg and Jessie Bauer, take off at the beginning of a cross country race at the Regional Championship Meet on November 4. More on Cross Country on page 6.

## Water, Water Everywhere

Fire sprinklers give West Potomac an unrequested washing

Joy Yoo

Wire Reporter

On Wednesday, November 10, 2004, many students were able to miss about thirty minutes of third block as a result of a technical mishap in the Quander Building. As students were walking out of B lunch on the way back to class, the fire alarm went off. Thinking that it was just a usual drill, many students were looking for a quick get-away from class. Surprisingly, students were left outside for almost twenty-five minutes.

After students were allowed in the building, there was even more hold-up. Many Quander hallways were blocked off because of flooding; so, there was so much congestion, which made teachers and students become really irritated. Spanish teacher Latitia Silverberg said, "At home and at work, there are accidents. Things break and you have to get them repaired. Those are just some of



Photo by Kaley Jensen

Principal Vesilind looks in disbelief as teachers scramble to clean up in the English Workroom after water from the second floor leaked to the first floor.

the difficulties of daily life."

Senior Jessie Stage said, "The flooding came as a big surprise, and as an inconvenience. Not only did the fire alarm disrupted classes in Quander, but

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# OPINIONS

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## Which Wide Receiver?

Dear Editor,

I saw an article on best wide receivers of the NFL in the last edition of *The Wire*, and while I agree with you that Terrell Owens is a great wide receiver I think he's a huge jerk with a big mouth. He's so full of himself, his touchdown celebrations are over the top and he mocks other players just to get attention. I'm sure some people said he was just having fun when he made fun of the Ray Lewis dance on Sunday's game against the Ravens, but now he's personally attacking Lewis by bringing up the fact that he was charged (and acquitted) for double murder when it was completely off topic and at the wrong time. This isn't the first time something like this has happened either, before the season began Owens accused his former QB Jeff Garcia of being homosexual. Besides the fact that Garcia has denied it, who cares if he is homosexual? He is a great quarterback and if he had chosen not to throw the ball to Owens, Owens wouldn't be the superstar he is now. Owens' behavior is completely inappropriate and I don't think you should print any more articles about how good he is because that'll give him the attention he desperately craves.

Kenneth Llewellyn; Freshman

## Celebrate Hispanic Heritage

Dear Editor,

Hispanic Heritage Month celebrates the Latino contribution to our great nation and allows us to see that cultural diversity has made America strong throughout history.

From the Revolutionary War to the Iraq War, Hispanics have proudly and bravely served in the Armed Forces. As a matter of fact, in proportion to the number who served, Hispanics constitute the largest number of Congressional Medal of Honor recipients.

When the colonies rebelled against England, General Bernardo de Galvez of Louisiana sent money, rifles, and other supplies to George Washington. Many other Hispanics raised collections to aid in the fight for independence.

When gold was discovered in California, prospectors knew what they had, but had no idea how to extract it from the ground, so they borrowed mining techniques from the Hispanics who had been mining in Mexico and South America.

Hispanics have also contributed much to the fields of medicine and science. In 1959, Dr. Severo Ochoa won the Nobel Prize in Medicine for his discovery of RNA (ribonucleic acid).

Hispanics have also graced the stage and silver screen for generations. Desi Arnaz, Rita Hayworth, Fernando Lamas, Anthony Quinn, Rita Moreno (the only artist to have won an Oscar, Emmy, Tony, and Grammy), Raquel Welch, Martin Sheen, Charlie Sheen, Emilio Estevez, Andy Garcia, Edward James Olmos, Cameron Diaz, and George Lopez are but a few of the many Hispanics in the entertainment industry.

The sports world has its share of Hispanics as well. Chi Chi Rodriguez, and Nancy Lopez in golf; Manny Fernandez, Jim Plunkett, and Tony Gonzalez in the NFL; Ruben Najera in the NBA; and Major League Baseball has too many to name.

There are currently over 5000 Hispanic elected officials in the U.S. One of the most influential Hispanic figures was never elected to office - Cesar Chavez (1927-1993). He founded the United Farm Workers Union and led the fight to gain recognition for workers who harvest this nation's produce.

Hispanics have now become the majority minority with many of us still speaking Spanish at least half of the time. To envision America without Hispanics is to imagine a country without much of its folklore, culture, and many of its achievements.

Fernando Frescas

### A Note to the Readers From the Opinions Editor:

I am disappointed. You have few opportunities to legitimately and vocally express yourself. Yet, you neglect your only soapbox. Why not make use of this Opinions section? Give vent to your frustrations or give voice to your praise. Have a complaint about the way the school is being run? Write to *The Wire*. It's the first step toward gaining broader support and effecting real change here in the school. Perhaps you've noticed a particular student, teacher, or team which has far and above exceeded the status quo. Give such a person or group of people the attention and admiration they deserve. It's simple. Type up your letter. Make it around 200-250 words, and drop it by room 418 in Upper Quander. Let your voice finally be heard and respected.

# Rants and Raves

A Rave to the Varsity Football Team for pulling out a big win against Lake Braddock in the final game of the season.

A Rant for the sprinkler malfunction on Wednesday the 10th. It's good to know the system is in tip-top shape in case of a fire.

A Rave for the two-and-a-half hour delay on the 11th. What sweet, sweet slumber it was.



A Rant for the enormous aggravating traffic on Tuesday morning we had Touchback. Nothing like ensuring that students are in school on time to learn.



A Rave for the Drama Department for putting out a great updated version of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*. It's not easy to put off changes to the works of the Bard.

## Guarded Optimism for Youth Voters

Young people across the country have finally spoken out. The numbers are in and it is official: voter turnout on November 2 represented the highest proportion of the population in decades, including a record number of young voters. Statistics show overall participation among eligible voters age eighteen to twenty-nine at a rate of over fifty-one percent, a nine-and-a-half percent increase from the 2000 election. This amounts to nearly 21 million voters from the youngest age bracket, a number previously unheard-of from a generation often perceived as apathetic at best.

**It may not even be too much to hope that non-voters who saw how close the election was this year will be more motivated to make themselves heard the next time around.**

This drastic increase, due in large part to registration drives from countless non-profit organizations, is indicative of a greater trend among the voting population. Overall voter turnout this year accounted for nearly sixty percent of the eligible population, a proportion not seen since the 1968 election. Therefore, the percentage of voters from

the youth age bracket has not increased, remaining steady at about seventeen percent of the electorate.

Because of this, some critics feel the youth vote was still under-represented, as the increase still did not affect the percentage of the overall vote. Regrettable as this is, however, the drastic increase in voter turnout among this age bracket proves the youth of America are becoming less apathetic about their leadership. Perhaps it takes a hotly contested election like this one to stir up the opinions of young voters. However, this seems to be a good indication of things to come. Hopefully, the new voters this year will come to appreciate the necessity of choosing a good leader. It may not even be too much to hope that non-voters who saw how close the election was this year will be more motivated to make themselves heard the next time around.

From a pessimistic viewpoint, it seems history will likely repeat itself, and youth voters will lose interest in the political process as nationwide partisanship decreases and the elections become less issue-driven. Without a "hot topic" to debate, apathy is wont to reappear throughout the nation, and the youth vote will once more be written off as unlikely to make a difference. For now, however, it appears we have the attention of those in charge and, hopefully, they will give the youth vote the recognition it deserves.

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**THE WEST POTOMAC WIRE**

Friday, November 1  
Volume # 20 Issue

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## Giving Up What He's Earned?

Drew Macklin

Opinions Editor

Well, I guess I can gloat now. A full-on, no holds barred "I-told-you-so" would seem perfectly acceptable. After all, Election Day came, held our rapt attention, and departed into the annals of history, leaving one very happy Opinions Editor behind. My verbose, sometimes heated, rhetoric seems to have been justified in the end. America traveled to the polls in record numbers, and, leaving little doubt as to their sentiments, re-elected George W. Bush to a second presidential term. It seems when all is said and done, the opinions I present so frequently on these pages are shared by a majority of Americans.

Still, although I know the same courtesy would not be given to me by most of my political counterparts, I do not deign to revel in the victory of November 2. Instead, I choose to take it as a matter of fact. I know focusing on the events of the election campaign that captured America's attention for almost eight months will do little for the next four years, and constantly reminding Democrats of their further fall from favor will not bridge the chasm that lies between the two parties right now.

I believe that chasm should be an integral part of every post-election analysis. The strident and angry barbs exchanged by both candidates reflected so much more than just the titles of two different political parties. They helped reveal even more the basic, ideological differences hiding in America today.

As November wears on and Election Day fades from memory, the talking heads on television will feast on the subject of reconciliation. They will ponder and argue, "Will President Bush reach across the aisle and work once more with Democrats? Will the Democratic Party make simultaneous concessions to guarantee the President's hand will find another to shake? Most importantly, will everyone kiss and make up?" While they consider the eternal weight of such queries, I will have made up my mind already. Even now, I know that to ask President Bush to give in and drop some of the issues nearest and dearest to his heart is to ask him to forsake the positions he has had to defend from all sides for over eight months.

It does a giant disservice to an issue if we expect someone to feel strongly about it, and then expect him to turn around and give up the conviction he has so jealously maintained. Doing such a thing implies we never really believed in the candidate's sincerity in the first place, and therefore we assume his façade will be easy to drop. But what if such passion for an issue is not driven by poll numbers? What if conviction stems from a deep-set belief in the absolute truth behind an issue? Should Americans still expect the issue to be dropped? I say, no.

This is the situation with President Bush. His support for tax cuts, a constitutional amendment defending heterosexual marriage, and an unborn child's right to life are based in a genuine belief that those

positions are right. For this reason, no one should be surprised if Bush takes steps toward furthering those issues. It's not as if it will be a surprise Bush advocates tax cuts — he has advocated them from his very entrance into the national spotlight.

Furthermore, I contend the clamor for concessions by Bush was birthed by sore



Photo By Houston Murphy

losers who lost an election they badly wanted to win and who are now fighting tooth and nail to ensure they are not left behind as America moves forward with Bush's plans. When will they wake up and smell the strong, aromatic coffee of reality? President Bush won decisively on November 2. With an increased majority in the House and the Senate, and a margin of almost four million between himself and Kerry, he has every right in the world to follow through on his campaign promises. America has spoken, and all the whining in the world won't make them change their mind.

## The LaBarrometer

Measuring the Pressures of Daily Life



Photo By Ken Wagner

### Stuck on the Sidelines

Ansley LaBarre

Editor-in-Chief

"Why me?"

I have no doubt every teenager has, at some point, screamed these words during their adolescence. However, the lack of such a universal realization will only leave one wallowing in self pity instead of connecting to other miserable teens around them.

Each year of my high school career, I have hated the arrival of the winter sports season. I admit, I have been consumed by my own misfortunes, as my hopes of ever being a participant on the swim team were shattered before I reached the age of fourteen.

I was born a fish, but also born with a disorder in my ligaments. The years I spent swimming the butterfly paid off with amazing race times and a bad back. Finally the piercing pain was intolerable, and the doctor's prescription was no more swimming.

What? Swimming had been my life! I was not ready to give up grueling practices and 5 a.m. Saturday swim meets; I wanted to bring my glory of being the best at something into my high school career. So naturally, I curled up into a little ball and drowned myself in the misery of a failed dream.

When my freshman winter sports season rolled around, I was bitter, especially towards my friends who were members on the team. However unjust, the only thing I saw was God's ridiculing doom to deliver me the worst life possible. I could not attend a school meet without being the most resentful individual present, fighting back tears.

Luckily, I woke up. Observing my fellow students, there are plenty of runners whose knees have gone bad, or

**The determination you have to overcome such challenges really proves who you are as an individual.**

even individuals who have no choice but to work a job instead of participating in athletics. I was not the only one who had to sacrifice my passions for a greater good. Instead of moping, I decided to use my energy to improve upon other things. In fact, had I still been swimming year-round, I might not be writing for this newspaper.

My advice to students is this: instead of feeding the black cloud of self pity, ask, "why not me?" You are not the only one facing challenges, look around. The determination you have to overcome such challenges really proves who you are as an individual. I'll see you at the next swim meet.

## Senior Slump in School Spirit

Ashlee Newcomb

Style Editor

Senior year. A milestone for many high school students. The day of reckoning is soon to come. Freedom is close at hand. The fat lady will soon sing! One would suppose with such a significant event as graduation around the corner, this school's senior class would be more hype for this school year than any other. However, that would be too easily said.

I have preached before about the lack of school spirit that exists in this school. However, the senior class blatantly lacks any amount of zeal. It's quite pathetic when the junior class out cheers the senior class at the Homecoming pep rally, where the seniors are traditionally higher-spirited than the other classes. It may sound cheesy to state that we were "outcheered," but honestly, seniors you must admit you felt somewhat feeble after the pep rally was over. Nonetheless, I must admit I did find it humorous that while the junior class was yelling "0-6," the senior class ended their

chant with an explicit two word phrase; let's put it this way, it rhymes with six.

I don't find it hypocritical to bash the senior class, because I, myself, am a member. Individually, there are a great number of school-spirited seniors that have maintained their fervidness over the past three years. As mine has grown,

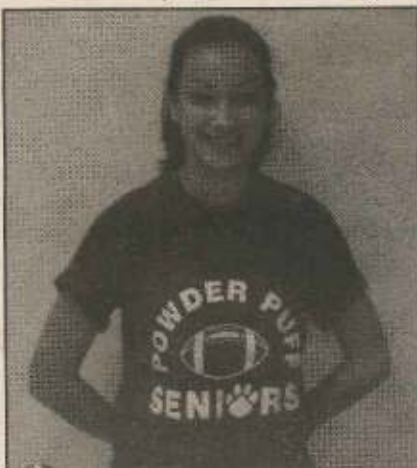


Photo By Houston Murphy

others have depleted.

The senior class is historically known as the supreme class. Full of excitement, seniors are usually ready to pursue their pranks and beat the juniors at anything put in front of them. However, the class of 2005 just doesn't seem to care.

Whether it is the 1-9 varsity football team record (I will back up the team by saying their game against Lake

Braddock was by far their best-played game all season) or the build-up of administration, the school spirit within our class is seriously lacking.

My theory about our nonexistent school pride is the "Class of '05 Curse." Every year of our high school career has seemed to possess some type of mishap. Freshman year was September 11<sup>th</sup> and the DJ never showing up for our Homecoming. Sophomore year withheld the "Sniper Attacks." Our junior year consisted of the tragic death of Schuyler Jones and Hurricane Isabel. Now we are at our senior year, which began with the two losses to the juniors during Homecoming Week (both the Powder-puff game and the floats.)

Many will find this as an excuse to say that our class, according to many juniors, "sucks." But once you take the time to think about it, is it really our senior class' fault that we lack school spirit? Or are the major factors that help build up that school spirit deficient themselves?

Over the past years, honestly, the dances such as Homecoming and Prom have not been up to the movie levels. As the dances have improved over the years, there still remains a kind of hesitation about going to

these events. Many students attend just to see what others are wearing, dance to one song, and burn up their curfew hours wandering Waynewood.

Administration is always going to be a big factor in whether, we, as students, care about the school. To be honest, when you have a woman poking you with her walkie-talkie telling you your stomach is showing, the whole 1/4 inch of it, my pride for the school goes somewhat south.

I have always looked forward to my senior year, including being able to leave class five minutes earlier than the other classes (which obviously is not happening) pulling the best senior pranks (which the junior class is actually doing) and proving to the rest of the school that we definitely "rule the school," which I will leave room for comment about. It honestly is difficult to maintain school pride for an institution that took away all of our privileges right before we were able to obtain them.

However, when it all comes down to it, I think of one little thing. Though the juniors think they rule the school, I figure we have eight months left, they have one year and eight months left. "Oh, five!"



# Stem Cells: Saving Lives or Destroying Them?

## A Necessary Tool of Science

**Ansley LaBarre**

*Editor-in-Chief*

On thousands of driver's licenses, glowing red hearts boast "organ donor." Individuals believe they are contributing to the benefit of society by donating working parts they can no longer use after their death. Few arguments are made that this issue is immoral, as most of us are avid supporters of recycling.

Stem cell research is partially constituted from this same idea of recycling, instead with an unwanted and aborted fetus. The fact that the tissue is derived from an unborn human child is the only reason opponents have in objecting to such beneficial research. Protesters do not understand the fetus had already been aborted and passed several test requirements, including the permission of the parents. Not using the healthy tissue would simple be like throwing it in the garbage.

Opponents also disagree with the idea of "test tube babies." During this process, donor reproductive cells are taken from adults, combined, and grown to the first stage of development within a laboratory. After DNA has developed enough to be studied, growth is stopped and the tissue is used for research. Those who find it unethical say it is unjust to create a life just to destroy it. If this is the case, then they should not so readily be inhaling hamburgers on a daily basis, as most of the meat we consume comes from farms where livestock is specifically bred and raised to be sent to the slaughter house.

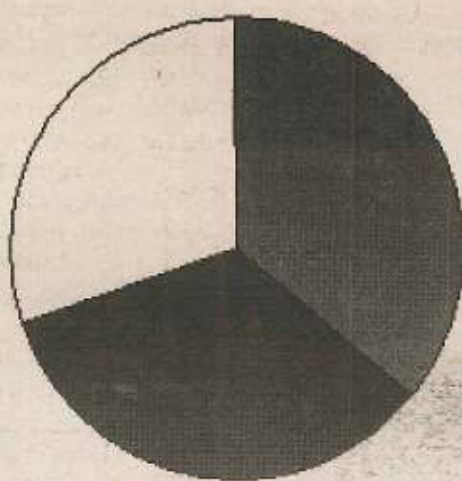
The "life" created with a stem cell is not simply destroyed either. Tissue

replacement with these cells has proven to aid patients suffering from incurable diseases, as stem cells can serve to function as many different types of cells, and continue to reproduce as long as their hosts are still alive. This means brain diseases like Parkinson's and Alzheimer's, which have no cure, can now be partially treated. While improving the condition of patients, research conducted also allows doctors to gain further knowledge on the development and possible prevention or cures of such diseases. It seems so much more unethical to me to stop research that could help millions of sufferers.

Advances in research of cancer, heart disease, and diabetes, are among the many which have come about from stem cell research. For anyone who has lost a loved one to such a dominating and uncontrollable disease, it seems more than reasonable to grow a couple of unwanted cells in order to save an already fully developed and progressing life. I'd much rather save the life of a struggling 25 year old than try to promote the rights of some abandoned cell who never stood a chance.



Photo by Kim Wagner



Do you feel that Stem Cell Tissue should be used to aid victims of untreatable diseases?

(Out of 134 students)

■ Yes - 35.8 %

■ No - 33.5 %

□ Undecided - 30.5 %

**Hana Beckerle**

*Editor-in-Chief*

Imagine a human being in a test tube. Now imagine scientists removing this human being from the test tube and pulling it apart in the name of research.

Embryonic stem cell research is an example of an issue of morals that has been politicized. It's too bad that many people can't see issues such as this one in terms of right and wrong anymore. It is true that embryonic stem cell research has the potential to discover cures for many terminal diseases. However, we must consider the costs of this research.

There are many myths surrounding this issue, and many people are not aware of the actual facts behind the rhetoric. Stem cells are cells in living things from which other types of cells can develop. One misconception is that stem cells come from aborted fetuses. Although stem cells may be obtained from a human body in almost any stage, the kind that are the issue here do not come from fetuses. Fetuses and embryos, although both stages of human life, are different.

The thing that is special about embryonic stem cells is their ability to develop into almost any kind of cell in the body. Adult stem cells have not shown this ability in research so far, but this does not mean that they cannot be used for research purposes. Adult stem cells can regenerate and grow new cells, and may potentially provide answers to scientists' questions about human life, without destroying embryos.

Scientists create fertilized eggs (the embryos) through methods such as cloning, artificial insemination, and genetic manipulation, and then split them apart to extract the stem cells. Here we have a great irony. These scientists produce a life, only to destroy it in the name of enhancing life for others. This to me seems to be a remarkable injustice and a cruel practice.

Besides the scientific side of embryonic stem cell research, there is the political side. Some politicians and scientists would like to have us believe that within this practice, the answer to curing many terminal diseases lies just around the corner. However, there is little evidence

of this so far. It is true that this type of research is promising, but it does a great disservice to patients with diseases such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's to have them believe that a miracle cure will be found any day now through embryonic stem cell research.

Another misconception is that President Bush has banned this type of research. Bush did not ban embryonic stem cell research. In fact, he was the first president to ever provide funding for it, although he set limits on the practice to prevent more lives from being ended in their early stages while the ethical aspects were being explored. There are already over 60 lines of stem cells that have already been extracted from laboratories today, and these are legal for research.

I have heard the argument that an embryo is not a human being and therefore is acceptable to use for research. While it is true that an embryo may lack the features of life that the average person might look for, the fact remains that it is an

early stage in every single human life. Just because these embryos exist in a test tube does not mean that they do not have the potential to become human beings.

Many also point out the fact that most of these embryos are produced using unused eggs that women have placed in fertility clinics. If we didn't use them, it would be a waste, right? However, I think that the majority of people would rather see eggs go unused than see life be ended prematurely.

It is easy in this day and age to feel that morals are a little bit old fashioned. It is not always easy to do the right thing, and the issue of embryonic stem cell research is a difficult one. While this practice may eventually lead to important discoveries, it is more important for us to cultivate and preserve a respect for human life at all of its stages.



## Questions for Thought

If you try to fail, and succeed, which have you done?

Why don't fortune tellers win the lottery?

If Maria from "The Sound of Music" had to give away all of her possessions before entering the convent, why did she have a guitar?





# Sarah's Scholastic Section

**Sarah Raser**  
Wire Reporter

**George Mason University:** Only minutes from this school, George Mason is a great university for those who can't bear to leave home. Mason offers a great amount of academic programs in a culturally diverse atmosphere. Its student population comes from a wide range of different countries from around the globe.

Application Deadline: Fall freshman- January 15<sup>th</sup>

Tuition: In state- \$5,112

Room and board: \$5,600

Enrollment: 16,579

Average SAT: 1108

Location: Fairfax



**Old Dominion University:** Founded as a division of William and Mary, ODU has evolved to one of the 101 universities with Carnegie/Doctoral Research-Extensive distinction. Located on a seaport, its campus is a beautiful array of new and old buildings.

Application Deadline: Fall freshman- January 15<sup>th</sup>

Tuition: In state- \$5,100

Room and board: \$5,802

Enrollment: 13,229

Average SAT: 1048

Location: Norfolk



**Howard University:** Howard has the reputation of being a mainly African American college and thrives on a sense of community and collaboration within the school. It is located in the heart of D.C. and is for a person who loves the city.

Application Deadline: Fall freshman- January 15<sup>th</sup>

Tuition: In state- \$10,130

Room and board: \$5,570

Enrollment: 6,076

Average SAT: 1081

Location: Washington D.C.



**Longwood University:** Longwood's main goal is to create an "experience that shapes your life and helps you become what you want to be." The campus may be in the middle of nowhere, Farmville, but is surrounded by a tight knit community and small towns.

Application Deadline: Fall freshman- January 15<sup>th</sup>

Tuition: In state- \$3,320

Room and board: \$5,424

Enrollment: 3,653

Average SAT: 1085

Location: Farmville



**Virginia Commonwealth University:** VCU has academic programs that help create a better knowledge for their students about what they want to be in life. It is known for its outstanding programs in the arts and in medicine, and a brand new arts facility was recently constructed. The diversity around the campus makes anyone who attends feel right at home.

Application Deadline: Fall freshman- January 15<sup>th</sup>

Tuition: In state-

Room and board:

Enrollment: 16,504

Average SAT: 1066

Location: Richmond



**University of Richmond:** The small size of UR helps make a comfortable learning environment for its students. The social life revolves around the Greek system and activities are often located within the city of Richmond.

Application Deadline: Fall freshman- January 15<sup>th</sup>

Tuition: In state- \$33,510

Room and board: \$7,000

Enrollment: 2,861

Average SAT: N/A

Location: Richmond



# Check Yourself Before You Wreck Yourself

**Mark Peterman**  
Wire Reporter

There are many reasons why a job is not given to someone, and employers rarely explain themselves when they are feeling particularly selective. In some cases, they deny the job to a candidate because of a background check. Many people complain because they haven't broken any laws in

a sheet brimming with crimes and convictions committed by someone else.

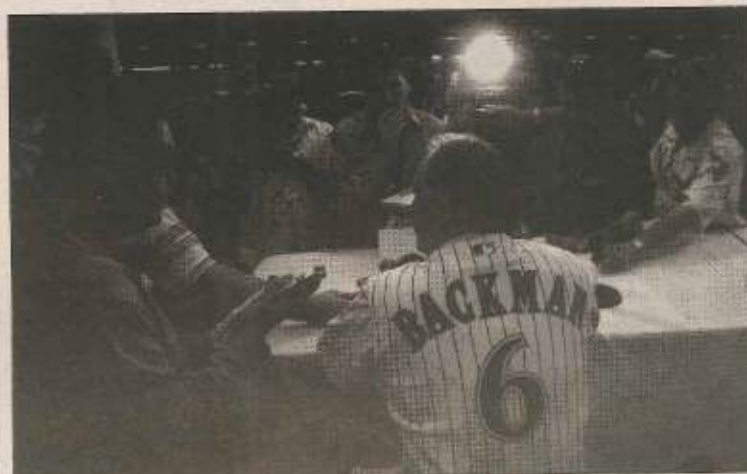
Some places are stricter than others when it comes to background checks, though. Medical schools in particular are especially harsh on what they allow on their students records. For years, these institutions have conducted checks on all incoming students and faculty. Of the 201 applicants who reported felony convictions in 2003, 199 were not admitted.

There are many ways for checking backgrounds used by medical schools. Some of them only check first-year students and staff, while others force them to submit to a check at the start of every school year. Then again, there are many schools that do not check their students' backgrounds at all, but a recent murder-suicide case by a student at the University of Arkansas has brought this issue to the forefront.

There are a lot of unhappy students who are looking to be doctors or nurses. Sophomore Franklin Pagan wants to go to Johns Hopkins to study medicine, but he said, "I'm uncomfortable with some total stranger looking through my records. I don't have anything to hide, but I don't appreciate them going through my business like that."

Senior Cyndy Ellis is also a prospective nurse and says, "The background checks are just something you have to deal with to get what you want."

So how often do people slip by the background checks? Not often, because the checks are very thorough, although it can happen on occasion. These mistakes are made because the applicant lied on their transcripts, and the school didn't double check the information given to them. That is just another example of how background checks are essential.



Wally Backman, recently hired as manager of the Arizona Diamondbacks, is fired after only four days on the job because the D-backs did not perform a background check before hiring him. They discovered information from his past that didn't sit well with team officials.

a while. What they don't understand is, no matter if it was yesterday or two years ago, these strict job requirements can still find it and use it to their advantage.

Sometimes there have been no unlawful transgressions worth a mention and the job could still be just out of reach. This is because the company probably made a mistake of their own. All they have to do is get a single digit wrong in your social security number, or confuse the names of two separate candidates for the same job, and they could pull up

# Wrong Place, Wrong Time

**Sarah Raser**  
Wire Reporter

On Thursday, November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2004, junior Queen Suyat's had the film in her camera confiscated by the administration. The film contained various pictures for an assignment for her yearbook class.

Suyat was assigned to take pictures of the administrators working in various places in the school. While completing this assignment, she allegedly took a picture of a fight between a student, the student's mom, and a security guard. She said she didn't take any pictures of the fight, but still had her film taken away.

The fight happened during the morning traffic time when a student was being dropped off by her mother and sister, but parked

in the wrong area. An administrator approached the vehicle to tell them to move. The woman attempted to move, but he was standing in front the car



Queen Suyat is waiting her confiscated film to be returned by the administration.

her film. Her roll wasn't completely finished so she had to waste the rest of the film in an effort not to ruin it. Later on in the day she was taken out of class yet again, and was questioned about the happenings of that morning. Suyat says it was a hassle to be taken out of class, but she knows that she was just helping out the school. "It's nice to help people and you got to

do what you got to do, even if it means helping on your own time," says Suyat.

The administrator said she will be getting the film back soon, but she has yet to get it back. During her next yearbook class she told what had happened to her teacher, Mrs. Mobley, and was told to report all of her questions to her. The administrators were unable to comment on the current investigation.

# Kudos To

The Volleyball Team for having a tremendous season. Especially to Jean Coder the head volleyball coach, who has been selected by her peers as the Patriot District Volleyball Coach of the Year.

Eric Henderson, Social Studies Teacher, was named the Virginia recipient of the James Madison Fellowship for 2004 for the graduate study of American History. 54 Teachers, one from each state, DC, PR & other territories were selected to receive the fellowships.

Ms. Watts for her many years of service here at West Potomac. You will be missed.

The anonymous donor that paid for the ESOL field trip to the National Museum of the American Indian.



## A Surge of Plastic Surgery

Joy Yoo

Wire Reporter

As of October 11, 2004, teenagers make up 4% of the plastic surgery market in the U.S. In specific numbers, that is 346,000 cosmetic surgeries per year. That stat may not seem like a lot; however, this number is continuously increasing.

Breast implants, liposuction, rhinoplasty (nose job), and otoplasty (procedure that reshapes ears) are the most common types of plastic surgery among teenagers. In 2003, 43,000 rhinoplasties were performed. Also, from 2002 to 2003, according to the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ASAPS), the number of girls eighteen and younger getting breast implants tripled, from 8,732 to 11,326.

Plastic surgery is not only a big factor for American

All of these factors should be taken into consideration when one decides whether or not to go through plastic surgery.

It is indisputable that high school and the teenage years carry a lot of emphasis on one's physical experience. As much as people say, "But it's the inside that counts," physical characteristics play a big role in a teenager's perspective of others as well as themselves. Many people believe that plastic surgery is a process by which teenagers gain a lot of self-esteem which they lacked before the surgery. Senior Moira Holt believes, "Plastic surgery can be very beneficial if someone has a real problem with the way they look. But, when people want to change everything about themselves, it is tacky and can look really bad." A student who attends Robinson High School got plastic surgery the summer before her senior year. She had always wanted to get plastic

surgery ever since she was young because people always made fun of her big nose. In addition, she had a medical condition called Deviated Septum, which complicates the breathing process. Her surgery was not for others' approval but for herself. She tells others who are considering plastic surgery, "I don't think that you should care what other people think, and that shouldn't be the only reason you are getting it."

There are also those who think that plastic surgery is a superficial method by which teenagers and many others create a "fake" appearance. For example, senior Nicole Andrade openly disagrees with it. "I think it is absolutely superficial. If someone really has low self-esteem and wants to change,

then, they should work hard to better their lifestyle," said Andrade.

People who disagree with plastic surgery condemn the new popular reality TV shows such as "Swan" and "Extreme Makeover." They believe these shows motivate teenagers to be unsatisfied with their bodies and to solve their "problem" with plastic surgery. Another criticism of teenagers' plastic surgery is that it encourages behavior such as passing judgment on one's physical appearance. In other words, it dissuades them to get to know what's on the "inside" of others. Psychologist Kearney-Cooke said, "When you're a teenage girl, there's this whole myth of transformation that's very powerful...that cosmetic surgery can transform your looks and your life."

Many would agree with senior Jessie Stage, who said, "Plastic surgery has positive and negative aspects to it. In some ways, a person can overcome tremendous self-esteem issues but abusing the use of plastic surgery can have horrible consequences. I think altering your physical self is fine as long as it brings out your true self"

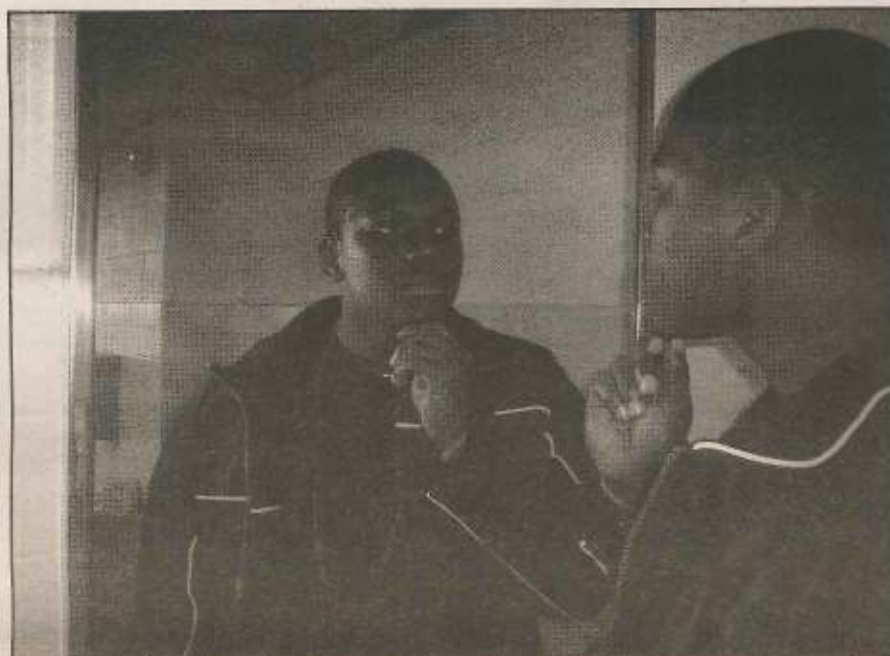


Photo by Houston Murphy

Senior Anthony Bennet has contemplated cosmetic surgery. High school is a time when many teenagers take their looks very seriously.

teenagers; other countries around the world are finding its youth questioning their beauty and getting plastic surgeries to solve the problem. In Asian countries, the younger generations are using cosmetic surgeries to have more "American" eyes. This procedure is called blepharoplasty, a procedure where the patient's eyelids are flipped up so the eyelashes are more visible and fat from other body parts are transferred to their eyelids to create a more western look. This procedure has become so common in Asian countries that many can just walk into an office at the local mall and get the surgery done within twenty minutes.

Medically speaking, teenagers are very unaware of the risks that come along with plastic surgery. Permanent scarring and the possibility of rupture are only two items on the long list of possible consequences. Most would agree that teenagers who are going into plastic surgery should be fully informed on these potential dangers. Financial burdens also come along with plastic surgeries. The initial surgery, no matter what kind, is usually no cheaper than \$2,000. Then there is the possibility of necessary surgery if any problems occur.

## NEWS BRIEF



Standing: Coaches Marie Knight and Don Bedykneeling. Kneeling left to right: Sam Stevens, Kelly Carmichael, Dan John, Drew Markin, Nick Jachowski, Frank Devier, Dan Jachowski, Tyler Gray.

Adele Hampton

Business Manager

### Cross Country

The boys Varsity cross country team placed second at the state's meet on Saturday, November 13, 2004. Going into the race the team was ranked tenth in the state. The meet was held at Great Meadow in The Plains, Virginia. The team came behind Tomas Jefferson High School, and ahead of the number one team in the state. The number one runner for our school was Nick Jachowski followed by Sam Stevens, who cut off his eight inch rat tail because the team placed in the top three. It was a great close to an amazing season.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

November 22

- Fall Play Strike (2:30 pm-6:30 pm)
- Fall Sports Awards Night in Cafeteria (6:30 pm-10 pm)

November 23

- NHS Inductions in Auditorium (7 pm-8:30 pm)

November 24

- Awards Ceremony in Auditorium (9 am-11 am)

November 25

- THANKSGIVING!! ☺

November 26

- HOLIDAY

November 29

- Junior Class Dinner in Cafeteria (6pm-9:30pm)

November 30

- Teacher Cadet Internship @ Hollin Meadows (9am-10:40am)
- WABC Rep/Coaches Pizza Dinner in Cafeteria (6pm-7pm)

December 1

- Academy Counselor Open House in Room 50 (9:30am-11am)

December 2

- Piano/Guitar Concert in Kogelman Theatre

December 3

- Colonial Singers to Mt. Vernon Estate (6pm-9pm)

December 4

- Colonial Singers to Mt. Vernon Estate (6pm-9pm)
- SAT Test in Cafeteria and Quander classroom (7:30am-2pm)

December 6

- Interims distributed in 7<sup>th</sup> Period Classes
- One-Act Play Auditions (2:30pm-6:30pm)

December 7

- SAC Students to Fairfax HS (10am-2:05pm)
- Holiday Spotlight in Auditorium (12am-11:30pm)
- One-Act Play Auditions (2:30pm-6:30pm)

December 8

- Forensics Tournament @ Chantilly (3pm-7:30pm)
- Math Team Competition in Room 206 (2:15pm-3:45pm)

December 9

- CPP Parents Pot Luck in Cafeteria (5:30pm-8:30pm)
- Band Concert in Auditorium (7:30pm-10pm)

December 11

- ACT Test in Cafeteria plus Quander Classroom (7:30am-2pm)

December 16

- Choral/Orchestra Messiah Concert in Auditorium (7:30pm-10:30pm)

December 23

- Winter Break Starts

Flooding, from page 1

activities like NHS were cancelled as well."

Students and teachers in the other buildings held opinions. Senior Ramy ZamZam ranted, "It sucks because I had A lunch, and the fire alarm didn't even go off in Gunston. So, I had so much extra time in class. It was fun."

Although many students were happy to have missed school, there were still many students who are worried. Junior Leigh Rossi stated, "I was glad that we stayed in class for so long, but it's also a little worrisome that our sprinklers don't work."

The system malfunction also frightened junior Beth C. who said, "I was glad that we got out of class but it was annoying that nobody knew what happened. I hope the system so something worse won't happen in the future. Overall, the water damage was an inconvenience for students and teachers."



# A Few Good Wolverines

Jeff Snyder

News Editor

Teachers deal with loud students in their face all the time with incredible poise. It makes you wonder how they are so good at it. But it probably never occurred to you that they've already experienced it for years before here at this school from the worst yet, drill instructors.

On November 11, 2004 the West Potomac JROTC program assembled in the main gym for a Muster Formation. The Battalion's Muster Formation is a meeting of all the JROTC cadets in the school for a specific purpose, such as an award ceremony or guest speaker. On that Thursday morning, the four platoons consisting of approximately three dozen cadets each gathered to celebrate Veterans' Day and prepare for their Formal Command inspection on February 16. A Formal Command inspection is an assessment every three years by U.S. Army officials that inspects each cadet in their muster formation and critiques their appearance and discipline. The formation is then given a grade; the highest credit possible is called "Honor Unit with Distinction Status" which has

each Veterans' Day. The fifth period platoon broke into smaller squads that each covered three or four teachers. The teachers were presented with a brief history of Veteran's Day, an anonymous poem entitled "In Memory of Departed Comrades," a lapel pin with "Veteran" on it, a personalized certificate, and concluded with a salute. During the last thirty minutes of the day,

as well as his patriotism. His seventeen years in the Army helped him convey a sense of urgency in being a responsible individual that he tries to install in his students everyday.

Other departments at this school also hold America's finest. Criminal Justice teacher Ron Giovannucci joined the Army to build structure in his life. He achieved the rank of Sergeant in the 82<sup>nd</sup> Engineer Brigade. Giovannucci was also a squad leader and demolition/mine warfare specialist. He then instructed Officer Candidates at Fort Belvoir. "I enjoyed working with



JROTC companies Alpha and Bravo both split into their respected platoons for Muster Formation and stand in silence for a half hour inspection.

Photo by Jeff Snyder

the squads dispersed amongst the school to visit fifteen West Potomac Veterans.

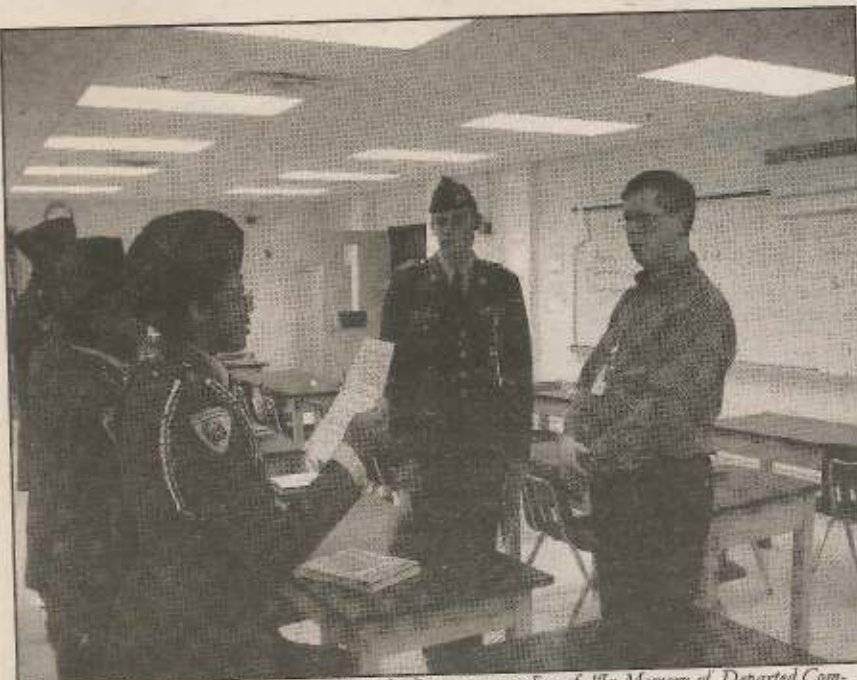
The JROTC instructors are obviously military veterans. These instructors have chosen to transfer their military knowledge to students after their careers. Andrew Lang was in the Army and achieved the rank of First Sergeant. He spent 24 years in the

the Vietnamese refugees. Being in a third world country makes you appreciate the United States," said Giovannucci. Special Education Teacher Bristol Martin served in the Virginia Army National Guard. History teacher Bill Rhatigan, security officer Louis Dorfman, mathematics teacher Bill Dobson, and ESOL teacher Victor Mbodouma also served in the Army.

Chemistry and Physics teacher Stephen Rezendes served in the Navy as a lieutenant on the USS Joseph Strauss DDG-16. He spent four years as a Gunnery Officer. Beyond the traditional benefits of learning discipline and organization in the military, Rezendes met his wife and lived in Hawaii. "I've got stories but I like using them every year with

my classes. If they got out I'd have to make up new ones," said Rezendes.

Geosystems and science teacher Dan Alexander served in the Marine Corps and last year returned from a tour in Iraq. English teacher Robert Boyd also served in Marine Corps. Pulley Center instructor Julie Baxter served in World War II and Foreign Language teacher Brett Simonson is also a veteran.



Physics and Chemistry teacher Stephen Rezendes listens to a reading of "In Memory of Departed Comrades" by an anonymous poet. "This year was one of the better dedications," said Rezendes.

been achieved by this school the past three judgments in 1996, 1999, and 2002.

"There are people in this building that aren't on holiday that should be. We need to honor them," said Major Russell Easter to the entire battalion after their practice inspection. JROTC instructors Easter, First Sergeant Dennis Tucker, and First Sergeant Andrew Lang organize a commemorative presentation to each veteran teacher at this school

Army as Company First Sergeant, Drill Sergeant, Technical Avionics Mechanic, Instructor, and Communications Electronic Maintenance Chief. Lang joined the military because he did not wish to college at the time and he wanted to see the world. He got a free education from the Army and will benefit from retirement after twenty years. Easter too was in the Army as a part of the Finance Corps. His role was to "support and serve" the Army with funds



Photo Courtesy of Dennis Tucker

## Dennis Tucker

- U.S. Army, 1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant
- Current Position: WP JROTC
- Twenty years as radio operator and combat engineer
- Obstacle/Minefield deployment and breaching operative
- Saw combat in Operation: Desert Storm
- Three tours in Korea and Germany Current

## Merrilee Seidman

- U.S. Marine Corps
- Eight years as Drill Instructor and Staff Instructor
- Current Position: Health and Physical Education Teacher
- Learned professionalism, organization, good work habits
- "I feel that everyone who is a U.S. citizen should serve in the military for at least three years."



Photo Courtesy of Merrilee Seidman



Photo Courtesy of Greg Koons

## Greg Koons

- U.S. Marine Corps, Artillery Officer, Retired as a Major
- Current Position: Guidance Counselor
- Twenty years in Marines
- Vietnam and returned without a scratch
- "I look forward to the recognition that the JROTC unit always gives the West Potomac veterans on Veterans' Day."

## Mary Mathewson

- U.S. Navy
- Five years in Communications and Technology
- Current Position: 11<sup>th</sup> grade English Teacher
- Radioman, 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Naval Support in Antarctica
- "I grew up and ensured a good, independent future for myself during those five years."



Photo Courtesy of Mary Mathewson

## Jeff Dietze

- U.S. Army, Captain
- Current Position: Director of Student Activities
- Six and a half years as battery commander. Stationed in Korea and Massachusetts
- Saw combat in Vietnam
- Awarded two Army Commendation Medals and one Bronze Star



Photo Courtesy of Jeff Dietze



# "Now He on the Sideline"



Photo by Houston Murphy

"If someone were to come up to me and call me a punk or a skater, personally, I wouldn't care, because that's what I do, and if someone were to label a group like that, that's ok. I can be friends with people who like different things than me or dress differently."

Freshman Graham Jenkins



Photo by Houston Murphy

"We met out of the blue, on the first day of school. It's good to meet people out of the blue."

Freshman Beth Ellis



Photo by Houston Murphy

"I don't really like cliques. People make other people feel bad because of cliques, and I don't like seeing other people get hurt."

Junior Emily Macklin

"They're fun. We go to someone else's house."

Junior Owen



Photo by Houston Murphy

"I don't care if other people come to our table as long as they're cool. As long as they're people like us, with a sense of humor. Like William Hung."

Freshman Fartha Gupta



Photo by Evan Dobbs

Senior Andrew Langen



Photo by Marissa D'Onofrio

"They make kids feel left out."

Junior Wade Stuart



Photo by Houston Murphy

"You hang out with different people at different times."

Freshman Daniel Deheza



Photo by Marissa D'Onofrio

"It's hard to find true friends, but true friends never grow old!"

Seniors Anderson Munoz, Nair Deheza, Ana Ventura, Michelle Gonzalez



Photo by Houston Murphy

"I like being with my group because some people don't like you, and they will pick on you."

Freshman Cameron Krizek



Photo by Matt Becker

"There are a lot of cliques within our school, but it doesn't cause drama. You have your own friends, but it's not so exclusive that people are not nice to others." Seniors CCAN (Caroline Cassidy, Carson Dougherty, Ali Underwood, and Neely Edwards)

## It's All Fun Until T

Hana Beckerle

Editor-in-Chief

As I make my way through the senior parking lot, past the patio, and in through the front entrance each morning, I can't help but notice that there are clusters of students everywhere. These are almost the exact same groups of people I saw yesterday and the day before. Sure, there are a few floaters who have stood with different groups, but for the most part I see the same people together as I walk around the school every day.

We are not able to talk to and hang out with everyone because of the size of our school. Most teens settle this by forming groups of friends that they stick with — cliques.

Before we examine social hierarchy in the Age of the Clique, we must define the term. The Oxford English Dictionary defines a clique as a "small exclusive group of people." Most students at this school would probably agree that the word "clique" has a negative connotation.

It is interesting to note how cliques form at this school. Some groups seem to consist of people who have grown up together and been friends for a long time. Others appear to have been formed by

students who have similar interests, such as theater or athletics. Others seem to have formed randomly, consisting of students who have diverse interests and pastimes, who just happen to get along well. Whatever the reasons behind the formation of these groups, it can be difficult for new students to find a particular social niche.

But are the groups at this school really cliques, that is, are they exclusive? That depends upon who one asks. Certain students feel that cliques are not so much exclusive groups as they are just groups of friends who hang out a lot. These students feel that forming cliques is a natural thing for teens to do. Then there are some students at this school who do not think that cliques are a very big part of the social order.

From personal experience, I think that cliques are very prevalent at our school. This may or may not be a bad thing, but it is obvious to me that it is commonplace. Everyone knows who he or she is going to sit with every day at lunch. Some tables even have unofficial seats, and any attempt to break into this order, even by other friends, could result in confrontation. Many people base their judgments on people they may not even know on who that person hangs out with.

## Costanza Doesn't Know B

Focus Editor, Reporter

This school harbors the classic prep group, goth group, and everything in between. Our cafeteria is uncannily similar to the cafeteria in *Mean Girls*. As Janis said to Lindsay Lohan's character in the beginning of the film, "This is going to be your guide to North Shore. Because where you sit in the cafeteria is crucial, because you've got everybody there: You've got your freshmen, preps, ROTC, J.V. jocks, Asian nerds, cool Asians, varsity jocks, unfriendly black hotties, girls who eat their feelings, girls who don't eat anything, desperate wannabes, burnouts, sexually active band geeks..."

Would it be too utopian to wish that you could sit with any group in the cafeteria with minimal whispering and staring? As soon as you break out of the mode of the permanent cafeteria seating, people do a double take.

"Whoa, Katie... like what is she doing here?"

You sit down ten tables away and hear nearly the same thing. "Hey Narcissus, what in the name of Satan is that piece of Abercrombie-wearing flesh doing over here?"

No, most of us don't typically mingle and mix. We're usually part of one set group.

The formation of cliques is understandable. They

feel comfortable and accepted. But the problem is that cliques are so limiting. Why can't you feel comfortable and accepted amongst people outside of your social group? They may be different, but we're all humans. Are they too different to talk to?

When you're in different sports, activities, and classes, grouping tends to set some people apart from others. This is where we get the really strange yet concrete groups in our school, like the Cross Country Cult or the AP Preps. These groups, formed by common activities, shouldn't necessarily be looked at as cruel and exclusive, rather, proof of how close you can become after you spend a considerable amount of time together.

Groups of people formed by common interests cross over into clique territory when they begin looking down on other groups. This superiority is not only reserved for "popular" people, and is actually much more prevalent among kids who aren't into mainstream ideals and conformity. "I hate the preps. They're so mean." We hear it all the time. If you hang out with a "prep," you are considered a prep as well. There are many labels, but they are each so confining. Preps are mean. Punks are rebels. Goths are freaks. Nerds do well in school. Everyone expects everyone else to be so

stereotypical and worthless.

When they do make friends outside of their zone, it's not always for a good reason. It's a degrading relationship you have with them. This is the "charity case." This is the nerdy person of a "lower class" who you talk to them because you feel sorry for them. You want others to think you're superficial and pretentious. You're befriending a person you are a little weird? Setting up a relationship that assumes that we are better than them.

What about our other groups? Aren't they charity cases? "My worlds are colliding!" exclaimed the sitcom "Seinfeld" when George was starting to interact with Jerry. Jerry worked so hard to keep them separate, and now they were colliding. Why keep them separate? Why?

How many more friends do we have if everyone were friendly, tolerant, and open-minded? So instead of just letting them remain separate, we could bring them together. Maybe they would



# "e Starin' at My Clique!"

-- J-Kwon



htime, we sit together.  
house all day, but if  
come they could."



"A lot of people feel like they're better than another group because of what they wear, and they call all the other people nerds and geeks."

Freshman Amanda Willis



"My friends usually mish and mash. They get along for the most part, though."

Junior Becca Tinker



"I think you have a lot more friends if you're not in a clique."

Senior Carolina Llinas

## e Drama Comes

that girl?" we sniff. "She's a part of *that* group. There's no way I'd ever talk to her."

Some groups of friends even go so far as to give themselves names, in acronyms formed from the group members' initials. We've seen everything from "CCANT J" to "BLAKJACK." Sometimes the names aren't acronyms, such as "Doms the Bombs," the "Easy Izzles," or the sophomore "Waywood Boys." It may seem hypocritical of me to point this out, since I have been in my share of named groups. However, experience has taught me that even if these names are formed with only fun in mind, they can lead to hurt feelings and unnecessary fights. This doesn't mean that I love the "HATZ" girls less, but in my experience, making names seems to only cause drama.

I'll never forget the day that a group of girls (myself included) went up in t-shirts we had made for Spirit Week. Even though they were not meant to be exclusive, some friends who had happened to be there at the time when we decided to make shirts grew very upset, even if they weren't close with all of the girls wearing the shirts. The resulting confrontations were ugly and completely unnecessary.

over something as stupid as a shirt, but in retrospect I guess I can understand why my friends would have had their feelings hurt and felt left out. This is an example of how an innocent act can be seen as a "clique thing."

So where can we draw the line between a "group of friends" and a "clique?" There is not really a specific "clique" litmus test that determines a group's status. I think we can safely say, however, that cliques differ from mere friends in that they make others feel excluded. Cliques are also associated with gossip, which is something that almost everybody is guilty of.

Because most "clique" activity usually starts out as just fun between friends, without any intention of being mean, there doesn't seem to be a lot that we can do about this situation. It doesn't help when our peers get angry over things that were done or said with no intention of malice. However, hardly any students can argue that they don't feel that cliques are a limiting, omnipresent part of our school. If we all (again, myself included) made a little bit more effort to be mature about things, then maybe our social scene would be a lot more tolerable for everyone.



"Everybody on myspace.com is friends."

Freshman Genevieve Watson



"Cliques and gangs are two different things."

Junior Chris Jones

## What Teachers Think About Cliques

"When I was a senior in high school, cliques tended to be defined almost exclusively along certain visible lines: race or ethnicity, social class, athlete vs. non-athlete, social status, etc. Now, when I look at my Senior students, I see groups of kids who are very different in terms of beliefs, money, and race, but have grouped themselves because of mutual interests."

--Mr. Ellis

"Students feel comfortable with their groups of friends, but often isolate others by not including them or picking on them."

--Mrs. McCormally

"Some students won't take the time to get to know wonderful people because they are not part of their 'group.' The good news is that it seems to get a little better by their senior year, in the classroom at least. I understand the need to belong during the teenage years, and having a group to belong to can feel comforting, but it can be isolating when it prevents you from getting to know others."

--Mrs. Piskor

"When I go back to class I see how these little groups form, and how it determines who is trying to get into an Ivy League school or earn an academic or athletic scholarship. Sometimes these groups cross over, but it seems pretty obvious to everyone else where people stand as far as their morals and likes/dislikes. It seems like teenagers and young adults want to find a sense of self. They need some sense of where they 'belong' even if their idea of a group is 'not being in a group.'"

--Ms. Knight

"It seems to me that cliques play an important role in the socialization part of the maturing in high school. They provide a 'comfort zone' for students who need the additional peer support, especially in their earlier school years. It seems to me that cliques are-- and have been-- a real part of the high school experience. To think about attempting to control or abolish them would be foolhardy at best and destructive at worst. It is within the human spirit to gravitate to those with whom one has a commonality of interest."

--Mr. Rhetican



"No, they [the other groups] don't like us. They have preconceived ideas of us. They call us 'mean girls' and 'the plastics.'"

Freshmen Natalie Ford and Avery McMahon



"Cliques are a form of social comfort. They are formed by interest groups with similar ideologies."

Junior Kristina Dahmann



"There are so many of them [cliques], it's ridiculous."

Senior David Hanson



"I'm friends with a lot of the different groups you see around the school. I don't know how they would act if some of them hung out with the group I normally hang out with, though."

Junior Sarah Merchant



"We give them mean nicknames: Mysterio and Mothera. They can sit at the end of the table."

Freshman Brad Huber



## In The Numbers

333

Points scored against the Varsity football team through the entire season.

2

Place that the Cross Country team came in at States only behind Thomas Jefferson. Nick Jackowski was the first finisher for

32

Games won over the course of thirteen matches by the Varsity Girls Volleyball season

50

Years since the Kansas Jayhawks Mens' basketball team has been ranked number one in the country in the pre-season poll.

## NHL Locks Out Players, Fans

Jason Yaworske

Wire Reporter

Sports fans at West Potomac have likely noticed something has been missing over the last month, and that something is National Hockey League (NHL). With the season suspended because of a lockout, many are outraged at what is expected to be at least a full year without professional hockey. "It's really a shame, I miss watching professional hockey. I hope they (the owners and players) sort things out as quickly as possible," says senior Kesha Shalaginov.

The NHL's collective bargaining agreement between the NHL Players Association (NHLPA) and the team owners expired on September 15<sup>th</sup> of this year. All sports organizations need collective bargaining agreements because they define the rights and obligations of the players, teams, and the league. All this simply means that there will be no hockey until an agreement is reached between the two sides.

But why did this happen in the first place? Unlike the National Football League, the National Basketball Association, and Major League Baseball, the NHL has not enjoyed great success financially over the past decade. It seems as though the players' salaries are increasing at a faster rate than deeper and deeper into a financial hole. In fact, players' salaries have increased 240% in the last nine

years, compared to the increase in revenue, which has only been 160%. This is probably a result of more competitive owners, who have been willing to pay their players whatever it takes to get

might be dragged out for a very long time. The owners want a salary cap put on the league to limit the amount of money an owner can use towards player salaries. Naturally, the players are against

linked to its expansion, critics point out that they both began at about the same time, which they argue cannot be coincidence.

On the flip side of the argument, however, Bettman feels that contracting teams would be a terrible thing to do to the fans, and claims that contraction is not even an option. Washington Capital fans need not worry about their team being contracted, as most of the candidates for contraction come from the US Sunbelt, which is home to the Carolina Hurricanes, Atlanta Thrashers, Nashville Predators and the Florida Panthers. Interest in these teams is very low because their location and climate has not allowed for a foundation of hockey fans to build up, and the teams are struggling to establish a strong fan base.

None of the details matter to hockey fans, which are just hopeful that the NHL can get back and running as soon as possible. But unlike the other sports stoppages in recent memory (MLB strike in 1994, and NBA lockout in 1998), the NHL is in serious trouble. If they cannot come to an agreement that will satisfy both the owners and the Players' Association, we may have seen our last NHL games ever. No business organization like the NHL can function if they are consistently losing money, and no players union wants to take a pay cut. Somewhere an agreement needs to be reached, but until then there will be no more National League Hockey in North America.



Hats fly onto the ice after the Keith Primeau scores his third goal of the game during Game 5 of the Eastern Conference final against the Toronto Maple Leafs. Unfortunately the enthusiasm seen at the arena was not followed by good TV ratings. They only managed a 1.1 Nielson rating.

them to play for their team.

The Wall Street Journal claims that more than twenty out of the league's thirty teams experienced losses during the 2003-2004 NHL season. But the NHLPA is claiming that these numbers are misleading. While NHL teams are required to report all of their hockey-related profits, Goodenow claims that many teams under-report the amount of money they bring in order to gain sympathy from the league.

The owners and the players want completely different things, and this is why the negotiating process

this, as it will force their salaries to go down in order to allow owners to fit them under the salary cap.

Another issue is revenue sharing. Both sides are interested in implementing rules that would help distribute revenue from the teams making the most money to the teams making the least money.

In an attempt to find the reason for the NHL's decline over the past decade, many have pointed out the expansion of the league from 24 teams in 1992 to the current amount of teams, which is 30. While the financial decline of the league has not been directly

## American Athletes Getting Into Trouble

Alex Keckeisen

Sports Editor

Athletes are role models for many people. The question is: "In what way are they supposed to set a precedent?" Are they responsible for setting good standards through their athletic skills? Or are they supposed to be role models in every aspect: socially, athletically, and professionally? This has been a controversial issue throughout all of sport's history. It has recently become even more contentious with

recent cases such as Kobe Bryant's rape charges and Michael Phelps' DUI charges.

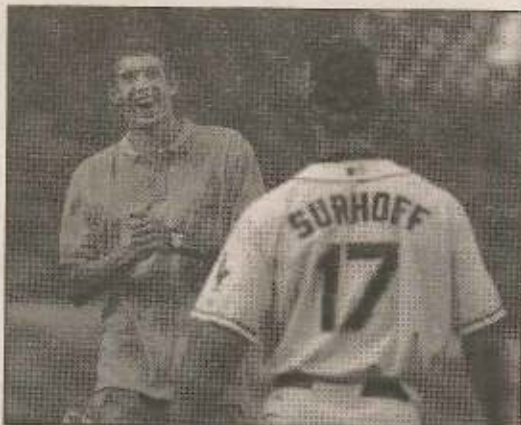
Bryant's felony charges were dismissed on September 1. Bryant was apologetic and remorseful about the entire situation. However, for many children, their basketball idol was no longer someone who they could look up to anymore. Many believe that athletes, along with celebrities and politicians, should be extremely responsible and conscious of the fact that hundreds of millions of people look up to them as an example. Parents, especially, do not want their children to live their life according to a celebrity who does not follow a lifestyle that they agree with.

Yet, there are hundreds of millions of fans who are forgiving and aware of the fact that these athletes are human. Senior basketball player Lauren Arthur stated, "Even though many people look up to athletes as role models, it's not fair to judge them by a higher standard. In Kobe Bryant's case, everyone made a big deal out of it when stuff like that happens all the time. Athletes' problems are always blown out of proportion because they have so many people watching them, and that's ridiculous."

Swim idol, Michael Phelps, was pulled over by a Salisbury, Maryland police officer on the night of November 2, 2004, and

was convicted for DUI charges. After the 2004 Summer Olympics and Phelps' record eight medals, there are many young swimmers looking up to him. Thursday night proved that he was a human being just like all of his fans. Phelps told *US Today*, "Getting into a car after anything to drink is wrong. It's dangerous and unacceptable. I'm 19 and was taught that no matter how old you are, you should take responsibility for your actions, which I will do. I'm sorry." Now, the question is: Will this little incident damage Phelps' entire career? Will aspiring swimmers and athletes be able to say that Phelps is still their role model? His coach believes that he deserves a second chance. When interviewed by *US Today*, Phelps' coach Bob Bowman clearly stated, "Michael feels like he's let everyone down who supported him, and he has, clearly. When you see Michael swimming, he just seems superhuman. You forget that he's 19 and he's just trying to grow up."

Everyone needs to acknowledge the fact that these superstar athletes are just as flawed as anyone of us are. However, there are many celebrities who use their status to their advantage. They feel like they do not need to pay for the actions and just use their money or name as bribery to detangle them from their penalties. Undeniably, that is crossing the line and no one will respect that.



Michael Phelps, seen here throwing out the first pitch at Camden yards, won eight medals at the Olympics in Greece over the summer. He was recently arrested on a DUI charge and he made an apology the next day.

Lloyd Fox/KRT



# Keckee's Katch

Getting it Done One Article at a Time

## Hoop It Up, Ship It Out, The NBA Is Back

Alex Keckeen

Sports Editor

First off, welcome back NBA season. It's been a long few months since those rascals of a team that call themselves the Pistons somehow won the championship. A lot has happened, but has a lot really changed? Kobe is still in trouble in a crumbling empire, the Western conference may not assert its power over the Eastern conference like it has since the downfall of the Bulls, and to top it all off, the Wizards suck.

Possibly the best plot line of the season will not include the Heat's rise to power or the rivalry that may grow between the Spurs and the T-Wolves by the end of the season, but the vocal scuffles that take place over 3,000 miles between Kobe and Shaquille O'Neal.

Just days after being traded, Shaq had to

open his mouth and flame Kobe about his personal

life. It's not like we didn't see this coming, but it was during a rape case brought against Kobe. Then Kobe fired back, telling the police that Shaq had paid over one million dollars in hush money to women he had affairs with. Seriously, if I wanted a soap opera I'd watch "Passions" on NBC (I love that show). I just can't wait till Christmas day. I won't be near the Christmas tree opening presents (although I really want that pony). I will be right next to the TV watching Kobe fight Shaq, elbows flying everywhere, tempers flaring, and that one white guy who thinks he can throw a few good punches.

Where's Don King when you need him?

Being traded to the Heat didn't just intensify the rivalry between Kobe and Shaq; it also intensified the rivalry between the East and West, as the former JV league in the East finally makes the Varsity squad and challenges the West. The Pistons somehow won last year in an

astonishing series finale in the fifth game, but

don't expect that to happen again unless the

other O'Neal and the Pacers can stay

healthy.

In fact, a number of analysts say there is a possibility that up to three teams with only 35 wins could make it to the playoffs in

the East.

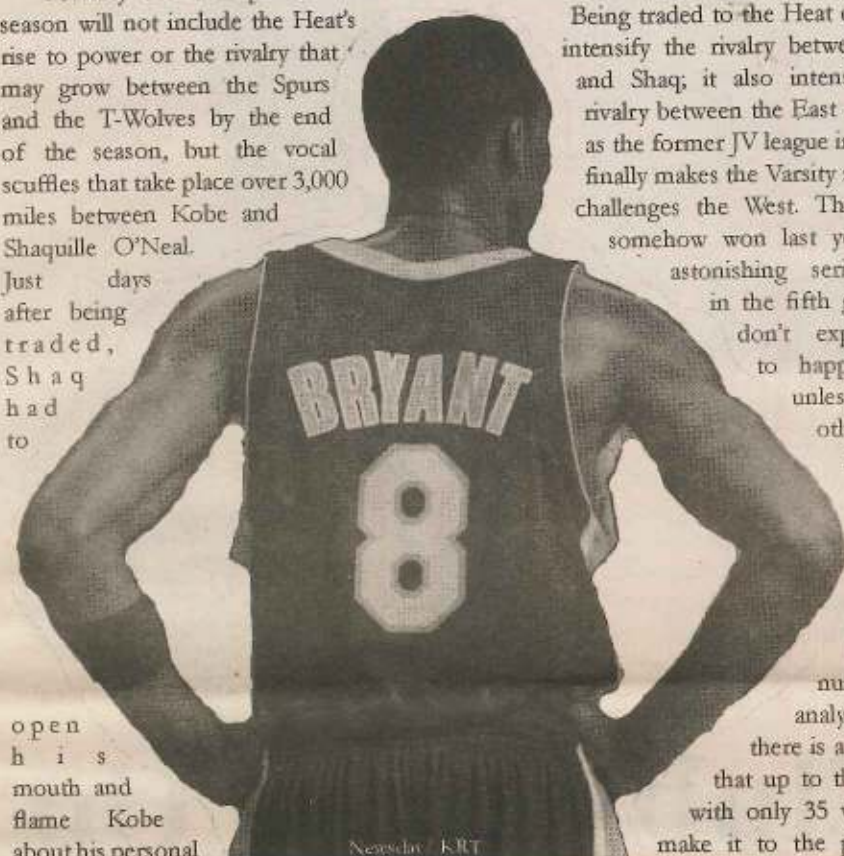
The fact is most of the teams in the East don't even try to compete. They get the small guys who can pull the street ball moves and not the tall guys who can put the ball through the hoop and, in essence, they just try to sell a few tickets. But now the Wizards will have to pull a trick out of their sleeves to sell tickets and this has brought a very good offer to the table. Singles night. Yes, singles night. This brought me an interesting idea... I may be able to find a date. Thousands if the promotional ad is true. This could really be my big break. Sure, it'll be illegal if anything happens, but think of the possibilities. I, Alex Keckeen, may have a date. Maybe I'll get a few numbers to add to my little black book.

Unfortunately, we must regress and actually talk about the skill of the Wizards, or lack thereof. It seems pitiful to me that the Wizards staff is already talking about the playoffs. Apparently Antwan Jamison is the answer to all our worries. They better not get their hopes up too high. If you take a brief look into the past, Gilbert Arenas was supposed to be our savior last year, poor old Jerry Stackhouse the year before that, and Michael Jordan before that. The fact alone that they can't even make it into the playoffs with Michael Jordan putting up 20 points a night on minimal shot attempts is astounding. The Wizards have tried to fill a void with some random player who may not even fit into the coaching scheme, and then seem so surprised when it ends up not working.

And now after weeks of deliberation with myself, I have decided to crown the

team that will undoubtedly take the NBA crown. With all star names like Primoz Brezec and Tama Slay, the expansion Charlotte Bobcats will not only scare their opponents in the eastern conference, they will beat them. Then they will take on the L.A. Clippers in the finals which will come down to a seventh game and a last gasp buzzer beater by Jahidi White form half court. I can dream, can't I?

The NBA just may be exciting this year, but you're going to have to go out west and you're going to need to wait until April. Sorry to burst your bubble, but the NBA is heading south like the NHL is heading out.



Newsday KRT



Newsday KRT

## Sports Calendar



### Tuesday, November 23

Boys Basketball Scrimmage 8:30 p.m. vs. Woodson at Sandburg  
Girls Basketball Scrimmage 8:30 p.m. vs. Fairfax

### Saturday, November 27

Boys Basketball Scrimmage 6:00 p.m. vs. Hylton  
Girls Basketball Scrimmage 4:00 p.m. at Dover H.S.

### Wednesday, December 1

Gymnastics Meet 7:00 p.m. at Marshall H.S.

### Friday, December 3

Boys Basketball Game 7:30 p.m. at Yorktown  
Girls Basketball Game 7:45 p.m. vs. Yorktown  
Swim/ Dive 6:00 p.m. vs. Robinson (at South Run)

### Saturday, December 4

Winter Track 7:30 a.m. at Episcopal  
Swim/ Dive 6:30 p.m. vs. T.C. Williams (at Mt. Vernon)

### Wednesday, December 8

Gymnastics Meet 7:00 p.m. vs. W-L, Edison, Potomac Falls

### Thursday, December 9

Boys Basketball Game 7:30 p.m. vs. The Enterprise School

### Friday, December 10

Boys Basketball Game 7:45 p.m. vs. Wakefield  
Girls Basketball Game 7:30 p.m. at Wakefield  
Swim/ Dive 6:30 p.m. vs. West Springfield (at South Run)  
Wrestling TBA NoVa Classic

### Saturday, December 11

Winter Track 7:30 a.m. at Episcopal  
Wrestling TBA NoVa Classic

### Tuesday, December 14

Boys Basketball Game 7:45 p.m. vs. Edison  
Girls Basketball Game 7:45 p.m. at Edison

### Wednesday, December 15

Gymnastics Meet 7:00 p.m. at Chantilly

### Friday, December 17

Boys Basketball Game 7:30 p.m. at Robinson  
Girls Basketball Game 7:45 p.m. vs. Robinson  
Wrestling 3:00 p.m. at Lackey



# A Day in the Life of...

## A Math Teacher Making His Mark

Rob Jones

Wire Reporter

"Yes, you can have a calculator out, if you feel you need to look at it for moral support." This is just one of many catchphrases Mr. Bill Dobson's students have come to appreciate as par for the course. Dobson, a long-time calculus teacher at our school, enjoys teaching math in an unconventional



Dobson spurs up geometry classes with his personal and interactive teaching tactics.

fashion. Unlike many of the math teachers here, he refuses to allow calculator use on most of his tests. "Any person can use a piece of plastic to spit the answer at him. What I'm trying to teach is self-sufficiency in mathematics."

A typical day for Dobson begins with his arrival at school at approximately 6:15 a.m. He then prepares for a busy day of teaching. His schedule consists of two AB Calculus classes followed by a Geometry class on A-Days and a video-taught multivariable Calculus class followed by two blocks of Geometry on B-Days.

Students in computer science teacher Margaret Cross'

neighboring class are often astounded to see Dobson in the middle of a lecture, striking a dance pose to demonstrate one of the finer points of an algebraic function. Some of his best-known quirky dances include the "binomial boogie," a reminder to students

about the procedure for multiplying a certain type of function, and an aerobic routine reviewing the shapes of function graphs.

At lunchtime, Dobson often helps out with students from various math classes. He often has students come to his class for extra help or to make up tests or quizzes they have missed. It is a rare thing to see Dobson without a line of students at his desk for help with difficult concepts.

Dobson's teaching methods have made a lasting impression on his students. Many remember the numerous anecdotes and classroom antics he often uses to demonstrate his points. "Taking Mr. Dobson's class

was a

very religious

experience for me," says senior Chris Dell. This is truer than many students may realize. Dobson reminds students to honor a constantly growing list of Mathematic Commandments, including such gems as "Honor Thyne Asymptotes," "Check Thy [Calculator] Mode," and of course, "Read the Problem."

In addition to his inspirational classroom instruction, Dobson also makes an effort to be available to his students for independent help. He can almost always be found after school offering extra help to motivated students, and his

help is available after school hours via Instant Messenger or e-mail.

Dobson devotes his after-school time not only to extra help, but also to student activities. He is the sponsor for the Teenage Republicans, a politically-minded club working for Republican campaigns on both local and national levels. "Mr. Dobson has been perhaps the most powerful influence in my life," says senior David Hanson, a member of the club, who also had Dobson for Precalculus last year.

After the school day ends, Dobson drives to his home in Loudon County, where he likes to sit and relax throughout the evening. "As a very tired at the end of the day," says Dobson. "My favorite thing to do in the evenings is spend time with my wife, who is and always will be my best friend."



Photo illustration by Houston Murphy

# State

Katzenbach Kings & Pepper  
The Recker Theatre  
Towson, MD  
November 8

The Mahoney Brothers  
Beatles Tribute  
The Recker Theatre  
Towson, MD  
December 4

Hatchreed  
The Recker Theatre  
Towson, MD  
November 20

H.F. Small Watercolor 2004  
Patricia L. Small  
Fairfax, VA  
December 4

Battle of the Bolands-Flanls  
Jazz Nightclub  
Springfield, VA  
November 20

Mary Prankster  
Fletcher's Bar & Grill  
Baltimore, MD  
November 27

Magnolia Fields  
Ellicottville  
Alexandria, VA  
December 2

All Mighty Senators  
with Can't Hang  
Frank Box  
Washington, DC  
November 26

# the

# Arts

## New Club Stacks Up

Sarah Raser

Wire Reporter

JENGA ON! Watch out West Potomac, a new club has hit the school. Jenga Club: a gathering of all the Jenga addicts in one room, consulting each other on their different techniques.

Founded on September 10, 2004 in senior Paul Cambon's living room, Jenga Club came from modest roots. "Paul and I were slammin' some blocks when genius struck us like a ten-ton truck," said Jenga Master senior Drew Macklin. "The mystery of Jenga had been revealed to us, and we realized we needed to share it with everyone. All of a sudden, we knew West Potomac needed a Jenga Club." And so Jenga Club was born.

Jenga is a game consisting of 54 wooden blocks. The game calls for a steady hand, elementary structural knowledge, and a little bit of luck. The rules of Jenga are simple: remove the block, stack it on the tower, but don't let it fall. The only caution from this game is this: it may be addictive. The combination of applying intellectual thought and the adrenaline pumping in your blood makes the game a drug to many, and the club shows that our school fosters its own Jenga junkies.

Among the list of Jenga Masters are Macklin, Cambon, and their friends seniors Stuart Trouton and Kevin Ebberts. In order to

become a Jenga Master, one must earn points by attending meetings or winning tournaments. There are different levels you must climb to get to the coveted level of Mastery. In total, there are eight levels, from Jenga Pupil to Jenga Master. "All prospective Jenga Masters must be held to the highest standards of sportsmanship and integrity set for by the constitution. Those interested must recognize Jenga is not just a game as many may perceive, but it is truly an art," said Jenga Master Stuart.

A true Jenga Master must embrace Jenga as a whole, and step out of the confinements of society. From the trunks of cars, to the street corners of Northwest D.C., Jenga has stepped out of the closet into the odyssey of Street Jenga.

A typical meeting starts out with announcements, followed by pre-competition stretches. After several deep breaths, it's JENGA ON! For sportsmanlike conduct, the members must honor your opponent by doing the special "Jenga Clap," followed by the "Jenga Bow." Each game starts out like

any other game of Jenga, but soon the skilled step in with their special moves. Seniors Dustin Smith and Nick Jachowski have perfected the 'flick.' The 'flick' is speed Jenga. It is a move only for the ones who are willing to risk everything to get that one block from out of the tower.

If by some stroke of bad luck, the tower does fall, all members must yell "JENGA!" to alert those a tower has fallen.

As Jenga Master Paul says, "Jenga Club is a microcosm of post-modern pseudo-industrial society." If you wish to join, come to a meeting.

The next meeting will take place on Tuesday, November 23<sup>rd</sup> and will continue to be every other Tuesday for the rest of the year. Be sure to bring your Jenga set and your \$8 dues to the meeting. It is guaranteed to be a good time!



Photo edited by Evan Dobbs



# "Know When to Hold 'Em, Know When to Fold 'Em"

Jason Yaworske

Wire Reporter

This year's biggest craze isn't a yellow bracelet. It's not some ticklish Sesame Street doll. Its poker; and it's everywhere.

More specifically, it's Texas Hold'em, a particular type of poker. Ever since major networks including ESPN and the Travel Channel began broadcasting Texas Hold'em tournaments, more and more people have picked up the game. The reason is simple. Everybody can play it and you don't have to be an athlete or even be very smart to be good at the game. "I doubled my money the first time I ever played, and have been hooked on the game ever since. It's just so much fun and the competition is so intense it can make any night fun and interesting," says former West Potomac student Jay Magill.

A large part of Texas Hold'em's appeal is that anybody can be the best poker player at the table at any given night. This idea has been proven by the last two winners of Vegas' World Series of Poker, both first time World Series players with minimal poker playing experience.

High school and college students are constantly searching for ways to overcome boredom. Poker presents a safer and healthier option than other recreational pastimes. For this reason the outcry against teenage gambling has been mild thus far. Some parents even embrace their kids' love for poker in hopes that it will keep them out of trouble. "I actually like the fact that my son plays poker; it keeps him out of trouble," says Mrs. Pat Dewey, mother of senior Patrick Dewey, an avid poker player. "After all, there's much worse things that he could be doing with his time than losing a few bucks on a poker game!"

Texas Hold'em is so typical in college campuses around the nation that many

colleges are embracing it. For example, Florida State University is one of many colleges that have endorsed campus Texas Hold'em tournaments as part of their recreational offerings to their students.

However, not everybody loves poker. Many adults are concerned that gambling at such a young age could lead to addictions. Gambling addictions are serious problems that affect up to four percent of adults in the United States, a number that gambling help-agencies fear could grow tremendously because of the current poker epidemic.

But a \$10 game of poker can last an entire night. So what's the worst that could happen?

The player loses his \$10, which is the cost of a movie ticket. Another concern is the possible conflicts that could potentially erupt in an unsupervised game of poker. Although it's true nobody likes losing money, very few players take the game personally, and know it is not something losing friends over. So while it's true that not everybody can "know when to fold'em," many teens believe the risks of the game are not very high.

Poker playing is no longer limited to somebody's basement with a few friends. Anybody can go online and spend hours playing poker against real-life opponents from across the nation. "Sometimes, when I'm real bored, I'll go online and play a few hands of poker, it's a lot of fun and makes the time fly," says senior Teddy Rynn. "Plus, it makes you a better

player so you win when you're playing for real money." Websites like UltimateBet.com, GGPokerStars.com, and PokerRoom.com are three of many sites that offer a variety of options. It can be very addicting for some to try and play online everyday, as most sites keep track of your total earnings, and it can be fun to build up your chips over a long period of time.

With the holiday season approaching, stores are hoping they too can capitalize on the current craze. Retailers are speculating poker related items will be hot sellers this year. People have always been able to purchase a \$3 dollar deck of cards almost anywhere, but with kids trying to emulate what they see on TV, stores are beginning to include casino-quality poker chips that range from anywhere between \$50 and \$200. These are quickly becoming must-have items even for the casual poker player.

The World Series of Poker, televised on ESPN, is the most popular of the televised poker tournaments. The World Series is played in an elimination-style format, in which the last player remaining is declared winner. This year, 2,546

poker players went to Vegas to try their luck at this tournament. The winner

## 5 Steps to Playing Texas Hold'em

Step 1: Players are each dealt two cards as their personal hand (pocket cards), after which there is a round of betting.

Step 2: Three community cards are then dealt simultaneously in the middle of the table which is called the "flop," and another round of betting occurs.

Step 3: The last two community cards are then dealt, one at a time, with a round of betting after each card.

Step 4: The community cards can be used by any player, and the player may use any 5-card combination of community cards and his or her pocket cards in order to make the best hand.

Step 5: The best hand out of all the remaining players wins the money.

was Greg "Fossil Man" Raymer, whose previous poker playing experience had been mostly limited to online play. Ironically, he had won his seat at the World Series of Poker through an online tournament he won. The buy-in for the online tournament was only \$40, and the payout for winning the World Series of Poker was \$5 million. Not bad investment by any means.

The World Series of Poker made its official debut back in 1970, and has been growing ever since. One possible reason for this interest is that two of America's most popular types of programming are sports and reality TV. Television poker is a wonderful combination of the two genres. The poker craze is undeniable, and is not going anywhere soon.



## A-List

### Newcomb Names Her Number Ones.

**Book:** The Princess Bride has been a favorite bedtime story of mine since eighth grade. That may sound a little strange, to have bedtime stories at that age; however, I read the book after seeing the movie. The movie was hilarious, so obviously the book was even better. It was a great comedy filled fantasy.

**CD:** "Tell me more, tell me more..." Ahhh, back to the days of poodle skirts and leather jackets. Grease has always been one of my preferred movies, but the sound track is even better. When you are alone in the car, and in the mood to belt out a song, the Grease sound track is all you need.

**Movie:** Mulan is the best recent Disney movie ever! Not only does it have great humor, provided by Eddie Murphy, but if Shang, Mulan's love interest, was a real person... all I have to say is I wish I lived in China. Is he not a cutie?

**Restaurant:** Mango Mike's has a great tropical feel, with tanks full of exotic fish and an interior decorated in beach accessories. It's great when you can get "laid" just by walking in the door. Their food and atmosphere is warm, and it is like you're at the beach during the middle of winter.

**TV show:** "Motormouth" is a show on VH1. It may have the stupidest plot, but a high entertainment value. How can you not laugh at a rather large fellow expressing himself during a car ride, to "Like a Virgin?" It is hysterical seeing macho guys singing along to "Moulin Rouge."



**GREASE**  
is still the word



## One Incredible Movie

Katie Staples

Features Editor

Pixar has again outdone itself with Brad Bird's new family comedy *The Incredibles*, which falls only behind last year's *Finding Nemo* in entertainment and animation quality.

Ex-superhero, Bob Parr, aka Mr. Incredible, with the power of extreme strength, has settled down and married fellow super heroine Helen, formerly Elastigirl. Bob works as an insurance claims assistant in a tiny cubicle under the eagle eye of his pushy boss, but knows that Helen has worked too hard to conceal their family's identity for him to follow his dream of reliving the "glory days" and once again becoming the world's superhero. He balances his less-than-mediocre job with fighting for sanity amidst his children; Violet, who has the ability to make herself invisible and create force fields, and younger brother Dashiell "Dash", with the power to outrun any of our fastest track runners.

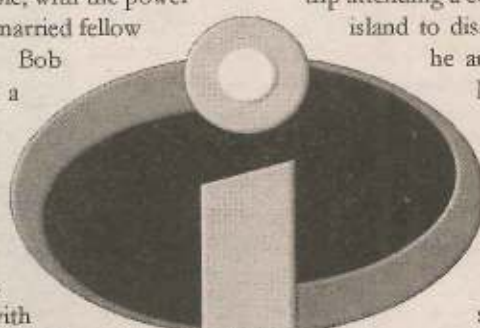


Photo illustration by Katie Staples



Rodney Turner/KRT

*The Incredibles*, Mr. Incredible, Elastigirl, Violet and Dash, are one incredible family.

Bob jumps at the chance when a mysterious stranger, a super heroine whose alias is Mirage, offers him a job as a crusader to destroy a robot-project-gone-wrong on an uninhabited island. Darning a new "super suit" and telling his wife, who still doesn't know that Bob has been laid off, that he is on a business trip attending a conference, Mr. Incredible is flown to the island to disarm the psycho robot. It is only after he arrives and destroys the automaton that Mr. Incredible realizes that the robot scenario was a setup by his former "biggest fan" but now archenemy, Buddy Pine, aka Syndrome, to kill him.

While searching through Bob's office, Helen discovers that his old super suit has been ripped but now neatly mended, a job Bob could definitely not pull off. Helen knows it could only be the work of petite but sassy designer Edna E. Mode, whose voice is played by director Brad Bird. "I love Edna, I wish I had my own," said sophomore Cat Brokaw, who adored the movie. During one of my favorite scenes, Edna shows Helen a complete new line of super suits for her family, including even one for the infant, who seems not to have a super power. But, Helen wonders why Edna would make suits again if the superheroes were retired. Then, she realizes that Bob had become his alias and learns that he is working on a mission on Syndrome's island. While risking having to reveal their powers, the Incredibles fly to Mr. Incredible's rescue.

Overall, this is a very entertaining movie and worth your time and money. Actors like Craig T. Nelson (Mr. Incredible), Holly Hunter (Elastigirl), and Samuel L. Jackson (another superhero), did a great job at portraying their characters. If you enjoyed *Monsters Inc.* and *Finding Nemo*, you will love *The Incredibles*. Between its humor and skillful animation, this movie is sure to delight all ages, even if you think you are too mature for children's movie.

## Baggins Gets Bagged

Robin Harry

Business Manager

It was 7:30 on the night of the Homecoming dance. As we walked from our cars to Bilbo Baggins Restaurant on 208 Queen Street, we thought we would just walk right in to our table since we had made reservations days before. We were dead wrong. There we were at 8 pm standing in the narrow hallway still waiting for a table but oddly enough, other groups were being seated right away. As we all grew agitated, we became surrounded by a bunch of middle-aged people who were exceptionally rude to us merely because we were "typical teenagers." Every time one of my friends or I would speak, we would get glared at. Finally, after growing more and more uncomfortable, we were seated at 8:20.

If only uptight, over-priced establishments like this came with a warning.

Starving, I instantly open up the menu hoping to find something that sounded delicious and was reasonably priced. I could have never been more wrong. The menu was full of unappealing dishes that ranged from ten to 25 dollars. This would be fine if there were at least a few entrees that sounded the least bit good. Between duck lo mein, which was horrible according to senior Luke Urban, and crawfish ravioli, I was torn. Luckily, I came across the bar menu with some normal food. My friend, senior Janine Morgan, and I decided to keep it simple and get a hamburger. We figured we could not go wrong with that, but unfortunately we

## The Truth About This Book

Adele Hampton

Asst Business Manager

How long is forever? It can either be as long as a lifetime, or as long as a moment one never wants to forget. Sarah Dessen's new book, *The Truth About Forever*, tells a story about letting go and living your life. This book made me go from laughing hysterically to flat out bawling. It's the type of book that no matter who you are, you'll be able to find something you can relate to. Each one of the characters adds to the story making it a fun, and sometimes exhausting book to read.

Dessen creates these worlds that are so life-like the reader can't help but feel like the characters and their stories are real.

Macy has a long summer in front of her. Her perfect boyfriend Jason is going off to "Brain Camp" and leaving her with the exciting job of working the information desk at the library. So now she's doomed to have an ultimately boring summer, complete with no boyfriend, a completely mind-numbing job, lots of studying, and time spent with her mother mourning the painful loss of her father.

But then some unexpected things happen. A catering company called Wish brings a chaotic and fun loving

crew into Macy's life and teaches her the meaning of living your life to the fullest. Her older sister is renovating their dad's beach house, which awakens memories and feeling that have been forgotten. Macy's relationship with her mother was always just on the surface. Her mother had all of these expectations and Macy always exceeded those expectations. As the book progresses Macy realizes that keeping everything inside and things with her mother only on the surface was actually hurting the bond between them.

And then there's Wes. Wes is a guy with a history who Macy meets when she becomes a part of Wish Catering. He's the type of guy who can turn any girl's world upside down, but at the same time is modest and couldn't care less about what girls thought of him. Through a simple game of 'Truth', Macy and Wes' relationship grows and as Macy begins to live her life, she begins to question whether it's worth it to let go of everything and become herself.

This is Dessen's sixth novel. Some of her previous novels are *This Lullaby*, a finalist for the Los Angeles Times Book Prize. *That Summer* and *Someone Like You* were brought together to make *How to Deal*, a New York Times Best seller, as well as a movie starring Mandy Moore.

Her novels are about love and self-discovery. The characters she creates

are developed and perfect. The reader can always relate to the book in some way. Dessen creates these worlds that are so life-like the reader can't help but feel like the characters and their stories are real. At the end of each book, the reader



Photo by Evan Dobbs

*The Truth About Forever*, written by Sarah Dessen, is one of Adele's favorites.

get a sense of wellbeing and a better understanding of what it means to love.

If you enjoy reading love stories, or if you enjoy a good chick flick, then you will without doubt love *The Truth About Forever* which is a story about love, self discovery, and letting go.



Photo by Evan Dobbs

*Bilbo Baggins* is located at 208 Queen Street in Old Town.

did. The burger was served on an English muffin without cheese, even though we had asked for it. For a nine dollar hamburger, I at least expected cheese. My other friend, senior Moira Holt, ordered the crawfish ravioli. The dish, only fourteen dollars, only came with five ravioli squares, and was not that tasty. "It was the biggest waste of money ever. There is no way I will ever go back," said Holt.

The service we received by the waitress made our night that much more unbearable. It took twenty minutes to get my soda, which was flat. When I asked for a new one, she said fine but never came back with it. Getting the bill was like pulling teeth. We had to ask her six different times to get it because she continuously put other "more important" customers first.

Overall, the atmosphere is not inviting for a group of high school students. With every move we made the stuck up crowd was gawking at us. At one point, we were told to be quiet because one of us laughed too loudly. If only uptight, overpriced establishments like this came with a warning, just because we were younger does not mean they had the right to serve us differently. We were paying customers; therefore we should have received just as good service and respect as the next guy.

My advice is, instead of wasting a wad of money on mediocre food in a place you cannot even enjoy, go elsewhere.



# Converting to J.E.W.daism

Marissa D'Orazio

Focus Editor

Jimmy Eat World (JEW) is not merely a band. Rather, they are a group of painters, with instruments and lyrics as their aesthetic medium.

I realized this upon hearing a track off their old CD, *Bleed America*, entitled "My Sundown." This song was no jumble of syllables and sound, instead, it captured the hues of a dark pink and orange sunset and the smell of leaves burning in my brain.

Their new album, *Futures*, is no exception. Each song not only captures something, but captures it in the form of a painting for your ears to interpret. If I were blind, listening to Jimmy Eat World would be my trip to the art museum.

"Night Drive" is painted on an all black canvas. The only visible parts of the picture are illuminated by bluish streetlights and the lights of a dashboard inside an old rusty car. It poses the all too familiar phrase, "Now's the right time, for a good song! Get something to say what I can't." The entire thing reminds me of this sensual description thing called a "Slice of Life" that my AP Literature teacher once made me do. Everything you wrote had to

be something taken in by your senses; you had to leave knowledge and feelings out of it. Instead, the reader could infer what you were thinking and feeling by what your senses were taking in. This song could have gotten an "A" on that assignment.

"The World You Love" can take you anywhere— but in my mind, it's on a college campus, full of new and old friends living together for the first time. It's all about new additions to your life, and slowly moving on from past times—"Windows open and close/ that's just how it goes." This song is possibly the most upbeat one on the album, but doesn't deviate from the sadly profound tone. Many of the lyrics are things to be said while your head is shaking with regret, but your shoulders shrugging,

declaring, "Oh well. What can you do about it?"

In "Polaris," like many Jimmy Eat World songs, it is hard to put your finger on what the band is singing about. Their general way of discussing things makes you wonder what provoked their feelings. "They say that love goes anywhere/ in your darkest time it's just enough to know it's there." The background music mixed with the lyrics provides the listener with an

image of a beautiful light making its way through the darkness. I always imagine the Aurora Borealis when hearing this song.

In the song "Work," the singer proves that he doesn't always let people in on what he is thinking. "The things we think might be the same/ But I won't fight for more/ It's just not me to wear it on my sleeve/ Count on that for sure." He is not an open book to be read, rather, quiet and mysterious. The things he says have meaning that the listener must read into.

"Drugs or Me" presents the difficulty to get through to an addict and the effect drugs has on a relationship. "If only you could see/ The stranger next to me/ You promise, you promise that you're done/ But I can't tell you from the drugs." While the singer seems firm the person must decide between their addiction and him, he also sings about his dependence on the person, making it seem like, in a way, this person is his drug. The conflicting feelings of the singer make this song very powerful.

"23," the last track of the album, is one of my favorites, and leaves the listener with an excellent summary of what they should take away from the album. No offense Coheed fans, but just because a song is long, it does

not mean that it is good. But "23," which is all of seven minutes and twenty-four seconds, has a purpose to each second. Upon listening to this song, a friend of mine



Marissa D'Orazio looks up a few lyrics while listening to *Futures*.

Photo by Evan Dobbs



Marissa D'Orazio takes the name of the band literally.

Photo illustration by Evan Dobbs

told me, "You know, that song feels like it's only two minutes long." It discusses past mistakes and regrets, but not in a way that really clues the listener to what happened to the singer, and instead leaving it up in the air for interpretation. "Amazing still it seems/ I'll be 23/ I won't always love what I'll never have/ I won't always live in my regrets."

The contemplative attitude of *Futures* is reinstated in this song, and it sums up the regretful but hopeful attitude (for the future) the listener should walk away from their CD player having

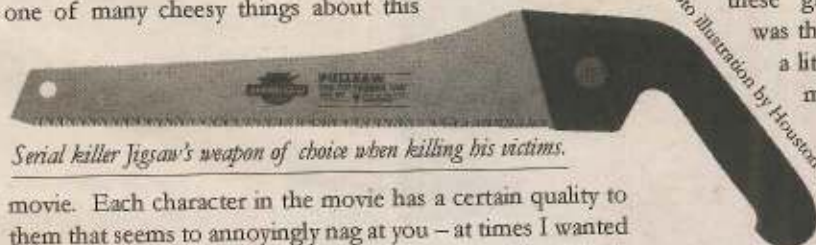
# I Wish I Never Saw It

Houston Murphy

Photo Editor

"He doesn't want us to saw through our chains! He wants us to saw through our feet!"

Who says that, seriously? This is just one of the many smug comments that the arrogant Dr. Lawrence Gordon made throughout *Saw*. In each case, he acted as if he knew exactly what the maniac serial killer who kidnapped him was going to do way before it even happened. The overconfident character of Dr. Gordon, played by Cary Elwes, was only one of many cheesy things about this



Serial killer Jigsaw's weapon of choice when killing his victims.

movie. Each character in the movie has a certain quality to them that seems to annoyingly nag at you—at times I wanted to applaud the fact that they were captured. All of their cheesy ways of acting scared just made *Saw* laughable.

*Saw*, directed by James Wan, was a story about a serial killer who tries to avoid getting the charge of murder by instead finding ways for his captured victims to kill themselves. The murderer, nicknamed "Jigsaw" gives people bizarre ways to stay alive, and he basically makes a game out of his whole massacre of people who he thinks don't appreciate life.

Jigsaw must have a very ill imagination, because some

of the situations he puts his victims in are sickening. One of the most disgusting ways the maniac thinks of to kill a helpless woman is to strap a reverse bear trap to her head that is locked shut; the effect of this reverse bear trap would be to rip the bottom of her jaw clear off of her head. The only way she could avoid being paralyzed for life was to find the key—which was inside of a man lying in the same room as hers stomach.

On the opposite end of these gruesome scenes was the attempt to add a little humor to the movie. This was what destroyed the whole story. As the movie starts off,

Dr. Gordon and a young man named Adam are oddly trapped in a strange dingy bathroom with chains around their legs. As they gain their consciousness and notice each other, Dr. Gordon asks Adam "What's your name?"

Adam only replies with "What's my name? Right now my language.

name is Pretty F\*\*\*ing Confused, what's yours?" In a time when you are trapped in a terrifying situation with shackles chaining your ankles to a rusty pipe in a dark, abandoned bathroom, do you think you would even have room in your thoughts for a sarcastic remark like that? Right when a scary part is about to happen, one of the characters just had to

put in their two cents with a ridiculous, corny joke, which made their attempt to act scared meaningless and quite pathetic. The acting in this movie was one of the worst performances I've ever seen.

On the other hand, some people thought the blend of humor and horror was great. Fabian Seaton, former West Potomac student said "*Saw* had the perfect mix of unintentional comedy and real suspense. Now, whether that was sarcastic, I don't know."

With all of the hype, along with the corny mix of gruesomeness and humor, *Saw* is not even worth calling a second-rate horror film.

*Saw* was so gruesome that it was originally rated NC-17. The director decided to edit the film to get a re-rating of R, for its strong grisly violence and



Actor Cary Elwes at the premiere of *Saw*.

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# Human or Robot?

Laura Lofgren

Wire Reporter

Char Prescott. I think she's a robot. Instead of eating food for energy, she has a battery pack that never seems to run out. There's just no way a human could accomplish it all. The average senior feels pressured having to write four or five college applications and



Photo by Evan Dobbs

Senior Char Prescott acting like a robot in the auditorium.

sending them in. Prescott has about thirteen college applications, along with auditions for each. She is not just an average senior. Along with being a robot, she's also a prodigy musician. She's been working all her life to become an accomplished cellist, practicing three to four hours a day, every day. "She's the most talented student I ever had, even though I couldn't pronounce her name," said science teacher Mr. Rezendes.

Over the past couple of summers, she has attended both Tanglewood and Meadowmount (high-caliber music camps) in which she practiced her cello up to eight hours a day. She has performed in concerts and competitions all over, including the Kennedy Center. Now she is working on dozens of pieces for her live auditions, in which she will travel to colleges like Curtis, Juilliard, and Northwestern, to become the next YoYo Ma. "Char is an amazing musician. She is so devoted that I predict she will move to West Virginia, marry her cello and spend the rest of her days sitting on her porch, stroking Mr. Cello," said senior Amy Heilman.

But Prescott's music talent doesn't stop there. Up until a few months ago, Prescott was almost just as accomplished in the piano. However, she had to quit so she could concentrate solely on the cello. And if that's not enough, she also has perfect pitch, and is an amazing singer. She finally found the time to join a chorus group this year, Soundsations, and without any training or preparation, she managed to make second place at Virginia Honors Choir.

All of this music would seemingly take away from her school work, but she realizes that to get into a good music college, one must have impeccable grades. Somehow, amongst her hours upon hours of music a night, Prescott comes into class having thoroughly studied for every single test or quiz, no matter how

small. And, she has managed to complete all of her homework as well. A couple of APs is not good enough for her, either. She has to take four, including an upper level music theory class outside of school.

No matter how stressed out Prescott can get with her 25 hour a day workload, her friends understand, and Prescott manages to keep her loud, outgoing personality alive. "Char is a very funny person. Somehow, whenever I'm around her, I cannot stop laughing. She is so bubbly and smart. She is never afraid to laugh at herself which makes her an interesting person and friend," said senior Ijeoma Nwatu. She's been known to make even the most boring classes fun, giving pet nicknames to the teachers, like "Glazy-McGlazerson" (Mr. Glaze) and "Mr. Rezy" (Mr. Rezendes). Class is never boring if Prescott is in it.

No matter how big of a problem she has, or how stressed out she is, her friend's problems always come first. She can make time out of her busy schedule to help out a friend. Senior Nicole Andrade knows that, saying, "Char is a person so full of life. No matter how she is feeling, she will always be considerate of others. Her passion for her music and school is amazing. I have never met a greater person."

Next time you see Prescott not being her loud, sociable self, just flick her battery charger on, and she'll be working overtime once again.



Photo courtesy of Laura Lofgren

Char Prescott ponders a book.

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# The Man; The Legend

Drew Macklin

Opinion Editor

It's a cold, windy night, and Stuart Trouton is ecstatic. As a member of the exclusive area Urban Endeavors Club, he has just reached his Mecca. In a setting more appropriate for James Madison than this reserved 18-year-old, he stands on what feels like the top of the world. However, in the swirling wind, the equally uncertain euphoria surrounding him will surely pale when compared to the feelings he will experience when he finally stands atop the pinnacles of success that clearly line the horizon of his future.

By all accounts, Trouton is catapulting

"He's a mysterious fellow. His beauty is only surpassed by his elusiveness."

~Senior Kevin Ebberts

on his way toward success. He is widely considered a model student - he was voted "Teachers' Pet" by his fellow seniors - but he hopes instead to be remembered as "someone who has had a positive impact on his community."

Particularly in the past two years, he has demonstrated a willingness to take a step beyond where other high-schoolers would go in order to have an effect on the world around him. As a junior last year, he organized a display in the library

that physically portrayed the amount of paper waste the school consumed every month. Thanks largely to his efforts and that poignant demonstration of the importance of a creative recycling and conservation program, the school has taken strides to cut down on the amount of paper used by teachers each month.

This year, in the midst of a heated Presidential Election which most students observed passively from the outside, Trouton stepped in and was the catalyst for a voter registration drive here in the school. He contacted the local voting registrar, coordinated with the administration, and helped voting-age students make the most of their democratic eligibility.

Try as he might, though, Trouton will long be admired for his academic prowess, especially in the fields of math and science. He was an AP Calculus BC student as a junior, and is now enrolled in Multivariable Calculus, a course taught to a select number of students over the TV. This past summer, he was awarded a position in the NASA Mentorship Governor's School Program. For several weeks, he worked closely with a Post-doctoral scientist at Langley Research Center in Hampton, Virginia on self-healing thermoplastics. The experience left him with both a greater

respect for the scientific community and a ready-made science fair experiment he is happy to exploit this year.

Take a longer glance at Trouton, and this entire resume fades away.



Photo by Houston Murphy

Senior Stuart Trouton devotes much time to this school's audiovisual program.

Instead, the picture of Jenga Master Stu inexorably fills one's mind. As a co-founder of the fledgling West Potomac Jenga Club, Trouton's face has become recognizable because of the commercial he helped make which rocketed Jenga Club to fame. Though he will release lightning bolts from his fingers if the request is polite enough, he instead prefers to hide his Jenga talents beneath a calm, good-natured façade.

Trouton is also a member of the Key Club, National Honor Society, the Debate Team, and the Swim Team. He is currently engaged with three other

talented friends in shooting their own original films. The short movies are being created by the same team that produced the Jenga commercial, and though their budget is nonexistent, their pool of actors is small, and the daily grind of school conspires against them, they have the highest hopes for the success of their endeavors. Senior Kevin Ebberts, one of his fellow student-directors, says of Trouton, "He's a mysterious fellow. His beauty is surpassed only by his elusiveness." While this statement is ambiguous at best, it clearly demonstrates the artistic sentiment present in the four boys.

This winter, Trouton hopes to apply to MIT, Columbia, UVA, Virginia Tech, Harvey Mudd, Duke, and possibly Princeton. Such challenging schools are nothing to Trouton. He plans on majoring in Engineering, and then following whatever path is laid out before him. These lofty goals shouldn't be too much for the student who prefers to describe himself as "hard-working, honest, full of integrity, moral, and a good kid." Then he chuckles and says, "Well, I don't know about the hard-working part." Whatever his thoughts, his high school record indicates he will do what it takes to reach the top.