



Photo by Hoff Cooksey

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Photo by Stephen Howell

Freshmen Danny Rivera ices a hurt knee as athletic trainer Alisa McDonald looks on. Student athletes are more prone to staph infections, which have broken out in the area.

## Area On Edge Over Staph Deaths

Stephen Howell

News Editor

When is the last time you washed your hands?

According to a new study, it should have been recently, or you might be have a greater chance of catching the deadly staph infection than you think.

A recent study showed that the staph infection Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, better known as MRSA, is more common than once thought. The study, published by the American Medical Journal, revealed that since 2005, MRSA has been responsible for more deaths across the nation than the sexually transmitted disease HIV/AIDS.

MRSA is a highly resistant virus given the deadly title of "Superbug." It is essentially a horrible infection that spreads quickly throughout the body once it enters. While 30 percent

of Americans carry MRSA in them, a particular strain of MRSA has been rapidly evolving over the last decade as it becomes more resistant to modern antibiotics. "We have to be aware that the drugs we used to use to treat MRSA don't work as well as they do now, because [MRSA] has gotten immune to it in a way," said athletic trainer Alisa McDonald. The disease, once thought to be limited to hospitals and other treatment centers, has recently appeared in schools and affected students all across the nation.

Last week, MRSA took the life of one senior at Staunton River High School in Moneta, Virginia. The teen, Ashton Bonds, struggled with the disease for a week. Since his October 15 death, friends have bombarded his MySpace page with tributes and prayers. After a student protest, officials shut down all 22

MRSA bacteria under microscope

Skin infection



Red, swollen Pus or other and painful discharge

*Staphylococcus aureus*

Street Name: Staph Infection

Photo illustration by Kate O'Connor

schools in Bedford County for disinfection.

However, the incident in Moneta was not the only outbreak. Last week, thirteen students in Rockville, Maryland contracted the disease in an outbreak believed to be related to sports. Also, in Brooklyn, New York, MRSA took the life of a seventh-grade student.

See MRSA Deaths, page 5

## Graffiti Defaces Bathrooms

Patrick Dunford

Reporter

"Wes Po Sucks." One might recognize this message scrawled across the wall of the downstairs bathroom across from the cafeteria. Bathroom graffiti is a widespread issue, and goes beyond the walls of this school.

Who writes these messages? Gang members, or people posing as them, are one of the alleged factions, with sharpies as their weapon. MS-13, or Mara Salvatrucha—which has been linked to significant criminal activity in the area—is a gang comprised of El Salvadoran immigrants to the United States. According to an article in *The Washington Post*, Fairfax County has a gang population of at least 2,000-3,000 people, with most members in the age range of 12-24. The MS-13 abbreviation can be viewed in three restrooms in this school. Gang signs in this school are only reminders of actions and rivalries outside of school that are commonly associated with the gangs responsible.

Graffiti on bathroom walls extends far beyond our school. In November 2001, a California newspaper reported one high school's case of

bathroom graffiti that went too far. The graffiti in this California high school threatened a shooting at the school the next day, causing a widespread panic. The next day 700 of the school's 1900 students chose to stay home, according to *The San Diego Union-Tribune*.

Another serious case of bathroom graffiti occurred on October 1 at Columbia University. The message on the wall read: "Attention you pinko Commie motherf\*\*\*ers and Arab Towelheads: America will wake up one day and nuke Mecca, Medina, Tehran, Baghdad, Jakarta, and all the savages in Africa. You will all be f\*\*\*\*\*! America is for White Europeans!" This message provoked a rally by anti-racism groups in order to dissipate the effects of the act. The culprit was not found, but the action caused an increase in security on Columbia's campus.

The act of defacing bathroom walls with hate messages is criminal, and repercussions affect this school directly. This issue frustrates the custodial staff at this school, and their main



Photo by Stephen Howell

Mostly gang related, bathroom graffiti has recently been a major problem at our school.

grievance with the graffiti is the time it takes them to clean it off of the walls. The security staff concurs with the custodians when it lamented the money squandered constantly repainting bathroom walls. When asked for suggestions for punishments for those who scrawl graffiti on the walls, one custodian replied with a smile: "expulsion."

## Teens Ignore Music Laws

Kate O'Connor

Editor-in-Chief

The music industry, hit hard by an increase in illegal downloading, began cracking down with a vengeance this fall. Downloading websites shut down and hundreds of users wound up in lawsuits. Teens frequently download illegally, and even those who have not gotten caught are still feeling the squeeze by music companies.

The music industry is desperate. The Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) is a trade group coordinating legal efforts by record companies to crack down on Internet piracy. The RIAA's latest tactic is to target college students who download illegally by gaining the university administration's cooperation. College students, however, are not the only ones under attack. Lawsuits against younger teens have also popped up in the past several months, hitting families hard because parents are the ones slapped with the settlement. How did the record companies not see this coming? How did they wind up in such a such a terrible nosedive? Ten years ago, record companies were growing and thriving. After working to get rid of singles (the popular music medium of the former generation were 45's), major labels began charging more for albums because they were the only option for music connoisseurs. To make their millions, they created pop stars like Britney and N'Sync, artists who were more successful making singles than cohesive albums, but who profitably churned out platinum albums anyway. The record industry banked on \$18 and \$19 CDs or mixes like the "NOW" series. When Internet downloading came into the picture, the record companies were set up for a perfect storm.

Now, desperate executives watching their bank accounts drain are taking out their financial woes on teenagers and their families. This September alone, 261

See Illegal Downloading, page 5

# OPINIONS

## STAFF EDITORIAL

# The Question of Lunch: Meal or No Meal?

When students at our school enter the cafeteria, there is one main smell: the terrible entrees called school lunch. For years students have complained about the school lunches, causing many to bring their lunches as an alternative. We think it is the time for students all across the country, and especially at our school, to stop patronizing unappealing and expensive, disgusting food.

Although the price of lunch was raised to \$2.15, the quality of food that we are offered has greatly decreased, even though it was already very low in the eyes of most students. Student complaints over the past four years include having to mop the grease off their pizzas, pull hairs out of their fruit trays, and pay for overpriced cookies that look like they were made out of animal parts.

On the Fairfax County Public School (FCPS) website, the county describes

the food safety in the cafeterias as "prepared under strict sanitary conditions." How can that be true if students are frequently finding hairs in their food? The nutrient content on the website describes school lunch as being low in saturated fats. The only thing that is verifiably low in fats is the milk. Everything else is questionable, at best. In addition, buying greasy ingredients in our lunches causes pimples, so if one is having constant outbreaks and does not know why, it is probably because of what he or she is buying from the lunch lady.

FCPS and our school still believe that what they are serving us meets all health requirements and is healthy as well. However, on October 10, and earlier this year on April 9, a health inspector came to our school to see if the food being served to us met all the health

requirements according to the Fairfax Health District. According to the October 10 report, our school was only given one critical violation, but on April 9 we were handed 4 critical violations. A critical violation is defined as a breach in policy that can lead to food contaminations and other illnesses. Some of the violations on April 9 included that some of the utensils did not appear sanitized, some of the food was too warm and the bologna and turkey sandwiches were too hot. Some repeated violations involved faucets in the men's and women's bathrooms that did not run for at least 15 seconds. This shows that even the county thinks the food and the cafeteria is below all health requirements.

Our question for students is, why did we not decide to stop paying for inadequate food a long time ago? Sure,

there is an excuse for the students with free or reduced lunch, but for everyone else, the convenience should not be enough to lower our standards so. Throughout history, people who have been oppressed have boycotted for change. The American colonists rallied against British taxes. Granted, that analogy might not completely compare to us, but we are being given some of the worst food anywhere so we need to stick it to the man!

Here is some advice for those who hold their noses and eat cafeteria food. Suck it up and brown bag it until some change comes in the cafeteria. Unless one wants to look like a certain unattractive character from Austin Powers for the rest of their life, then they need to boycott this disgusting display that is called school lunch.

## RANTS and Raves

A **RANT** for Senior Night and the Homecoming game being postponed.

A **RANT** for extra long announcements in the afternoon.

A **RANT** for turning vending machines off during school.

A **rave** for SGA holding homecoming elections online!

A **rave** for National American Indian Heritage Month!

A **rave** for volleyball making it to the district championship for the first time ever!

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

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## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

# One Last Word on the Jena Six

Dear Editor,

With a great interest in current events, I realize only too well that my generation is growing up in a troubled world. The news is filled with stories of hatred, lack of understanding and compromise, and racism.

I am not a minority. But as a member of the majority, I can tell you that I can condemn racism. Racism is passed down from generation, like a cancer that just keeps growing. Just recently, a noose, a symbol of lynching, was hung on the campus on the University of Maryland. It is sad, distressing, and discouraging to see that racism like this is continuing in full force, so many years after brave men and women marched on the Mall in Washington, D.C., and in Selma and Birmingham, Alabama, to ensure that racism would not live on in America.

When I learned about Jena 6 this year in English class, I realized that this is not the world we should want to live in. I have read the articles about these students in Louisiana we now refer to as the Jena 6 and how they have been punished, and I can see that racism is still alive. We are the future of this country, and it is our responsibility to fight such racism. In the words of civil rights activist Mary Barry Frances, "Civil rights opened the windows. When you open the windows, it does not mean that everybody will get through. We must create our own opportunities." We must continue the fight for equality begun by those before us, and hopefully, we can become one, just as it always should have been.

Sophomore Gwen Fishel

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# Too Many Children Left Behind

## Why Proposed Renewal Deserves an "F"



**Emily Kuhbach**  
Copy Editor

Three letters have educators all over the country quaking in their boots: AYP. AYP, or Adequate Yearly Progress, refers to the standards schools are required to meet each year, according to the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. The Act was designed to hold schools accountable by putting more emphasis on state test scores and standards. Six years later, President Bush is asking Congress to reauthorize it. If this happens, however, the American education system will regress even further since that fateful day in 2001.

We do not have to look far for proof of NCLB's damaging effects. Our very school is a case in point. We belong to one of the best school systems in the country. In 2005, 93 percent of Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) graduates went on to some form of higher education, boasts the Fairfax County website. However, FCPS did not make AYP this year, and neither did our school.

How is this possible? Why are "nationally recognized" school systems stumbling over the SOLs?

**"Why are "nationally recognized" school systems stumbling over the SOLs?"**

transfer to any other school in the county in a policy known as public choice. The Act also funds the creation of more charter schools, which are schools outside of the public education system. This is essentially privatization of education. It brings low-performing schools down even further down and creates homogeneous schools. Suddenly, there is no huge difference between the rich and the educated, the poor and the uneducated.

Another consequence of not making AYP is increased focus on passing the state test, or in our case, the lovely SOL. We have developed an obsession with it, mainly because schools are threatened with less funding and potential restructuring when they continually do not make AYP. Curricula become more narrowly focused, and students forget how to learn. Suddenly, whatever does not make the multiple choice cut is not worth learning.

No Child Left Behind set out to end, as Bush called it, "the soft bigotry of low expectations" by bringing all students up to grade level. The fact of the matter is that punishing low-performing schools will only widen achievement gaps. At our school last year, black and white students' math SOL pass rates differed by a whopping 23 percent, and Hispanic and white students' pass rates differed by 16 percent.

Our school is a great example of a school that does not fit into NCLB's cookie-cutter plan for success, but still thrives. NCLB is focusing on all the wrong aspects of the public education system, and this will have more damaging effects in the long run than any SOL pass rate.

## Diet Soda 7-Ups the Competition

### Calorie-Free Soda Stands Up To Its Sugary Rival



**Sandy Slippen**  
Copy Editor

In today's world, soda presents itself as a viable drinking option for teenagers on the go. A multitude of choices await those who are picking out their sodas. Traditionally, sugary, calorie-excessive sodas are favored by many. However, I do not share this opinion. Unlike most people I know, I actually prefer the taste of diet soda. There are people who fall on each side of the "diet vs. regular" soda debate, but I tend to believe that if more people gave diet soda a chance, they could eventually benefit from it.

Regular soda products are available in rather generous amounts, practically coming across as a coffee substitute in terms of providing caffeine. Old standbys like Coke and Sprite remain just as popular today as they were decades ago. In addition, soda companies still seem to be increasing their lines of sugary sodas.

Recently, the Pepsi-owned Mountain Dew made an attempt to appeal to gamers throughout the country by introducing Mountain Dew: Game Fuel. This bright orange-red concoction is clearly pandering to a specific audience of gamers, judging by its none-too-subtle *Halo 3* product placement. "I tried it once and it tastes like cough syrup," said senior Jeremy Bogdan, a self-proclaimed *Halo* fan. Not surprisingly for a drink that tastes like medicine with none of the health benefits, the soda's nutritional info presents some rather alarming facts. According to [www.energyfiend.com](http://www.energyfiend.com), Game Fuel contains 120 mg of caffeine, about 33 percent more than Red Bull, a drink with so much sugar and

caffeine that it actually advertises itself as "[giving] you wings."

In my eyes, there is a clear alternative to drinking this rather mysterious liquefied sugar. Yes, as one may have ascertained, I value the power of diet soda. For example, take Diet Dr. Pepper: a worthy, delicious drink that actually manages to taste quite similar to the original version, in my opinion. How many calories are in this soda? Zero. How much sugar does it contain? None. This is a marked contrast to regular Dr. Pepper, which contains 100 calories and over 9 teaspoons of pure sugar per can.

I hate to sound like a nagging mother or even a dreaded dentist, but think of the decaying effect that could have on one's teeth. Some speculate that sugary soda also creates caffeine dependencies and weakens bones. I cannot be the only one who notices a gritty, fairly gross feeling on my teeth after drinking a non-diet soda. Diet soda tasting better might have something to do with the fact that one does not need to feel guilt when they drink one, unlike with regular soda.

For those who dislike the effects of regular soda but also cannot stand diet soda's taste, I propose a happy medium. Coca-Cola recently introduced Coke Zero, a soda that tastes remarkably like classic Coke but has no calories, thus making it a diet drink.

Drinking regular soda may seem like the most practical choice, but I am here to say that I definitely do not believe it is. Perhaps it would help to think of one's teeth as screaming in pain every time one consumes a non-diet soda. Many diet sodas have all of the same taste benefits as regular sodas, but none of the same kinds of health issues. Next time one decides to purchase a soda, I advise thinking about making it a diet soda instead. One's teeth would probably stand up and give a round of applause if they could.

## Students' Soda Preferences

Out of 100 Students Polled



Photo Illustrations by Emily Smith

## Just Talken

He does not see much, he does not write about much either.



**Ken Llewellyn**  
Opinions Editor

As many of you know, I am a journalist. Being a journalist, I like to stay informed on current affairs by watching the news. However, I have recently found that all the news seems to be like that song "Hey There Delilah" is really bad.

You know that "SNL" character Debbie Downer? Well, if local news was a person, it would be her. Some of the things I have heard on the news lately include the dangers of bottled water, iPods causing cancer, and the risk of getting leprosy from eating pizza (okay so that last one did not really happen). The news seems to be focused only on the world's negatives, and I think it is time the media changed its ways. Nobody wants to hear these depressing stories, try and cover some positive topics. How about a story on experimental cures for baldness or perhaps the ways sitting on your butt and eating cake can be beneficial?

Another problem with these negative stories is that they really do not need to be covered. Sure it is really gross that bottled water is full of bacteria, but did I really need to know that? The same goes with a story I read about laptops decreasing sperm count. That is right, dudes, apparently the heat from a laptop hurts the baby-making region when you put it in your lap. That information is as unnecessary as putting sprinkles on ice cream. Of course, no one offers solutions to these problems. Am I supposed to carry around a sheet of aluminum foil to place between me and the laptop? But back to the whole food thing,

**"** Apparently the heat from a laptop when you put it in your lap is hurting the baby-making region. **"**

If Bear Grylls (the host of "Man vs. Wild") can eat a dead sheep that he found on the ground in Scotland, then we should be able to tolerate a little bacteria. Just chill with the investigative reporting on delicious foods, Jim Vance. You are ruining them for me, and that grieves for the rest of you established news anchor jerks as well.

Not every piece of news is negative; some is just plain pointless. Yesterday I saw a groundbreaking story on the rise in the number of blogs by stay-at-home moms. Looks like the favorite for this year's Pulitzer has just revealed itself. These people call themselves journalists; I have seen harder news in the "Kids Post." Some may argue that stories like these are a nice change of pace from the usual stories about the struggles in Iraq. I say those people should turn off their televisions and go back to reading their O magazines. Sure, one does not want to hear those kinds of stories all the time, but do not just put in stupid stories just because they are different from the norm.

I am done ranting for now, but first, if anybody finds a graphing calculator that says Llewellyn on the back, feel free to let me know. Time to eat some dinner; hopefully my food does not contain a super rare disease that I have .000001 percent chance of catching. Of course, maybe some of you reading this are hoping that it does.

# OPINIONS

## Low Youth Voter Turnout: A Threat to the Future



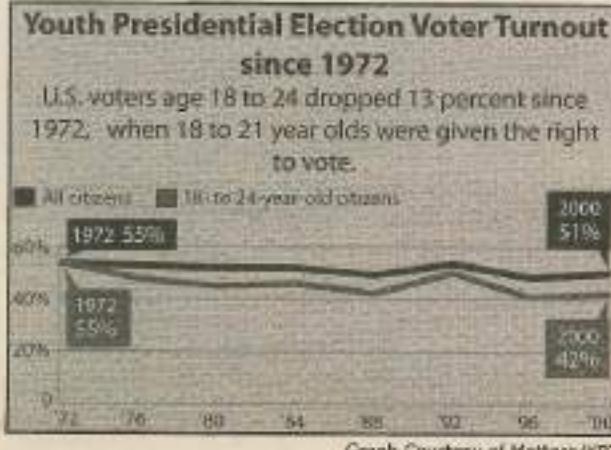
Taylor Dankmyer  
Editor-in-Chief

537 votes separated President Bush and Nobel Peace Prize-winning Al Gore in November 2000. 537 votes. It is now 2007 and local elections were yesterday. Registered voters went out and voted, including myself. However, the percentage of young people that actually vote is pathetically low every year.

According to most teenagers at our school and around the nation, one vote does not matter. Let me repeat my last statement, boys and girls, 537 votes. The 2000 presidential elections were a perfect example of how much one vote counts.

Apathy is defined on Dictionary.com as "lack of interest or concern, especially regarding matters of general importance or appeal; indifference." Apathy in politics is a common feature of teenagers these days. Most of us sit around, mind our own business and could care less about what is being discussed, debated, and decided only fifteen minutes from our homes on Capitol Hill or at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

In the 2004 presidential elections, only 47 percent of



registered voters age 18-24 voted, and only 56 percent of people age 25-34 voted. In comparison, 73 percent of people age 55-74 voted. No wonder the elderly have gotten a lot of reforms; politicians are forced to listen to them because they actually vote.

According to the 2000 census, 116,000 people live in the Mt. Vernon Magisterial District. However, only 67,000 are registered to vote. (Non-voters include people under 18, felons, military, resident aliens, undocumented aliens, and around 6,000 people who are not registered because they are lazy or apathetic, etc.)

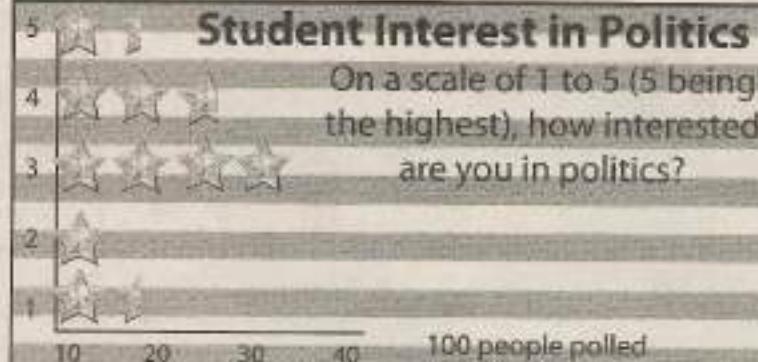
"Of the 67,000 registered, only 22,135 votes were cast in the 2003 local elections. In other words, 9.5 percent of the population selected the leadership for our area. Moreover, voter turnout amongst the 18-30 age group will be approximately 20 percent. Voter turnout among the 70+ age group will be much higher, probably close to 70 percent. You wonder why old people get what they want? They are the only ones who vote. They run things," said Scott Surowell, chair of the Mount Vernon Democratic Committee.

Also, according to most teenagers, politics do not affect them. That is funny, because last time I checked, the highest speeding ticket fines in the country are right here in Virginia. The "abuser fee" concept (charging Virginians with speeding ticket fees in the thousands) was sponsored and created by Mt. Vernon Republicans Senator Jay O'Brien (39<sup>th</sup> District) and Delegate David Albo (Springfield, 42<sup>nd</sup> District). Politics do not affect you? Come on. If young adults got out and voted, the chances of the problems we face now being eradicated would be much higher.

So, what current issues are we facing as teens? How about the "business" that college has become? It has turned into a political force, taking as much money as it possibly can from parents and students. Colleges more than ever now are accepting more and more students from out of state to get more money, or because they need to. Maybe, if teenagers actually voted, politicians would be forced to notice just how

### Student Interest in Politics

On a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being the highest), how interested are you in politics?



100 people polled

ridiculously expensive college has become, and they would do something about it.

Maybe, if young people voted, for better or worse, lowering the drinking age might actually be discussed.

Maybe, if young people voted, local governments would stop talking about raising the driving age to 18.

Maybe, if teenagers actually voted, politicians would be forced to listen to us.

So, what can teenagers do to make these "maybes" into realities? First, register to vote. The process is not as hard as many believe it to be. [Www.myspace.com/declareyourself](http://www.myspace.com/declareyourself) makes registering to vote a cinch.

After registering, it is important to stay informed on current events. What is being discussed among presidential candidates? Health care, the war in Iraq, global warming, taxes, gay rights, or whatever it may be. Also, you must look at both sides of an issue. Do not just read one side on abortion, read both sides, and figure out what you believe in. No one is asking you to be a political analyst; just get out there, register to vote, and stay informed.

The US is 20th out of 21 in voter turnout among established democracies; only Switzerland has a lower voter turnout than the U.S. (<http://www.fairvote.org/?page=262>). When all 73.3 million of the 0 to 18-year-olds come of voting age, they will make up a larger percentage than the Baby Boomers. Do you want to be remembered as the generation that "did not care"? If we do not start voting now, the future of our country is in grave danger.

## Dating: Is It Worth It or Should Students Keep Waiting?



Laura Howell  
Reporter

"Will you be my girlfriend?" This is a common line that many girls in our high school hear. Yes, some of them will be ecstatic and say "YES!" while others will say "Ew, get away from me." However, when it all comes down to it, what is the point? The likelihood of getting married to a high school boyfriend or girlfriend after graduation is basically slim to none, and it is flat out not worth the heartbreak and the effort.

With the pressures of getting into college, getting good grades, and scoring that winning touchdown or goal, there is no question that teenagers are busy. Dating is one of these distractions; it is an unnecessary time commitment that teenagers need to remove from their lives.

Yes, relationships are nice for those Friday nights when no one else is around, but nothing substantially positive can come out of a relationship unless the couple ends up getting married. "Dating in high school is a total waste of time because it distracts you from your studies, causes social implications with friends and, requires a level of unnecessary commitment. I think that high school should be fun and carefree, hence serious relationships are not needed," said senior Maja Blaszkiwcz.

Relationships just cause trouble. Besides being a distraction, they are stressful. They cause trouble when the members of the couple have conflicting schedules, or when a significant other forgets to call or is busy with school activities such as sports or

schoolwork. They also cause stress amongst other friends. It is hard to balance time between the two. Junior Michael Condon said, "High school dating can result in a loss of friendship. You could wind up spending too much time with your girl or boyfriend rather than your friends."

Relationships are costly. Think about when the holiday season comes around. Teenagers are forced to buy their boyfriend or girlfriend elaborate and expensive gifts. Then they have to take their dates out to dinner, to the movies, and give them little gifts here and there. The amount of money spent on all this is quite substantial, and many high school students do not work.

Where will students get these funds from?

Yes, relationships are fun to have and some people do realize that they are not going to get married. However, many high school students are not mature enough for relationships.

"It is hard for high school students to communicate to each other," said senior Rachel Curzon. Many relationships fail because of the lack of communication.

Yes, relationships can be fun and may prepare teenagers for what they find in the real world. However, relationships are unnecessary in high school. They only lead to heartbreak and bad grades. Dating is just a waste of time when teenagers are trying to get through the normal difficulties of high school. So, next time when you are asked out, think again about how it will probably negatively affect you.



Michaela Accardi  
Focus Editor

High school can be a stressful and hectic time in a teenager's life. Relationships can be a healthy way to relieve stress and allow teenagers to take some needed time off for themselves. Although relationships can be seen as a distraction, there are several positives to being in a high school relationship.

While having a boyfriend or girlfriend can bring added stress and commitment, it can also bring happiness and fun. "Sometimes [having a boyfriend or girlfriend] causes drama between you and your friends or even people you don't know, and if it's with your boyfriend then you've got a problem. But at the same time, it can make it less stressful, depending on the person. Personally, I think it's been all positive," said sophomore Cara Yaworske, who has been in a long distance relationship for 11 months.

Teenagers in truly healthy and stable relationships know that a boyfriend or girlfriend should also be a best friend. It is always nice to have someone to spend time with, but it is also important to have a constant confidant. Life in high school can be, at times, very hectic and stressful; in these cases, talking to someone is the best alternative. Everyone has a person that they can talk to about absolutely anything; in many cases, a boyfriend or girlfriend can be the perfect person. "A relationship

is a very good thing. No matter what, you know you always have that one person you can talk to, that one person to lean on. That person can bring you up even when you are at your lowest of lows. They're just always there for you," said sophomore Brendon Cumminskey, a former student.

Although high school relationships are often seen as pointless and guaranteed not to last, in our school, we have at least one couple that is engaged or planning on getting married: senior Beth Ellis and recent graduate Jon Mulligan. Although it seems unlikely, there is the chance one may meet the person that they want to spend the rest of their life with in high school. This chance is one that hardly anyone in their right mind would pass up.

High school relationships also prepare many of us for the future to come. College is a completely different world, in which things become much more serious, including relationships. While high school relationships may seem minuscule, in college, these same basic types of relationships can develop into five times what they are now.

High school relationships can also give teenagers a chance to decide what qualities to look for in a girlfriend or boyfriend and which ones to watch out for. When teens go off to college, they will not know anyone from high school, so why not give relationships a go now?

As we are developing into young adults, relationships are a significant way to demonstrate our growth. Although it may be both hard on us and our parents, relationships and maturity go hand-in-hand and are bound to happen. Take the chance while young and having few problems. What is there to lose?

# Athletes Attend Atlas and Athena Convention



Photo by Hunk Cooksey

**Hunk Cooksey**  
Managing Editor

Steroids, drugs, alcohol, and teenage obesity have had an impact on many teens at our school. The National Football League (NFL) and the Atlas and Athena programs have teamed up to try to stop these problems. Assistant Athletic Director Aaron Helmick applied for the convention through the Oregon Health and Science University which is affiliated with the Washington Redskins Charitable Foundation. Student athletes from our school, as well as from other schools in Maryland, Washington, D.C., and Virginia, traveled to FedEx Field, home of the Washington Redskins, to join the program.

After a day of meeting other students and learning the program's curriculum, our school's student and staff representatives were ready to pass on the main goals and ideas of the Atlas and Athena programs. At the convention, student-athletes and coaches learned about the actual ongoing program that each high school involved will adopt. This program will soon involve most athletes in the school. Trainees did activities, discussed the negative and positive effects of steroids and nutrition, and spoke to professional athletes about their eating habits and views on performance-enhancing drugs. Statistics shown at the introductory presentation showed a significant drop in steroid

alcohol and drug use among athletes who partook in this program. The students and coaches who attended this event will become the leaders of small athletic groups in our school. The groups will meet annually to discuss the topics and do certain activities to reduce the use of alcohol and drugs as well as performance-enhancing substances among high school athletes.

The Atlas (directed mostly towards males and dealing with the issues of steroids and nutrition) and Athena (directed at females and discussing alcohol and other drug use as well as nutrition) programs are working alongside the NFL to increase awareness about these issues. Eight NFL teams from across the country are involved and are setting up similar student and coach groups to help athletes avoid drug use. Our school was one of only two schools (the other being Robinson Secondary School) chosen from Fairfax County Public Schools to attend this program.

"I really enjoyed seeing student athletes work together, especially with members of other schools," said Helmick. "There will be ten male sessions and eight female sessions during the winter and spring seasons in which student athletes will meet together with the trained student representatives and go through the program. They will complete interactive activities teaching them the basics of nutrition and the dangers of alcohol, drugs and steroid use. Helmick's final thoughts on the program were that it was "very informative and will be very beneficial to West Potomac. This is a great opportunity for our students."

Photo by Hunk Cooksey  
Redskins players Picton Prioleau (l) and Shaun Suisham (r) talk to students about nutrition and steroids at FedEx Field.

Photo by Hunk Cooksey

West MRSA is nothing new to our community. MRSA is no new thing to Fairfax County or West Potomac. "Fairfax county has been on the alert over this for years now," said McDonald. "That's why we show students a video at the beginning of every sports season," McDonald said. "The athlete training staff has been showing students the video since 2002. We show it to under 1000 students each year at MRSA, and the video helps in open discussion," McDonald added.

All our athletic staffs are shown a 20-minute video highlighting the dangers of MRSA and ways it can be stopped. This includes frequent handwashing, not sharing personal items with friends, and practicing regular contact with open wounds.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention reports that MRSA is transmitted through five: (1) crowding of people; frequent skin contact; compromised skin (i.e., cuts and abrasions); contaminated items; and lack of cleanliness. These factors are all too familiar for high school athletes.

This year our school has started a new practice of sending all the game uniforms with a wash that kills MRSA on contact.

There are steps students at the school can take to prevent the transmission of MRSA along with other diseases. To bear prevent contraction, McDonald suggests very frequent handwashing and not sharing any personal items like sports equipment or towels.

Fairfax County policy restricts teachers from disclosing information about specific outbreaks of MRSA but the staff remains confident about the students' safety. McDonald added, "Whenever someone does do [going to cause] a heightened awareness, so I wouldn't say that the problem has declined as much as the information to the community has... West Potomac is very safe and has been very safe because we're known about this. However, there's no way we can be safe unless students practice good hygiene."

people were sued, including one 63-year-old grandmother accused of file sharing thousands of hip-hop tunes. Since Ward, the plaintiff, claimed that she downloaded those files online and the court eventually dropped the charges, but vowed to continue the investigation.

In addition to the lawsuits, downloaders all over the world are noticing that the major file sharing websites are slowly but surely getting picked off by the RIAA. On October 23, Click, the well-known file sharing website using BitTorent, was shut down and the administrator was arrested. Click was famous for letting free release albums and was one of the few websites that allowed full albums for download as opposed to just one song.

Senior Derek Battista, a frequent Click user, said, "I was shocked on the day the website was shut down and was shocked and disappointed. Instead of his gem of a website, Battista found himself staring at a grey screen that said the website was no longer in operation and that all former users are under investigation."

"I wasn't scared to see the post," said Battista. "My first thought was 'How can I get around this?'" Within two weeks, Battista had already found a site with services similar to the ones Click provided. The RIAA shut down did not slow him down.

"I'm really overwhelmed by the sheer multitude of people downloading," said Eric Garland, mentioned in a February Free Press article that around one billion songs are exchanged illegally each month. "Times, in comparison, has sold only two billion songs since its release. According to a study by the BBC, those who file share threaten also the biggest specimens on legal download sites. Although them would only make more financial trouble for the record companies. But, just because there are millions of people downloading doesn't mean a lawsuit could not happen to you."

Two years ago, Junior Arthur Geronimo and his family were sued by the record companies for illegal downloading via file sharing. They settled for \$1000, said Geronimo. "Now we look back and give out their names after the RIAA hacked the website."

"Downloads are a real threat, but illegal downloading is anonymous and often so perceivably anonymous that kids forget that file illegal downloading will always be around," said Battista. "It can't be stopped."

**66** Analyst Eric Garland estimated in a February Free Press article that around one billion songs are exchanged illegally each month.

## School Institutes New Mandatory Tests

**Allie Leinener**  
Reporter

On October 17, students filed down the hallways to their last period classes to take the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT). The test consists of two 25-minute critical reading sections, two 25-minute math sections, and one 30-minute writing section, totaling about two hours and ten minutes of test taking. Although the county pays for the sophomores to take this test, the administrative staff decided to use some of the school funds to pay for the juniors to take it this year as well. Before this change, the freshman could sign up to take the PSAT for a fee, but were required to take it again their sophomore year. The PSAT was never mandatory for juniors. Now, all freshmen are required to take the American College Testing (ACT) Explore test.

"We are not offering the PSAT to ninth graders anymore because it is catered to the eleventh graders. Ninth graders that take the test are not used to it so now we are giving the ACT which is catered towards ninth graders. We use it as a diagnostic test, and to prepare students for the SATs," Principal Rita Vesilind remarked. The ACT Explore Test consists of a 30-minute English section, a 30-minute math section, a 30 minute reading section, and a 30-minute science section. "The school paid for the ACTs, and it came out around \$5,000. The actual test packets are reusable so the students were not allowed to write on them. The answer sheets, however, must be ordered every year at a cost to the school," test administrator Toni Phelps said.

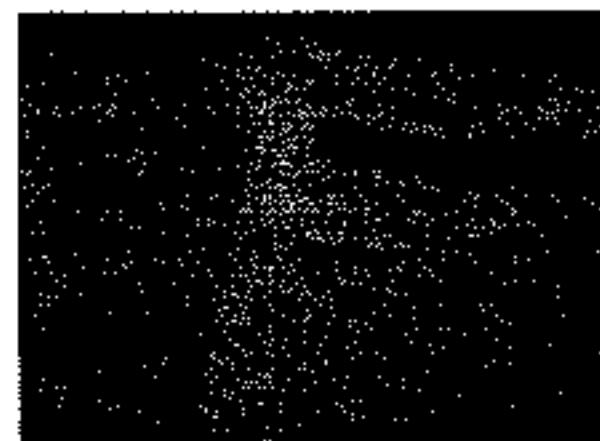
"This test is able to tell the students what their strengths and weaknesses are and prepare them for other standardized tests and the SAT format," said Vesilind.

With the changes in testing came changes in payment as

well. "Normally, it would cost \$13 per student to take the test," said College Board representative Gloria Williams. In other words, this year, the county paid \$6,097 for the sophomores to take the test and the administrative staff paid \$6,799 in school funds for juniors to take the test.

The process of administering the PSAT changed as well. "The PSAT is now offered on only two Saturdays: the third Saturday in October, that preceding Wednesday, and... an alternate test date for underlying circumstances," said Williams. She also commented on the payment of administrators of the test. "It is at the discretion of the school on whether they get paid or not. We have no say in who gets paid and who does not."

Vesilind is not sure whether or not this testing process will stay the same. "We will see how it goes this year."

Photo by Eric Coggin  
The PSAT prepares students for the SAT. This year the school paid over \$5,000 for freshmen, sophomores, and seniors to take the test.

# Class of 1987 Returns to Its Roots

Mariya Ilyas

Managing Editor

The second graduating class from our school, the class of 1987, celebrated their twenty-year reunion on Friday, October 26 and Saturday, October 27.

President of the school in 1987, Sang Lee, and his team spent about a year organizing the event. The original plan was to hold a tailgate party on October 26 by the rock before the Homecoming football game. Due to rain and cancellation of the game, the party was moved to the cafeteria. A dinner dance at Waterford Hotel in Springfield was organized for Saturday.

Our school's history extends back several decades. In the 1960s, it was Bryant Middle School and in 1976, it became Groveton High School. Due to lack of enrollment in Groveton (1,300) and Fort Hunt (1,200) high schools, Fairfax County decided to merge the two schools in 1986. Although the location of Groveton High was selected for, Activities Director Jeff Dietze said, "its better suited facilities," an original identity was born.

A school-wide vote was taken to decide the school name, school mascot, and school colors. Names such as Fort Groveton, Groveton Hunt, Belle View High, Beacon Hill, and Sherwood High were all possibilities. The current name describes the location—west of the Potomac River. Mascot choices consisted of the General (which closely resembled the federal of Fort Hunt), the Lion (which closely resembled the tiger of Groveton), and Mustang. The Wolverine was adopted from University of Michigan, who donated the dead baby wolverine in display in Gunston Hall, as a welcome notion to the rising "cubs." The colors were chosen to stand out from the rest.

"It is like a marriage," said Lee about the merger. "Once decided, it was gonna happen." According to Dietze, the student body handled the merging very well. "It wasn't that big a deal [for them]," said Dietze. "Community, now that was a different story. A number of people put their kids in private schools." Due to the great deal of tension that arose the first year of our school's opening, graduating seniors were

1987		2007
"THE COSEY SHOW" (1987-1988)	TOP-RATED TV SHOW	"C.S.I."
THREE MEN AND A BABY	BOX OFFICE TOPS	SPIDER MAN 3
BON JOVI'S "SLIPPERY WHEN WET"	BEST SELLING CD	HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL SOUNDTRACK (2006)
RONALD REAGAN	PRESIDENT	GEORGE W. BUSH

offered to receive a Groveton, Fort Hunt, or West Potomac diploma. "The merger was a big part of our lives, but it was a great experience," said alumnus Curry Rose Hoskey.

Main Office Secretary, Patty Jones, was a cheerleader at Groveton High, as well as one of Dietze's chemistry students. Her husband, Mark Jones was a pitcher on the baseball team, which was coached by Dietze. Social Studies teacher Eric Henderson played football for Fort Hunt, and Gary Relton coached our soccer team. Art teacher Mel Mobley has sponsored the yearbook since the school opened. Other teachers who are still present are Joan Reynolds, Paul Russell, and Margie Cross.

Although Class of '86 was the first graduating class, it was the Class of '87 that brought the rock and started the motto for the new school. "Tradition starts now" has evolved into "Excellence is our tradition." According to Hoskey, the students cooperated well to mix the two opposing schools, unite everyone, and create a unique identity.

Combining sports teams made our school a powerhouse at the time. The Junior Varsity football team was undefeated while Varsity held a record of 7-3. Both Groveton and Fort Hunt had to get rid of all their sports clothes.

For other clubs and organizations such as the newspaper and yearbook, students worked together and co-offices existed. For first couple of years, an underground newspaper called the *Stars at River Temp* was published occasionally mocking the administration.

Class of '87 seniors pulled off several pranks. They managed to put a Volkswagen on top of Quander, glue the lockers in the school, place tires on the flag poles, unleash an army of crickets, and bring three chickens to the school cafeteria.

Lee and his team hope to create the West Potomac Alumni Association because, as Lee said, "Everyone should feel at home wherever you are." The association would connect students in colleges and across the nation through a sense of pride and spirit for their high school community.

**WHAT IF MOTIVATES. WHAT IF INVENTED THE ALARM CLOCK.  
WHAT IF PUT THE LIGHTS ON. WHAT IF KEEPS THE LIGHTS  
ON. WHAT IF IS 60 MILES PER GALLON. WHAT IF PUTS  
FOOD IN PEOPLES' STOMACHS. WHAT IF FINDS CURES AND  
PREVENTS DISEASE. WHAT IF MADE THE COMPUTER. WHAT IF  
IS MAKING IT FASTER. WHAT IF MAKES YOUR SHOES LIGHTER  
AND YOUR JACKET THINNER. WHAT IF PUTS AIRPLANES IN  
THE AIR, KEEPS CARS ON THE GROUND AND MINDS IN THE  
CLOUDS. WHAT IF MAKES THINGS MORE VALUABLE THAN  
MONEY. WHAT IF FINDS A BETTER WAY. WHAT IF  
IS NEVER SATISFIED. WHAT IF IS IN HONG KONG,  
NEW YORK AND MOSCOW. WHAT IF IS ALWAYS  
POSSIBLE. WHAT IF YOU WERE AN ENGINEER**



[WWW.EGR.VCU.EDU](http://WWW.EGR.VCU.EDU)

HUNTLEY MEADOWS PARK

## AREA 3 OFFICE

6901 S. KING'S HIGHWAY

FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY

*Photo by Sam McCann*  
Last month, a woman was found murdered in this Fairfax County Park.

## News Briefs

## Gunman Causes Panic On Route 1

On the afternoon of Wednesday October 17, an 18-year-old male shot and killed an 80-year-old female walking in Huntley Meadows Park. Immediately after, he boarded a local Fairfax Connector bus with bloodied clothes, his gun still in possession. Upon boarding the bus, he did not take any hostages but instead took a seat, according to a witness' account to *The Washington Post*. He rode the bus until police pulled it over near Mount Vernon Plaza. A four-hour impasse with the police ensued. As a result, the local elementary and middle schools were shut down and a section of Route 1 was closed off, causing traffic problems in the midst of rush hour. The man was ultimately negotiated off the bus at around 7 p.m.; the entire time that students at the schools under lockdown were bussed home. Route 1 reopened half an hour later. The gunman, who has a history of criminal activity, was charged with murder.

## Fairfax Largest County in Virginia

According to full enrollment figures (October 1), Fairfax County is the first largest school division in Virginia. Public enrollment counts taken on October 30 are considered to be the official enrollment counts for the year. They are used to determine staffing, budgeting, and enrollment projections in public schools. Virginia's largest school district, Fairfax County Public Schools, serves 164,843 students. Prince William County is the second largest school division in Virginia with student enrollment of 12,654.

## Local Restaurants Donate to Football

During our team's football season, the coaches meet every Sunday to strategize. During this time period, Chilis and Chipotle have donated dinner to all the coaches in our football program. The West Potomac football program thanks both Chipotle's and Chilis for supporting the football program. The coaches spend almost the entire day in a room watching film, deciding on plays and putting together a starting lineup for the upcoming week. The coaches do not have to worry about paying for a large meal; therefore, the team can purchase anymore equipment or miscellaneous things needed for the team. Once again, thank you to these two businesses!

## Blood Drive to be held November 9

Give back to those in need on November 9 in the Auxiliary Gym. The American Red Cross will be holding its annual blood drive from 8:30 am - 2:30 PM. Students willing to donate must be 17 years of age or older and weigh at least 110 pounds. Students willing to donate can sign up during all lunches on November 9. There are other requirements involving residence in foreign countries in a certain amount of years. For example, if you live in Spain between the years of 1980 and 1996 or if you live in the United Kingdom for three months between 1980 and the end of 1996. There are very specific criteria for who can and cannot donate, however in most cases any willing donor can donate a certain amount of blood.

## Working to Crack the Cliques

Asma Ahmad

Reporter

On November 13, our school will be hosting Mix-It-Up at Lunch Day during all lunches. It is a simple call to action in which every student will take a new seat in the cafeteria. By taking this step, students will be encouraged to meet new people, make new friends, and cross the lines of division.

The cafeteria will be divided into twelve sections, one for each month of the year. Depending on when a student is born, he or she will sit in the designated area for their birth month, along with everyone else who was born in the same month. The ROAR committee and groups such as the National Honor Society, Latino Leadership Coalition, Muslim Students Association, Black Cultural Alliance, Gay Straight Alliance, SCA and Unison, and Peer Mediators will be working hard to make sure this day of bonding and learning is enjoyable for all.

"Fight hate and promote tolerance" is the motto, boldly printed on the Mix-It-Up at Lunch Day website ([www.mixitup.org](http://www.mixitup.org)), to demonstrate the importance of this day and its possible benefits. This will be the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Mix-It-Up at Lunch Day since its creation in 2001 by the Southern Poverty Law Center based in Birmingham, Alabama. Our school will be part of the 10,000 registered middle and high schools across the country participating in this event. Special Education teacher Kathryn Nelson registered our school for Mix-It-Up at Lunch Day after witnessing the immense amount of diversity we encounter every day. She said, "Through this event, I would like to see the end of labeling and grouping on our campus because each student has something special to offer." Nelson feels that breaking away from cliques is the first step in making this day a success.

The intent of Mix-It-Up at Lunch Day is to mix and match the entire school and persuade students to learn about the different kinds of people, cultures, and traditions within our community. Though many may enjoy the company of those different from us, students consider friends to be the time when they feel free to be with friends with whom they share commonalities. The purpose of this day is to completely "mix it up" by putting students who would most likely never get a chance to know each other together. Leadership students are working in and out of class in preparation for this event and they, along with other clubs, are touring for its success.

Members from each club will be monitoring tables and making sure everyone is having a good experience. Activities will be available in which all students are strongly encouraged to participate. There will be topic starters as a way to break the ice and have students get to know each other. According to junior and NHS member Cheryl Olechowski, who will be monitoring the area for her birth month along with other student leaders, "Mix It Up [at Lunch] Day will be a great opportunity to make new friends and visit with old ones but initially students may sit with their old friends." However, some students may feel uncomfortable when placed in a different surrounding. "It may not be a very successful event because many students do not like trying new things. They may be resistant because they will feel out of place," said senior Samuel Minish.

As this will be a day of experimentation to see how our student body responds to change, senior Chris Neelkerk is looking forward to the event. He said, "I have always wanted to sit and talk with other kids in our school to see how similar and different we really are."

With the help of student leaders, staff, and active participants, this day may go significantly beyond its estimated effectiveness. From now till November 13, Mix-It-Up Day will be advertised as a way to introduce students to it and have them understand its purpose.



*Photo of a student from hunting tolerance by Sam McCann*

A national poster for Mix-It-Up Day (November 13), which hopes to encourage students to interact with those outside their typical social cliques.

## No Rankings, No Problems?

Alex Babicela

Features Editor

The first report card will arrive soon to document the progress students in Fairfax County have made so far this year. Grades and report cards are nothing new for our county, but the recent trend of abolishing class rank is.

This information could affect whether or not seniors get admitted to the college or university of their choice. A total of sixteen report cards from the entire high school career serve not only to determine a student's grade point average (GPA), but also his or her class rank. Class rank is a system based solely on a student's GPA, in which a student is ranked in comparison to everyone else in his or her class. It is determined after six semesters of high school and is based on the student's grades in all high school courses taken. An additional weight of 0.5 is added to Advanced Placement (AP) courses in which the student scored a 3 or higher on the exam.

In 2006, a total of four schools in Fairfax County ranked their students, including ours. Now the Office of School Counseling Services of Fairfax County Private Schools reports that there are 100 schools in the county that currently rank. College and Career Center Specialist Barbara Turner said that the implementation or removal of a rank system is decided by the individual school and principal, not the county.

According to an article on Collegeboard.com, "If your school doesn't employ ranking, your students are at no real disadvantage... Admissions officers have increasingly begun to discount the accuracy and importance of class rank as a factor in evaluating students." Turner said that when students apply to colleges and universities, the admissions officers sort applicants into schools with ranks and without. "The students are in disadvantage at all," she said.

Turner said she believes that without ranking "there is more inner competition when the goal is to take high level classes and

get good grades." She also said that this causes students to take, for instance, Honors or AP courses without worrying about lowering their rank.

The Collegeboard.com article also said, "Many large state universities still require class rank as do many scholarship programs." The applications for most the colleges and universities ask if there is ranking at the school, and if there is none, they ask for an approximation of what the rank would be. Turner said that schools use deciles, or ten percentages, to place the students.

Fairfax County acknowledges anyone who graduates with a 4.0 or higher GPA as a valedictorian, but the functional valedictorian that makes a speech at graduation and is called "the Valedictorian" is now decided differently. When the ranking policy was still in effect, the student with the highest GPA, first in their class, was "the Valedictorian." Lisa Cox, last year's senior class speaker, said, "We were trying to determine what would be fair" in changing the process. Cox said she held a congratulatory breakfast for the students who had a GPA of 3.9 and higher. She then "extended an invitation" to all of those students to submit speeches that they would make at graduation. Some students declined, but those who chose to submit their speeches were videotaped and submitted to a panel. This panel consisted of English teachers Juan Reynolds, Julian Deesum, and Class of 2007 administrator Nancy Krejci. Mr. Deesum created a rubric to judge their presentations and also their speeches. The panel, Cox, and principal Ruth Verdell decided to have the voice of the "general population" head by "extending the invitation" to students with a GPA of 2.5 or higher. Those students also had to videotape the presentations of their speeches. The end product of this was four speakers for graduation, three with a GPA of 4.0 and one who represented the "general population." "I think it worked out very well," said Cox, though she suggested only three speakers for the future. Cox also said that there was a 95% chance that the "valedictorians" would be chosen like this again for the class of 2008.

## A Closer Look

O  
Fairfax County Schools that Use Rankings

Minimum GPA for Valedictorian Last Year

4.0

2.5  
Minimum GPA for Graduation Speaker Last Year

Number of Student Speakers at Last Year's Graduation

4

# Uncovering S

## Legend of Bunny Man Bridge

Sam McCann

News Editor

Although it may sound harmless, the "Bunny Man Bridge" is anything but. That is, if you believe the legend.

The bridge, located in Clifton, VA, is at the heart of one of the most famous supernatural tales of suburban D.C. lore. Like any good myth, the story has grown by word of mouth, or in this case, the Internet. One particularly fantastic version of the tale was posted on a website known as Castle of Spirits by someone under the name Timothy C. Forbes. Forbes tells a tale of supernatural killings under the bridge on several Halloween nights and cites specific examples complete with victims' names. He explains how, in 1904, a bus full of asylum inmates crashed as they were being transported to another location. One of the inmates was never tracked down, but residents kept finding half-eaten rabbit carcasses in the months after his disappearance. The following Halloween, a group of kids were under the bridge at

midnight when, suddenly, light flooded the tunnel. When the light cleared, all were dead and hanging from the bridge.

The post details even more killings at the bridge at midnight on Halloween, the most recent occurring in 1987. However, a thorough research project by Brian Conley, a Historian-Archivist with the Fairfax County Public Library, debunked much of the posting. On the Fairfax County Government website, he wrote, "All of the specifics given in the Forbes version are false," and takes a factual approach to the legend. Using newspaper articles and police reports, he traced the legend back to October 1970, when a person in a rabbit suit threw a hatchet through the window of an occupied car and hacked the roof support of a new house with an ax.

Although the true story of "Bunny Man Bridge" may be lost in rumor and exaggeration, its rich history makes it a popular Halloween spot for teenagers in the area. Whether or not the supernatural legend is true, the bridge is hallowed ground in suburban lore.



## Revealing Halloween's History

Mary McKnight

Poll Editor

Most of those who walk the suburban streets on Halloween night simply see the gutted pumpkins and kiddie costumes, the candy corn and automated drop-down spiders. Few have enough insight into the holiday's religious and ancient origins to realize its true significance or to know that the paper decorations hide ancient traditions so old that they outlive its annual perceptions in popular culture. For most people, October 31 marks the end of summer, whispered in the rustle of dead leaves, while for others, it is simply an excuse to scare the neighborhood kids with plastic skeletons and warty-nosed witches. Yet for the relatively small Pagan and Wiccan populations of America, this date signifies the beginning of a new year. Samhain, pronounced

"sow-in," begins at sunset on Halloween and puts special emphasis on the dead, or more specifically friends and family that have passed on. The more worldly facet of this reverence is, of course, the death of summer itself. The ceremony bids goodbye to long, hazy days and humid evenings and welcomes the short, night-stricken days of winter, known to those who celebrate it as the "dark half of the year." Most literally, it is the

slumber of Mother Earth herself, wherein her vegetation lies dormant and the earth is cold.

This acknowledgement of the Great Beyond bleeds through into our more modern traditions. When little tykes skip door-to-door collecting sacks of brightly-dyed candy and wearing Power Rangers and Disney princess costumes, this harkens back to the times of countryside and agricultural villages, when teens and sometimes their parents would parade through town deep into the night wearing horrifying costumes and asking for treats (usually acorns or apples). The penance for refusal was pranks, ranging from glue put in door locks, the whitewashing of windows and even the rebuilding of a neighbor's wagon inside their home while they slept, hence our modern phrase of "trick or treat." However, the fact of the matter was that those in costume represented death itself, and the subsequent bribe to ward it away was symbolic of a human instinct to keep death at bay for at least another year. The constant in all of these traditions is a deep-set reverence of death in its most purifying state, for this is a tween time - bridging light and dark, old and new, life and death - and the opportune sabbat for new beginnings. In life, there is death, and in death, there is rebirth, and the focus of the Pagan New Year is the collision of all three.

## Strange in Spring

Grace Powe

The world of Shakespeare excitement, triumph and, for

at our school, perhaps even a

Broken collar bone, sp

dislocated shoulder. These ar

of our theatre students have

process of rehearsing the win

is a dark

and gloomy

play, full

of witches,

nemesis

and, of course with

Shakespeare,

tragedy.

Over the years, a curse

has been attributed to

the play; supposedly, anyone

"Macbeth" will be cursed. To

choose to call it, "The Scottish

The theatre department see

a Ha

Kate

Fall is in the air, in Maryland, fear is in the Forest, a haunted house has drawn visitors from t

Outside of Markoff Maryland, screams of terror. The line to the entrance is hundred meters, then ends madly sign mandatory w inside, tourists are given a wait, but there is no lack of

The Haunted Forest is more eerie carnival. Beyond the entrance, is a clearing in the woods. The Forest are tents and booths. The entire camp smells like Thrill seekers can pay to ride

# Suburban Tales

## Legends and Other Eerie Accounts



### Happenings



bad luck. "Last year, our two leads got appendicitis," said senior Jessica Poole who recently dislocated her shoulder after falling down the stairs. A few theatre

students joke that the "ghost" of Dorothy R. Kolgeman continues to give them misfortune. Kolgeman was a theatre teacher at our school who died in 1981 at the young age of twenty-three.

While many people think that the incidents at Springbank are coincidental, the upcoming play is sure to

have drama on and off stage. "We're all just making sure to watch our backs, appendices and shoulders; hopefully nobody else will get hurt," said sophomore Jessica Merck.

all just making sure to  
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sophomore Jessica Merck

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### Haunted Tourist Attraction

Editor-in-Chief

the sleepy, rural part of town. Markoff's Haunted local tourist attraction, has been a wide hit for over a decade. Located in Dickerson, the sounds of the woods echo past the trees, back and forth for about two hours. A dimly lit table where people can sit and enter the Forest. Once inside, you can expect a lengthy wait to ease impatience. You can sit at a haunted house; it is an old, run-down house, run by a man in a jester's mask. Two huge bonfires. Lining the trail are food and entertainment, including apple cider and caramel apples. You can sit and climb a massive

tower while a crowd of those who are less adventurous stand below and cheer them on. A fortune teller (a plump, apathetic teenager) reads palms in a small red tent. Every so often, an actor from within the Forest comes out and runs around the camp with a chain saw or mask to keep patrons on edge.

A man with a megaphone stands near the edge of the camp, calling out numbers. Behind him, a group of people walk hurriedly through a dark gate concealed by a black cloth. Beyond that, the Forest begins.

Costumed men and women hide all along a dimly lit trail, popping out as patrons pass. The group walks through a pitch black house, an overturned bus, a marsh, and a cemetery.

For more details, you will just have to visit yourself!

### Create Your Own Lib

Alex Fabrizio

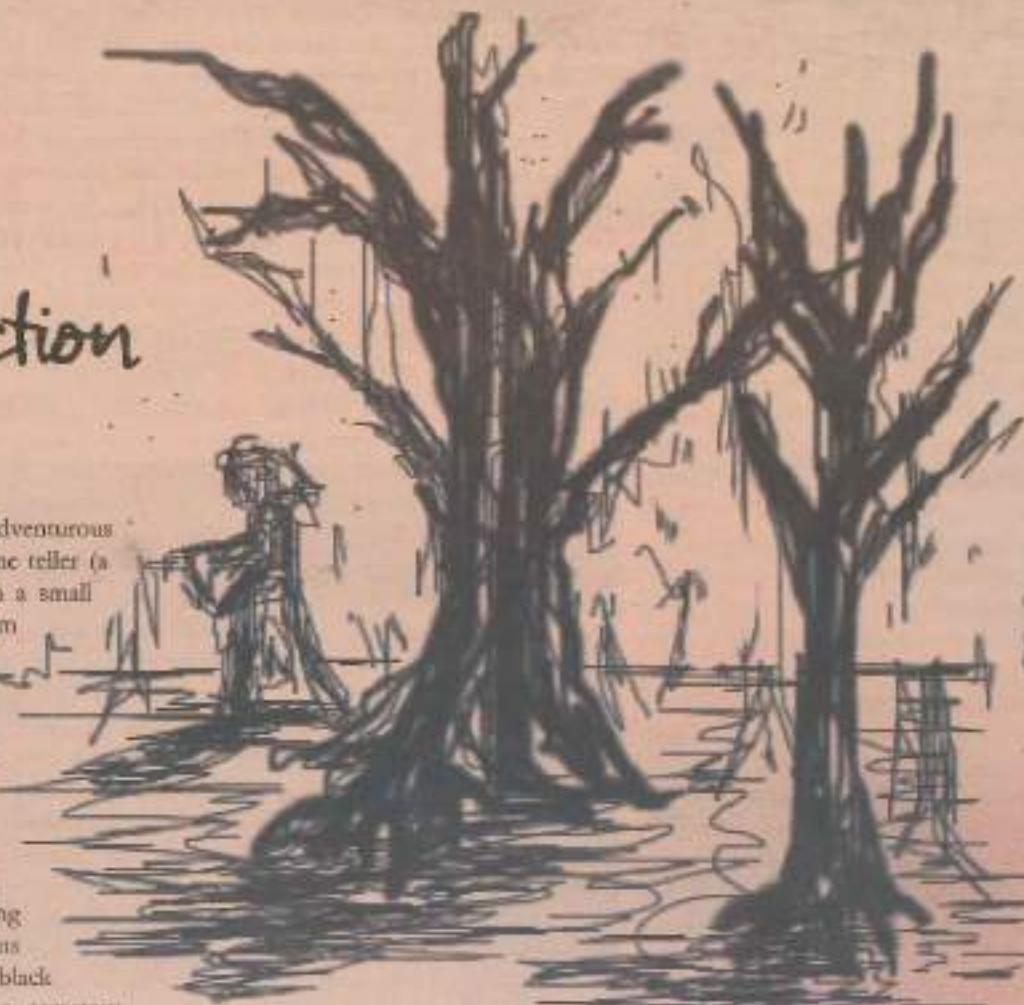
Features Editor

(adjective)

Fill in the blanks below with the part of speech indicated in parenthesis. Remember, DO NOT read the story before filling in the blanks. This can be done with a friend or alone, but be creative! If your mad lib is extra spooky or silly submit it to Mrs. Kelcy Pierre in room 418.

One dark and \_\_\_\_\_ night the \_\_\_\_\_ shone brightly. A group of \_\_\_\_\_ were out trying to prove that there was no "Ghost of Gillman Hill" when suddenly there was a \_\_\_\_\_. The \_\_\_\_\_ screamed as they \_\_\_\_\_ and hid behind a nearby \_\_\_\_\_. The \_\_\_\_\_ looked around to see where the \_\_\_\_\_ had come from but there was no \_\_\_\_\_. A collective \_\_\_\_\_ surged through the \_\_\_\_\_. They then \_\_\_\_\_ a \_\_\_\_\_ on the other side of the \_\_\_\_\_. "\_\_\_\_\_, go look." \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ disappeared around the corner of the \_\_\_\_\_. His friends for him \_\_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_\_ night for quite sometime until they \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_. The \_\_\_\_\_ over to where \_\_\_\_\_ had disappeared as \_\_\_\_\_ as they could. "\_\_\_\_\_,?" \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ There stood the \_\_\_\_\_ Ghost of Gillman Hill in all of her \_\_\_\_\_.

The severed \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ hung \_\_\_\_\_ in her hand by his \_\_\_\_\_ hair. The \_\_\_\_\_ blood of their friend covered the Ghost of Gillman Hill's \_\_\_\_\_. The \_\_\_\_\_ splattered \_\_\_\_\_ as \_\_\_\_\_ as they could to \_\_\_\_\_ the same \_\_\_\_\_ fate as their friend.



Illustrations by Kate O'Connor

# SPORTS

## *Laughing from the Bench*

NO WAY PARK  
(AND WATCHING THIS)



Photo illustration by Dennis Doherty

Taylor Darkenby

Editorial Staff

All. Yes, baseball.

Sorry, I just fell asleep. All. Yes, baseball. That slow sport we call "America's pastime." When one thinks about it, this describes the sport well; it truly is just its title. Or maybe it is America's pastime. It does pass the time, just not very well.

Obviously, did you see that World Series? I sure did, and even Red Sox fans have to be a little bored with that. A Game Four 2-1 " nail biter" was about as exciting as it got.

Yes, I know, I must sound like a woman in someone who does not "truly love sports." Well, I am definitely not a woman, and I do love sports, so, no, that does not apply to me. Nice try, though.

Baseball is just plain boring. It is the only sport where you get to see out-of-state guys pitching and hitting. Athletes are definitely not as important to baseball as they are to other sports. You have to be a lot more athletic to play basketball or soccer, and even though football offensive linemen are big, they still have to work out a lot to stop guys like Dwight Freeney.

Baseball does not have much excitement, either, except when it is filled with guys striking out or hitting a ball into the outfield, only to have it immediately caught or picked up and thrown to first base for an out. The few times that there is excitement, either because of a home run, a good foul-out hit, or an error of some kind, it rarely ever enough to keep fans watching. I mean, when your sport has to offer all of America a free meal at Taco Bell when someone gets a home run (Thank you, Jacob Ellsbury), then you know there is a problem.

How about those outfielders? They can practically sit down in the outfield. The outfield is where all the defensive assignments sit and wait. Oh, fine, not all of them, but a few, such as Jim Edmonds, did come off sitting here.

• Baseball  
is just plain  
boring. •

Plus, the playoffs are way too long. With a whole bunch of seven-game series, I just observed by the second inning of the first game, because I know there are at least another 20 innings to play.

It does not help the second issue with baseball is the HIR in the 30s decades. Stars may be just as prevalent in all the other sports, but until it is proved, it still makes baseball look like the most unimportant sport out there. Every sport wants their star to die, but, honestly, it is a fact that players like Barry Bonds, Jose Canseco, and Paul Byrd, who was accused of using human growth hormones from 2002 to 2005 (or though, are not making the sport any more enjoyable. "It's literally a game of cheaters, cheating off each other, all the time. All of the glory has been taken out of the game over the course of the last ten years," said senior Chris Silver. "It used to actually be able to call itself America's pastime, now it's a hollow claim."

I have just one more gripe. Because baseball does not have a salary cap, teams like the Yankees and Red Sox can buy anyone off the market, and teams such as the Pirates and Royals are stuck holding for ten years straight. Practically every other league has a salary cap of some kind.

Supposedly, one particular JV or start member with the initials S.M. is going to start a Baseball Appreciation Club, sponsored by Mr. Colin O'Grady. I have two things to say if your sport is so great, why do you have to start an appreciation club for it? And second, "They would."

Really, baseball fans, but football is just much more exciting – just goes to show that football and the other

## Fantasy Football Phenomenon

Paul Disselkoen

Sports Editor

It used to be enough for football fans to just sit back on Sunday and watch the procession of rousing action-packed professional games. However, something called fantasy football is taking the nation, and football fans everywhere are taking the bait.

Fantasy football is an online version of the NFL. A league can be started by any group of friends who want to take part in that season. At the beginning of the NFL season, this group of friends can take its pick from numerous online sites and register as a league. Then, just like in real football, each player of that league owns a team. At the beginning of the year, a draft is set up to put players on teams. Just like the NFL, the draft goes through round after round with each team getting one pick, eventually forming a team. League managers can make rosy changes, but typically, teams consist of thirteen players, eight of whom are starters and five of whom are bench players. The eight starters must include one quarterback, two running backs, two wide receivers, one tight end, one kicker, and one NFL team's defense. This list is compiled during the draft. When the draft is completed, the season can begin. Each NFL week, two teams in the league are chosen to face off. The players on each team get points for certain accomplishments,

such as passing yards, rushing yards, sacks, catches, and touchdowns. The points are tallied up after the games of the week are complete and the winning team is the team with the most total points from its roster. Again, the way teams accumulate points can vary somewhat depending on the settings of the league.

However, there are things that must be considered, things that any general manager or head coach would consider in real football. One thing is trades. If one is dissatisfied with a player because of lackluster performance or injury, the player can be traded to another team with the approval of that peer, or the player can be cut from the team and one can pick up a free agent player who was not selected during the initial draft or was cut from another team. Another thing the owners must look on for are "By weeks" in the actual NFL. If a player is on a team that has a "By week," one would want to pick up another player or bench that player, because if the player is not playing that week, they cannot earn one any points. Fans also root for their team because of their team's

These ranks of rules and regulations may seem too confusing to bother with, but many students at our school participate in said leagues. "It is a great way to follow football and actively participate in the league," said senior Thomas Johnson. "A huge group of me and my friends have a league together and it is an awesome way to compete and have fun with it. It can get quite competitive and trash-talking does occur, but it's all for fun," said Johnson.

Many of those like Johnson flood the hallways and competitively brag about the players that they have and the weaknesses of other teams. People all over the country are taking part in the new NFL phenomenon.



Photo By Kevin Fuhr  
Junior Michael Carr sets up his fantasy football lineup for the upcoming week.

## Are the Nats Going to Survive?

Sam McCann

News Editor

In the spring of 2005, baseball was in the air. The halls were dotted with Nationals hats and tickets to RFK Stadium were the hottest thing in town. Students were talking about the Nats, and baseball meant something in a town dominated by football. The Nats were at the height of their popularity and a potential pennant race gripped the region. The team stayed in contention for much of the summer, but their dream was ultimately squelched in late September. Despite the incredible run by the team that had been languishing in Montreal a mere two years before, the following season was a letdown. The Nats slipped in the standings and the raucous RFK faithful disappeared. Even during the spring, the Redskins managed to steal the sports page headlines. The apparent apathy continued throughout last season as empty orange seats swept over much of the stadium. The Nats desperately need the rabid fan base that most big-city teams enjoy on a nightly basis. Strong fan support plays a huge role in the performance of the team. Just ask the Phillies, whose dedicated fans spurred the team on during its playoff run.



Photo By KRT Campus/Steve Delach

The Nationals may need to make some bold changes to keep their fan base and improve in the National League East.

With a new stadium in place, the Nats need to capitalize on the hordes of fans the first games at the new stadium will undoubtedly attract. They need to reel them in, make them truly rally around the team. The team needs to recreate the buzz they generated in 2005.

It all starts in this off-season. General Manager Jim Bowden needs to recognize the team's two most pressing needs, starting pitching and outfield help, and address them.

First, the Nats need to grab a proven veteran starter. Someone such as Tom Glavine certainly fits the bill. The long-time Brave spent the past couple of years with the Mets, so he has more than proven himself in the NL East. He is just the veteran presence the staff requires to mentor the young hurlers the club will build around, a de facto pitching coach.

Then, the team needs to trade Chad Cordero as the centerpiece of a deal for a young outfielder that the team could build around. The Mets' Hastings Milledge or Carlos Gomez are players who could step in and provide a spark for the team. Both are dynamic young outfielders that could man centerfield at Nationals Park for years to come. The prospect of dealing The Chief, who was key to the 2005 run, may scare some Nats fans. However, the electric play of Milledge, a highly-regarded prospect, or Gomez, who is among the fastest players in the league, is exactly what the team needs.

Then, in a gesture to complete the rotation, the team needs to make an incentive-laden offer to Matt Clement-type starter, one who has struggled of late but has shown flashes of brilliance. Clement has not played extensively for the past two years due to injury, but should he fully recovered by spring, he would be a solid starter. Adding Clement could provide the Nats with a legitimate number two starter, which is crucial in competing in the East.

Of course, the team would have to pick up a variety of bullpen arms to replace Cordero, and role players would be key. But if Bowden could somehow execute his plan, the halls of the school would once again be buzzing with talk of the Nationals.

# Girls Can Play Football Too!

Cha'Vais Summers  
Sports Editor

When the potential game-winning senior score was called back, the fans in the crowd jumped in dismay as they watched the game slip away for the senior squad. Coming into the game with a senior team winning streak, coaches Keenan Willis, Thomas Johnson, and William Floyd were confident that they were going to keep the streak alive. Key players on this year's senior crew were quarterback Stephanie "Sugger" Gerow and wide receivers Hillary "Gandy" Goldstein and Tanisha "Nicky" Robinson, as well as an intimidating offensive and defensive line which consisted of Amanda Willis, Alisha Hemingway, Adriana Jones, and Alisha Jackson.

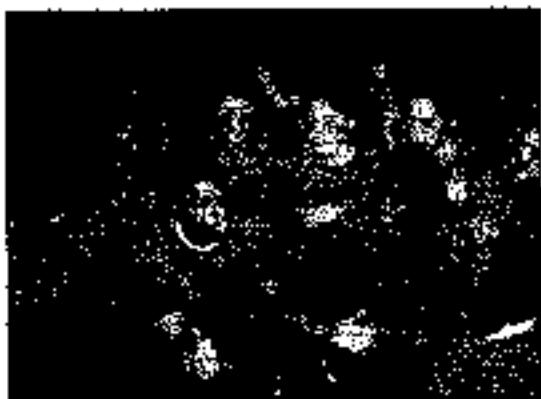


Photo by Cha'Vais Summers  
Seniors' coach Keenan Willis prep's his team for the tough game against the juniors.

The junior girls came in as underdogs lead by coaches Abu Yulah and Artis Rutledge.

"I was pretty confident in my team, but I don't know how confident my team was in themselves," said Coach Rutledge when asked about how he felt before the big game. Quarterback Sam Bauer led the charge as the juniors attempted to end the streak and create a streak of their own.

The game began like any great football match-up, with each team's defense staying strong. The junior squad struck first on a Sam Bauer touchdown pass to Emily Baumton. The remainder of the first half ended just as it began with battling defenses keeping each other scoreless. The game ended half-time with the juniors leading 7-0.

Late in the second half, the seniors finally got points on the board when quarterback Gerow scrambled for the team's first touchdown. With the score tied at seven, the juniors got the ball back with eight minutes left in the game. The senior defense forced a four-and-out, and were given the ball back with less than three minutes left on the clock. As the seniors drove down the field on the legs of Gerow, they were in field goal range with eight seconds left. Due to confusion by the referees, time ran out on the clock, and the game went into overtime.

The seniors won the coin toss and were given the chance to strike first

in the college-style overtime period. The drive began on the twenty-yard line and after a second-down Gerow scramble, the seniors were at the three yard line with two remaining downs to put points on the board first. On the next play, running back Leslie "Sleeky" Ford was stopped for a loss of four yards on a weak side tuck. The pressure was on as the game was on the line. On the next play, Gerow threw a seven-yard pass to Robinson for what was seen as the potential game-winning score, until a referee ruled that Robinson was down at the two-yard line. Despite arguments, the touchdown was not counted.

"Well, in my mind and everyone else's mind not the senior team, we won. There is no reason why our touchdown shouldn't have counted," said Coach Willis in regards to the controversial call.

The junior squad had the game within their reach as the last drive approached. On three straight incomplete passes, the juniors also faced a fourth down and a chance to take home the victory. Bauer dropped back, scrambled right, and launched a bomb into the end zone that was caught by Kelly Wood for the game-winning touchdown and bragging rights for the junior class.

When asked about how he felt about the victory, Coach Yulah said, "It felt like a movie. Everyone doubted us, even us. The credit goes to the junior girls. They had a lot against them and they beat the odds."

## IN THE NUMBERS

1

The place of our boys' cross country team in the Patriot District Championships.

Three athletes finished in the Top 20. The girls' team finished 3rd in the district.

5

The place earned by our school's cheerleading team at the Patriot District meet in Hayfield.

2

The number of consecutive losses by our school's football team, snapping their 5-game winning streak. They bounced back with wins against South County and Annandale.

25

The number of points scored by the volleyball team against Lake Braddock to advance to the District Championships for the first time ever.



Photo by Harry F. Walker / XRT  
The Wizards' Big Three, Caron Butler, Gilbert Arenas, and Antawn Jamison, hope to make the Wizards a contender in an improving East Coast Conference.

Because of Thomas' heart ailment, there will be no more fights between the centers.

With the drama left behind along with last season's injuries, the Wizards' new season is looking good. The pre-season has been golden so far as their defense seems to have improved. They have a current record of 41-42 with impressive wins against tough teams. It looks like the Wizards may have a shot at the NBA Championship.

## ATTENTION STUDENTS!



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November 8th. is  
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# STYLE

## SHRED SHIP

### JASON and The Argonauts

By Eric Lippman

Opinion Editor

Up to the local band Jason and The Argonauts, Jason Link, Chris Sava, and Matt Marinello, play through Monday nights and fall in their attempts to keep their recognition at a minimum. The band, which is fighting like the veterans it is known as, is keeping on the underground circuit scene at our schools. Jason and the Argonauts, however, continue to be seen in regular and books by students, parents, and teachers.

Just as the Argonauts have created a band that is new in name, seniors Hunter Link, Jake Cochran, and Matt Marinello are returning to our schools band and creating music. Each one of them has multiple instrumental skills and agents. Link plays drums for the marching band, while playing bass and singing vocals for the Argonauts. Cochran is an electric bass at our schools, plays drums for the Argonauts, and also plays guitar in the Argonauts' songs. Marinello is also on the electric line, and plays lead guitar for the band. The final band member is senior Carter Silva, who

sings lead vocals and plays electric guitar.

The band has a unique alternative and indie sound. It has a good balance between guitars that Marinello and Silva provide on guitar and the rhythm that Link and Cochran

play. Jason and The Argonauts have been able to create a solid rhythm given that Silva plays Link's bass playing Notes out the music, adding a thick, deep beat, while Cochran keeps a fast and energetic and strong of their style.

After listening to a few of its songs, the range on music that it achieves between indie and alternative sounds is apparent, and it has been given rise to their multiple merits. For example, the song "Don't Know If I'm Enough" features Link's drums and bass, and Sava's guitar in the beginning of the song. The song then moves over to the notes of the song "I'm Not Afraid," and Marinello's guitar provides the lead throughout, while Silva's rhythm guitar backs him up nicely. The song "I'm Not Afraid" features Link on drums, Cochran singing, and playing guitar, and Sava on bass. This song is an excellent example of the band's versatility, featuring a total shift in the instruments being used, retaining most of the quality played from the previous.

While the band is great, there is always room for improvement. When it comes to name, the name Jason and The Argonauts, or something similar, the band still sounds good, but the quality does not reach quite as high as comparison to other artists. Also, while Marinello's guitar playing is extremely skilled and has to do with some usage of effects dream out of place. The solution to both of these problems is quite simple, and all I have to say is "Please update practice."

While the number of shows the Argonauts are playing is relatively low, they are definitely not slacking on their music. Every Friday, they get together to write and record their songs, and the band has made much progress since its formation this year. Look forward to more from these guys; they are a diamond in the rough just waiting to be discovered.



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## A Day in the Life of...Mr. Coe

Alex Fabrizio

Editorial Editor

History teacher George Coe insists that he is just an average guy with an ordinary life. "I do what everyone else does," he said. Anyone who has met him, however,

can say that it is not necessarily true. The "best teacher" stays after school everyday until 4:00 PM helping his students, preparing his lessons, and

Coe's days begin the same. He wakes up every morning, copying papers. He said, "[I] go home, eat dinner, go to around 5:20 AM, takes a shower, eats breakfast, and bed and start all over again. Isn't that kind of sad?" As he wakes up his nine year old daughter for school, Coe explained one of his typical days, he repeatedly said, "This then gets in his car and drives to our school, arriving between 6:20 and 6:30 AM.

One of the first things he does is make coffee in the history workshop. Prey straightforward guy so far, while relayed it, but the truth behind this man is somewhat

right? Then things get

interesting. Once he has some caffeine in his system, Coe dances in the hallways to the music that plays. Although it is unclear whether he dances while waiting for the coffee, there is much speculation that it is a strong possibility.

Coe arranges the desks of his classroom between gulping down a couple cups of joe in preparation for his students. Another preparation before a busy day of teaching two AP World History and three Pre-AP World History classes is meditating with part of the staff at our school six years ago, when he first



Photo by Erin Parker  
Mr. Coe is regularly praised by students for his unique teaching skills and lovable personality.

a Buddhist chant, "like a Buddhist monk," according to students who were shocked by his passionate lectures and compulsive pacing.

At around 7:15, students begin to file into room 419. Sophomore Maddie Dahl has Coe for AP World History. Most are current students, but some are Coe alumni.

She said, "I heard a lot of good things about him from people and he lived up to my expectations based

impression of himself would not lead you to believe that on what I've heard. Also, he has excellent taste in ties."

he is well-liked, the Facebook group "Mr. Coe 4 Life" Coe's work colleagues agree. Molly Perez, Pre-AP World

begs to differ. When told that he is "the best teacher" by History and US History teacher, said, "He's a great

scholar and a gentleman."

## Leaving the Luck Behind

Shannon Bowdrie

Editorial Editor

At this year's graduation, no one will break mirrors in the audience, there will not be any black cats walking across the stage, and do not expect to see a ladder arranged to walk under after the graduates shake Ms. Vesund's hand. However, this year's graduating class will be sent off under one bad omen: graduation is scheduled for Friday the 13th.

Graduation is the time when young adults move on past childhood and enter the world to face their future head on. It is a push into success, good fortune, and feelings of happiness. So, why then is our school saying farewell to the class of 2008 on the unluckiest day of the year? What did the students do wrong?

Senior Jamie Coder said, "I guess we should have sold more wrapping paper. That way our school would have liked [the seniors] more." However Coder should not be so hard on herself considering the high school graduation date is chosen through a lottery system. Our school was assigned to June 13 by random.

This leads us to believe there is a black cloud hanging over Granston, Quander, and Springbank. Upon learning of the lottery style system, Senior Napoleen Krawiec said, "That must mean there is a curse of

2008, if Friday the 13th was chosen out of the blue!"

However there is still hope; not everyone believes in this supposed curse. Teacher and Class of 2008 sponsor Sandra Bobo said "I wouldn't consider it an 'unlucky' day. It may just be a 'lucky' day for the majority of the seniors." Bobo believes the worst that will come out of this Friday the 13th graduation is that the seniors who do not make it to graduation may blame the date for their failure.

So seniors, do not break any mirrors or walk under any ladders. But just in case, don those horse shoes, pick a four leaf clover, and attach a rabbit's foot to your keychain. Seven months from now, those lucky charms are sure to come in handy.



Photo Courtesy of Clipart

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# Henderson Heals Hole in the Eye

Zach Feinsteins

Online Editor

When junior Meredith Henderson noticed that her left eye was discolored and red, she knew something was wrong. However, it turned out to be much worse than she ever imagined. The redness and irritation were caused by bacteria in her contact solution that had, over time, made a small hole in her left eye.

The actual medical term for a hole in your eye is a corneal ulcer and it is caused by an open sore on the cornea. The sore becomes infected with bacteria, fungi, or protozoan, says Merck, a leading pharmaceutical company, on its website. Corneal ulcers are most common among people who use contacts, especially those who sleep with them in and do not properly clean them.

The contact solution that

caused Henderson's corneal ulcer was Aqua Soft. When asked about the side effects, she said, "pain, itchiness, dryness, [and] redness in my eye." If a user ever notices any of these abnormalities in their eye, he or she should contact a doctor immediately to prevent getting a corneal ulcer. When Henderson went to her doctor and explained her symptoms, he discovered the problem and put her on ultra-strength eye drops. For three weeks, Henderson used her eye drops, which she said were "basically rubbing alcohol" on her eyes every hour on the hour. Her irritation was so bad that Principal Rima Vesilind had to give her a pass to leave class to put in the drops.

The corneal ulcer in Henderson's right eye shed light on problems with recent contact solutions that have been recalled, as well as how destructive contacts can be in one's eyes if misused.



Photo by Erin Coquins  
Meredith Henderson checks the status of the hole in her eye with a mirror on her bus ride home.

Recently, contact solutions such as Bausch & Lomb and Complete MoisturePLUS have been deemed contaminated because have caused eye infections and other eye problems. Junior Kelly Russo, who does not use any of the solutions that were recalled, said, "[My solution does] not really [irritate my eyes]. There will be days when [my eyes] are scratchy or irritated a little bit, but nothing too serious."

There are many students who use contacts at our school. The risk of a corneal ulcer is very high if one does not care for his or her contacts and forgets to wash his or her hands. Henderson said ways to prevent a corneal ulcer include "[checking] your contact solution because some were recalled. And always wash out your contact case and keep your hands clean." Henderson gives good advice, considering she learned the hard way.

This situation for Henderson has caused some students to become fearful of wearing their contacts, such as sophomore Kenna Beaubien, whose biggest fear is that "I wouldn't be able to take [my contacts] out or put them in." Contacts and contact solutions can give students corneal ulcers, or worse, make them go blind, so doctors recommend that users always wash their hands before putting in or taking out their contacts. Also, if one ever sees Aqua Soft, Henderson says, "Don't use it!"

## YO HABLO IN SPANGLISH

Ariana Alvarado

Report

"Yo hablo en Spanglish," read the back of a shirt. She is not the only one. In the streets of Old Town, it is not uncommon for people to hear different accents from Spanish, with their native language, to come up with a whole new language called "Spanglish." "Chinglish," "Brooklynese," "Ladish," and "Bislanglish" are just some of the recognizable mixed languages that we speak today.

When people come from a foreign country, they usually plan to be able to fit in along with hopes of maintaining their background and traditions once they reach the United States. After a few years of living in a completely new environment, assimilation to American culture is bound to occur. However, why is it that Americans from different backgrounds begin to lose their linguistic identity by creating sentences that merge English words with bits of their own language? Perhaps it is because they have forgotten how to say certain words, or maybe it is simply a new method of slang. According to sociolinguist Avada, "Spanglish just became a habit for me. Whatever I wanted to remember a word in English, I just say it in Spanish and vice versa." Perhaps, "Spanglish" is not just a language, it is a lifestyle.

Many parents and students of older generations do not understand the new linguistic slang spoken by today's youth. "I speak English [combination of Urdu and English] with most of my friends because sometimes my parents can get confused about what I am saying," said sophomore Ameena Masood. Ability to comprehend two languages spoken at once is quite difficult, especially considering the English may provide a language barrier for immigrant parents.

Although "Spanglish" may be the most commonly spoken mixed language because of the growing Hispanic American population, students from Chinese, Cambodian, Pakistani, and other countries also mix English words with their language. "My language is very complicated and only senior citizens and people in the Asian community can properly speak our native language. Two" sophomore Nisha Dhamrait, having lived in the United States for the majority of her life, Dhamrait has come up with her own version of English called "Twinklish."

As immigrants to the United States continue to grow, younger generations tend to lose the originality of their native language. Language acquisition is just another step that contributes to American culture and immigrants must stay interconnected with each generation. According to senior Meagan Anderson, "parents that are in the future, more people will learn Spanglish or other English words because it is easier to speak it."



Photo from Microsoft Word

## T.C. Williams Renovations Call to Our Foundations

School Architecture Goes Unnoticed

Grace Powell

Focus Editor

Unfortunately, as students, we sometimes miss the big picture. Instead of seeing the beauty of education, we may come into the school building blind to the scenery around us. Consequently, we end up completely missing the brilliance of our school, including its innovative and refined architecture.

The buzz over the newly remodeled T.C. Williams High School is currently the talk throughout Alexandria. T.C. is equipped with a stellar cafeteria which resembles a mall food court. The school also has a garden on the roof which collects and conserves rainwater. Eleven years ago our school also underwent a dramatic renovation. "Just about anything you see is new," said Liz Parine, the senior associate of Architecture International, the company responsible for remodeling our school.

In 2001, the finishing touches were put on our school and the product was dazzling. "New walls were constructed, new systems installed, new equipment [such as cabinets, blinds, marker boards] and new finishes [such as paint, flooring and ceilings] were installed," said Parine. Our school also received new plumbing and electric systems, such as a new sprinkler fire system and new lighting fixtures that took their places throughout the campus. Parine said, "The Auditorium and Lecture Hall received new seats and stage equipment. The Greenhouse was reconstructed."

Contractors sought to redesign our school in a way that would be beneficial to everyone. "In a few instances a design was developed but [it] didn't quite meet the needs of the school. When that happened we...rewrote [designs] until we found just the right design." Unique to the new T.C. Williams is a strong environmental conscience, in the form of fixtures such as light sensors and recycled rainwater in all of the bathrooms. Our school is also environmentally friendly. The bluish color on the buildings' windows not only gives the building a sleek look, but also helps

to block too much sunlight. Parine said, "Energy efficient mechanical units were included [in the renovation]."

Even with the renovation, our school still needs improvement in some areas. Since the renovation was completed in 2001, technology has evolved drastically. In our nation, issues of environmental conservation are more pressing today than they might have been



Photo of a poster by Grace Powell  
A poster of our new campus for the 2005 school year design shows an evacuation plan that was created after the renovation of our school.

eleven years ago. This is evident when comparing our school to the renovated T.C. Williams, with its light sensors and recycled rainwater. When our school began remodeling in 1996, some of the new environmental features may not have been seen as a necessity. Principal Rima Vesilind expressed many improvements she would like to make to the school, such as adding a new biology lab so that teachers can have their own space. "We really do need to improve our facilities," she said. While our school was being renovated, Vesilind said, contractors dumped rocks from the debris on the land next to football field. As a result, many activities are run on the main football field, which is beginning to take its toll. Vesilind also expressed disappointment with the island used for Kite and Ride and the West Potomac sign entrance. "It's all funding," said Vesilind. "If we had the funding, we would know what we would be able to do."

There is always more work to be done, however. For now, the architecture of our school is based on design and practicality.

# FEATURES

## Museum Wax The Competition

Erin Parker

Photographer

It is now time to add something new to everyone's "to do list" when visiting our nation's capital. On October 4, our very own Washington, D.C. had the honor of becoming one of seven major cities to hold a Madame Tussauds Wax Museum.

Other locations include Las Vegas, New York, London, Hong Kong, Amsterdam, and Shanghai. Each has their own unique figures.

Located on 10th and F Street, Madame Tussauds is unlike any attraction in D.C. This museum provides visitors with the ability to touch and interact with the wax figures. Guests can take part in an interview with Katie Couric, pose with President Bush, and sit next to Ross Packer.

The museum is divided into five sections: "The Spirit of Washington, D.C.," "Behind the Scenes," "Glamour," and "Sports."

"The Spirit of Washington, D.C." is a trip through time to relive George Washington's inauguration and President Lincoln's assassination. The civil rights portion of the museum features prominent figures such as Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. The Watergate scandal is another feature where visitors can research information and news reports with Bob Woodward.

"Behind the Scenes" shows how Madame Tussaud makes her wax figures.



Photo by Erin Parker

A wax model of Will Smith is one of many wax celebrities in DC's new Madame Tussauds museum.

**Madame Tussauds  
Wax Museum**  
1025 F Street  
NW Washington, DC  
**Metro Stop:** Gallery Place - Chinatown  
**Tickets:** Adults - \$25.00;  
Children - \$18.00  
[www.madametussaudsdc.com](http://www.madametussaudsdc.com)

This section gives visitors the ability to see the hard work that goes into making these wax figures. The figures are so lifelike that visitors can see the sweat running down Muhammad Ali's face and Will Smith's big ears down to the smallest detail.

## Funny Has a New "Office"

Paul Dieckloen

Sports Editor



Photo by Handout/KRT

Pranks and shenanigans continue in *The Office's* fourth season with more laughs than ever during the first four hour-long episodes.

Four seasons ago, characters such as Michael Scott, Jim, Dwight, and Stanley were unknown. Now, however, in the wake of NBC's hot show "*The Office*," these lovable characters are an integral part of pop culture today. As the stars of the fourth season of "*The Office*," taunts reached incredibly high levels and now millions of people tune in to their televisions every Thursday night to watch the show.

The show is a lovable fake documentary about the daily life of a branch of paper company Dunder Mifflin. The characters are salesmen, accountants, and receptionists in the office who all have very strange adventures at work. Ruled by the dim-witted, insecure boss Michael Scott (Steve Carell), the branch tries to work hard but fails miserably in the presence of ridiculous parties, bickering errands, and downright immaturity.

"*The Office's*" fourth season started out with a bang. Jim and Pam's (John Krasinski and Jenna Fischer) relationship has been discovered, Meredith (Karen Nelson) got hit by Michael's car, and the former temp Ryan (B.J. Novak) is the new boss at corporate. The action-packed season is starting out strong, and to start it out with widespread interest and developed story lines, NBC decided to make the first four episodes of the season nine hours long each. The first four weeks of "*The Office*" have generated over eight million viewers across the country, drawing in more viewers than a majority of other shows.

The television show based off of the British comedy was watched closely due

first few years, as many people were worried that the show would disgrace the British version. Now, four seasons later, no one is skeptical, judging by the show's loyal and dedicated fan base. During the school day on Fridays, our school's hall ring with laughter discussing the latest tactics of Dwight or Kevin. Scott Graham Jenkins said, "I look forward to '*The Office*' every Thursday. The show is so unbelievably funny, no episode ever disappoints you," said Jenkins.

On Thursday nights, "*The Office*" gets the highest ratings in its time slot. Since the show has been moved to Thursday nights at 9 P.M., ratings have taken off, and people all over the country are now tuning in their televisions to have a good laugh. The show is not simply an immature slapstick humor for dimwitted audiences. The writers have made sure that it is a smart comedy, and one has to think and be intelligent; at the same time, the jokes are simple. "*The Office*" reflects all of the qualities of an instant classic while it has an original feel to it that is extremely refreshing to viewers. Although "*The Office*" has yet started its fourth season on NBC, it will surely not be the last.

"Glamour" is for any starstruck fan. In this section, fans can take a picture with a celebrity. Visitors can pose with *Pretty Woman* Julia Roberts, get up close with today's hottest couple, Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie, and feel like a *Dreamgirl* with Beyoncé Knowles. "Glamour" has a celebrity from every generation. Morgan Freeman and Will Smith are also featured.

Escape the madness of Hollywood and the political world and drift into the "Sports" section. This section gives visitors a chance to see the world's most elite athletes and some past heroes. Visitors can line up a putt with Tiger Woods and put on a pair of boxing gloves and step into the ring with Evander Holyfield (without his missing ear). The late Babe Ruth is at the plate and waiting for his pitch.

Madame Tussauds Wax Museum is one-of-a-kind and will not bore a single member of the family, young or old. Madame Tussauds Wax Museum is set apart from others by its unique, fun setup, which is uncommon for many typical museums.

Madame Tussauds Wax Museum is located at 1025 F Street, NW Washington, D.C. just a few blocks from the Gallery Place-Chinatown Metro Station. More information is available at [www.madametussaudsdc.com](http://www.madametussaudsdc.com). Tickets are \$25.00 for adults and \$18.00 for children.

## WHAT MOVIE ARE YOU EXCITED ABOUT SEEING?

**American Gangster,**  
BECAUSE IT LOOKS ACTION-PACKED.

Freshman Margaret Kerr

**Gone in Alexandria,**  
BECAUSE IT'S RATED 'R.'



Sophomore Mason Kraut

**Nightmare Before Christmas 3-D,**  
BECAUSE IT WOULD BE COOL.

Junior Michelle Cohen

Photo by Paul Parker

their job soon becomes a fight for survival.

After dealing with unwelcome gestures and skeptical Saudi officials upon their arrival, Ronald Fleury and his team begin their investigation without the help they need. Fleury's crew comes across an unexpected partner, Saudi Colone Paris Al-Ghazi (Athar Barhoum), who helps them dodge through the politics of Saudi royalty to discover the truth behind the crime. When such improbable allies share a strong commitment to cracking the case, it points the team directly to the killer. Now in a fight for their own lives, the strangers that were united by a single mission do not settle until injustice is put to death in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

So, the question remains, who is Paris Al-Ghazi actually supporting? I will save the ending for those moviegoers who may be at the edge of their seats and cannot wait to watch *The Kingdom*.

Overall, this movie should be commended for its excellent representation of Arab-American conflicts that continue to dominate our news today.



Photo by Handout/KRT

Action-packed scenes from this movie featuring Jamie Foxx helped *The Kingdom* rise to success.

# Unsatisfying Rendition

Sandy Slippin

Copy Editor

Another month, another political film with an agenda. Hollywood seems to release this type of film (typically with liberal leaning politics) by assembly line. The current trend in these films is to portray conflicts in the Middle East and their effects on the homefront, a tactic which films from earlier this year, such as *The Kingdom* and *In the Valley of Elah*, have already practiced. Director Gavin Hood's *Rendition* joins this group with a very clear message on its mind. Unfortunately, *Rendition* is missing a key ingredient in making a powerful statement to the world: quality. As much as I would like to applaud this film for being about something, I cannot. Because *Rendition* fails to draw viewers in emotionally, viewing this film is a complete bust that I would not recommend to anyone.



Photo by KRT/Tony Gervais

More scenes with actors Jake Gyllenhaal (above) and Reese Witherspoon would have saved *Rendition*.

"Extreme rendition" refers to an unorthodox American policy of shipping suspected terrorists and detainees to places outside of the United States where they will not be governed by American law and are often tortured in order to elicit information. *Rendition* introduces several interconnected storylines that revolve around this controversial policy. Anwar El-Ibrahim (Omar Metwally) is an Egyptian-American engineer set to return home on a plane from South Africa to Chicago, where his pregnant wife Isabella (Reese Witherspoon) and young son wait. Meanwhile, CIA analyst Douglas Freeman (Jake Gyllenhaal) is in northern Africa, knee-deep in an investigation of a terrorist bombing that killed his partner. In Washington, a top CIA officer (Meryl Streep) is provided with information that, by way of suspicious cell phone records, seems to link El-Ibrahim to the bombing. She suspects that El-Ibrahim is subject to rendition and puts him on a plane, erasing all of the records from the South Africa-Chicago flight he was supposed to take. Meanwhile, alarmed by her husband's failure to return home or contact her after several days, Isabella travels to Washington to seek answers, aided by an old friend (Peter Sarsgaard) who currently works as the top aid to a U.S. senator (Alfred Molina). While all of this is going on, El-Ibrahim is being unethically tortured for information. This sends the naive Freeman's conscience reeling.

This premise is ripe for an emotional, powerful examination of the complexities of extreme rendition. Unfortunately, the film does not take any chances. Every aspect of the film occurs exactly as a viewer would expect before seeing it. El-Ibrahim is practically saint-like; the powerful government officials come across as nothing more than evil caricatures and the film has all the subtlety of a skydiver's jump. By presenting a simplistic storyline throughout, *Rendition* stumbles.

While past films like *Zero Dark Thirty* have woven interconnected storylines together, *Rendition*'s various storylines are frustratingly ill-developed. Every time one of the storylines starts to get interesting, the film jumps to something else. As an indicator of this, despite getting top billing for the picture, neither Reese Witherspoon nor Jake Gyllenhaal actually appear on screen for more than about 30 minutes of the 2-hour running time. If, for example, the filmmakers had chosen to focus only on El-Ibrahim and Isabella's search for him, *Rendition* could have benefited. On the acting front, Witherspoon and Gyllenhaal's performances are fine but lacking in much of the energy they have shown in the past. Actors like Streep do well with laughably one-dimensional roles.

Despite its seemingly noble intentions and progressive pedigree, *Rendition* fails to engage. Considering the potential this film showed, it can be considered nothing more than a disappointment.

# Foo Fighters Keeps Fighting



Photo by Eric Swanson  
Foo Fighters singer Dave Grohl strikes a heavy chord with the lyrics of the band's newest album.

Brad Lupton

Columnist

There are not many bands that hold influential places in rock 'n' roll music. Rock has become a genre cluttered with sub-genres, similar sounding bands, and a lack of creativity. However, in the midst of all this banality, some bands prove to be exceptions. Such circumstances were such bands as the Foo Fighters.

The Foo Fighters are true veterans of rock, having released seven albums since their 1995 debut. Their recent release of *Educated Guess* and *Concrete and Gold* break long-time band tradition and a future now full of self-start.

This latest album contains a wide range of musical styles sure to appeal to any rock fan. Aggressive drumming and fast guitar playing characterize songs like "The Pretender," while acoustic sections of those in "Home" find their place in the album as well. Even an up-tempoed waltz fits well among the rest, and yet none of the tracks feel out of place.

Dave Grohl, the lead singer who started his career with garage-punk band Nirvana, brings his heavy influence into the band. However, the duo comes to many places with added colors like "Run," "Heavyweight," and "Mother's Day." His voice range is demonstrated throughout the whole album, but some songs, such as "See It Die," unique to show off all of his strengths in singing. His energetic and intense drummer role is present, but his thumper cell also appears frequently throughout the album.

Grohl is not the only vocal show off on this album. Lead guitarist Chris Shiflett shows off with awesome solos and rhythm skills. He makes many songs explode after minutes of build up into full-on rock anthems. The intro of "Shattered" does add an excellent date to the music.

Before *Nirvana*, the drummer Taylor Hawkins made a great solo debut with *Nevermind*. But, the guitar side, very well with rock and roll, was plain while Hawkins' rock side and aggressive drumming in the music to really drive some rhythms and beats.

This album is the first Foo Fighters album to finally live up to their '97 release, *The Colour and the Shape*. This would not surprise anyone who takes the time to listen to just a few of the songs off of *Everlong*, *Garage*, and *Crash*. The perfect mix of fun songs, slow songs, alternative rock, and soft rock albums for an awesome album that anyone can listen to without fear of being told to go away.

# Worth Coming Home For

Caroline Staples

Style Editor

Colored squares of green, yellow, red, blue, pink, and purple representing a Candy Land board circled the gym floor while students danced to "Crush That" by DJ Boog in our gym on Saturday, October 27.

"It was better than last year - mainly the decorations and the DJ," said senior Amanda Schenck, who raved about the DJ's entertainment and great music that, according to her, was not cheesy. We had a new DJ from flat 99.5FM called Electric Entertainment who also mixed for us two years ago. He threw out dozens of glow sticks that disappeared quickly into the hands of dancers. Those that happened to touch the ground did not remain there long.

A huge sign that read "Welcome to Candy Land" welcomed students, teachers, and chaperones as they walked into the gym lobby. Paper chains of different colors hung from the ceiling (and somehow stayed up until Monday morning when students stormed on their way to class.) Like in previous years, students hung around an assortment of long tables bearing food and refreshments. In fact, so many people attended this year that all the drinks were consumed by the time the dance was halfway over, forcing many students to resort to the water fountains.



Photo by Electric Entertainment  
Sophomore Mara DeRose said, "Homecoming was like beating my older brother at Candyland [the board game] for the tenth time in a row on Christmas Eve."

If they could find one that worked, that is.

Schenck also commented on the "grossness of everyone on the dance floor." Like every dance, students were covered in sweat, but maybe a little more so this year than in years past. Sweat stains were visible on many of the gentlemen's shirt backs, while many girls struggled with the embarrassment of underarm sweat.

Other decorations included red- and white-striped paper tails on the fairly new bleachers.

But they were not the only thing that was red and white. Senor Drew Reese sported a red- and white-striped shirt and hat and a red sequined vest. At his side, he proudly carried an enlarged candy cane - literally. His presence and apparel truly added to the Candy Land theme for this year's Homecoming.

## FEATURES

# 3 DIFFERENT SENIORS, 1 COMMON GOAL... TO WIN A TITLE

Stephen Howell  
News Editor

Chances are, you know one of our schools' many senior star athletes. Josh Wells is our football team's running back. Outside football, he enjoys hanging out with friends and "chilling." Jamie Coder is a star volleyball player who enjoys a great life aside from volleyball. Her lime green room and queen size waterbed portray her outgoing personality and love for her friends. Kelly Carmichael is a cross country captain. While most of his day revolves around running, he enjoys watching movies and being with his girlfriend, Hannah.

KELLY



Photo courtesy of Peter Coffey

W: Josh Wells C: Kelly Carmichael J: Jamie Coder

### What sports do you play?

- W: I'm on the football and track & field teams.  
C: I do cross country and track during the winter and spring.  
J: I play volleyball for the school and I also play soccer year round.

### What has been your favorite sports moment?

- W: Last year when I scored 5 touchdowns in the game against West Springfield.  
C: It was probably... when we won the district title at Burke Lake Park. I got a 16:03.  
J: Team sleepovers are my favorite memories of volleyball. I love the bonding and the things we learn about each other.

### What are your favorite foods?

- W: Barbecue chicken. I can't get enough of it.  
C: I love tacos. Nothing feels better than sinking your teeth into a crunchy taco full of toppings.  
J: Spaghetti. My favorite kind is the one with the noodles and sauce.

### What's your favorite music?

- W: I listen to mostly anything, especially rap and hip-hop.  
C: Well, I have an eclectic style of music I listen to. I like to listen to everything. Some rock, some rap, mostly chill music.  
J: Music featured on the Disney Channel would have to be my favorite. I love to listen to that and country.

### What are your hobbies?

- W: I love playing video games with my friends. I usually play Madden, nobody can see me in that.  
C: Eating pasta, drinking water, lifting weights, the usual.  
J: I like to go shopping at Springfield Mall with my friends. I also am collecting Yoplait Lids. For every lid you collect, Yoplait donates 10 cents to a breast cancer research fund. So far I have 50.

JOSH

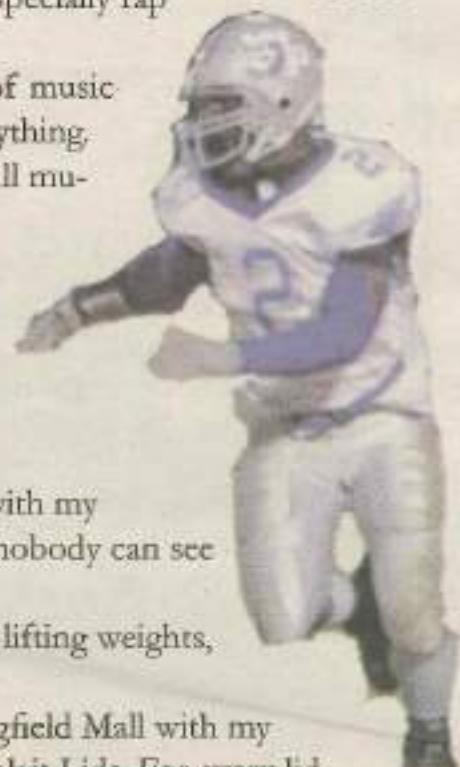


Photo courtesy of Josh Wells

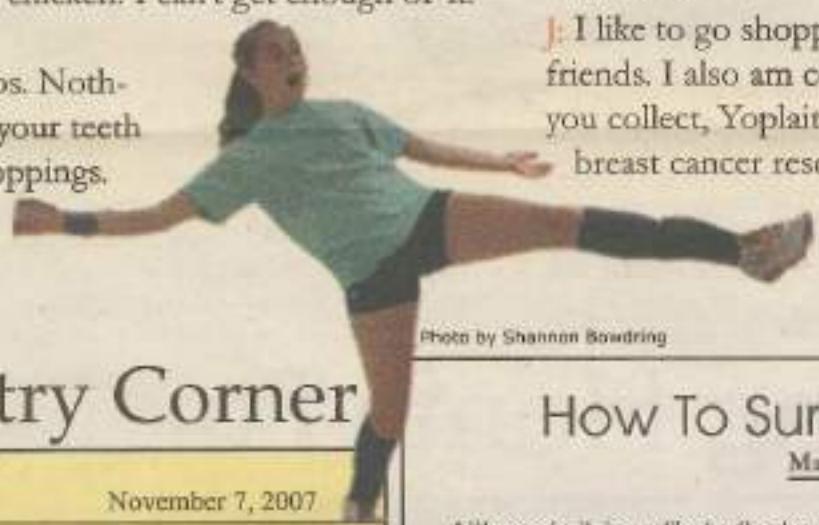


Photo by Shannon Bowring

## B-Rad's Poetry Corner

### REPORT CARD

November 7, 2007

• Buenas Notas? A B-radley Joint  
Report Cards, dropping in the mail,  
Taking the wind, out of your sail.  
Say goodbye, to that Xbox,  
Say hello, to new door locks.  
Before the weekend, they tend to release,  
Ruining the fun, like them police.  
Martial law here, in my house,  
Strapping me down, quiet as a mouse.  
Lucky for me, I'm smart as whip,  
Lucky for me, my life's outta the dip.  
Rollin' in the A's, sealin' the deal,  
I get good grades, 0 kids, I keep it real.

A  
B+  
A  
A  
B  
A

## How To Survive In The WILD

Mary McKnight

Editor

Although it is unlikely that a Northern Virginia teenager should ever wind up alone in the rugged wilderness without contact with civilization, life has taught us that we should prepare for the worst. Here are some tips to keep in mind if you ever find yourself in such a precarious situation:

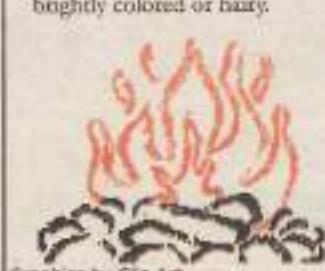
1 **N**ever forget the importance of the will to survive. This may seem obvious, but depression in a survival setting is common and dangerous.

2 **H**ydrate, hydrate, hydrate! Never push yourself, no matter what the situation is, without drinking the proper amount of water. 6-8 liters a day is recommended, but never more than 1 liter at a time. Do not ever drink salt water. It may seem as if it is an oxymoron, but it will cause greater thirst.

3 **B**od all water collected for at least one minute and at most ten, depending on altitude. Filter using several layers of cloth, crushed rock or charcoal to relieve mud or foul smell in addition to boiling.

4 **F**or food, never forget that insects provide 45-60 percent more protein than beef. It may seem gross, but creepy-crawlies get much tastier when you are starving. Stay away from those that are brightly colored or hairy.

5 **R**ed is the international distress signal, so if given the choice, try to make your signal that shade. Fire, bright lights, smoke, mirrors, and clothing that stand out in your environment are all effective ways to get attention.



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