



Wednesday, November 16, 2011

Occupy everywhere, never give it back

Junior DJ Condon takes a stand through the Occupy movement

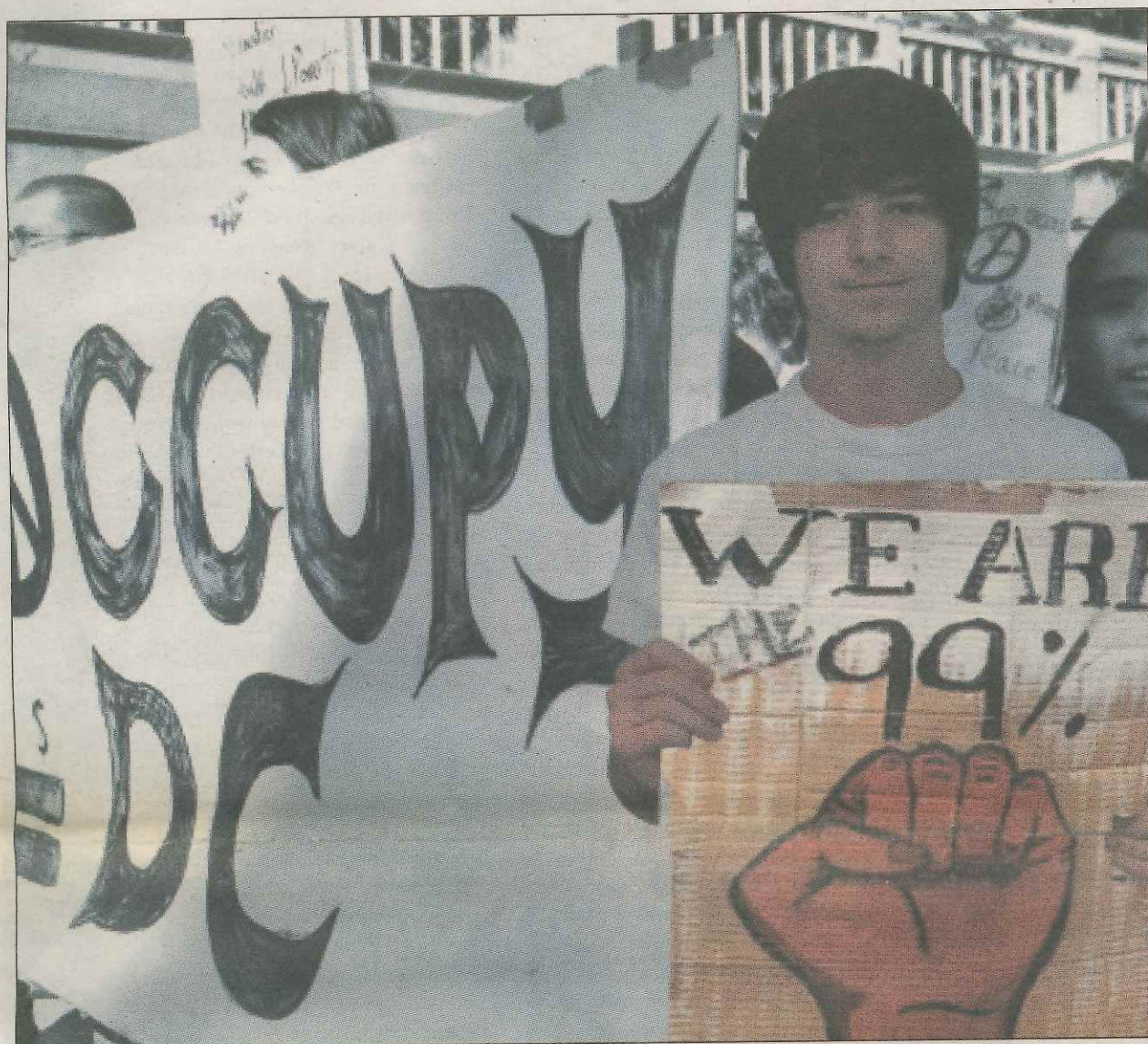


Photo Courtesy of Sonia Garakyaraghi and Google Images

Tyler Arnold
Features Editor

Politics, protests, and the economy are not a number one priority in most high school students' lives. However, one student has made an effort to change this trend. Junior, DJ Condon recently experienced the Occupy Wall Street economic protest movement that is growing in popularity around the world.

Occupy Wall Street started on September 17th with only a few protesters who had no idea that their simple protest would turn into a global movement. What started as a few has now turned to thousands. They all support the ideal of "the one thing we all have in common is that we are the 99% that will no longer tolerate the greed and corruption of the 1%," according to occupywallst.org. What many students do not realize is that this movement has spread all over the globe and protests just like the one on Wall Street are occurring in cities including D.C, Boston, Madrid, Hong Kong, London, Rome, Berlin, Tel Aviv, Amsterdam, and Los Angeles, just to name a few. But how does this movement affect high school students?

West Potomac has a wide array of students with different racial, ethnic and economic backgrounds. With a large portion of the school population on free or reduced lunches, West Potomac is that 99%. This protest directly affects not only the students of West Potomac, but their families. Condon states that, "We are the 99% and in order to make a change we must come together at this time of crisis." While occupy D.C is supporting the same ideals and motto as Occupy Wall Street, the protests right outside our door are not as heated as the ones in New York. Condon was in the mayhem on October 15, and felt the energy of the New York protest first hand. "Time Square was extremely energetic and you could

feel the unity among the protesters" states Condon "but the police were everywhere and they used their full authority." The movement in New York has seen some violence, from the reports of abused protesters to the videos on YouTube of police brutality, but the protests in D.C have remained peaceful. "In New York they used nets to herd the protesters

"We are the 99% and in order to make a change we must come together at this time of crisis"

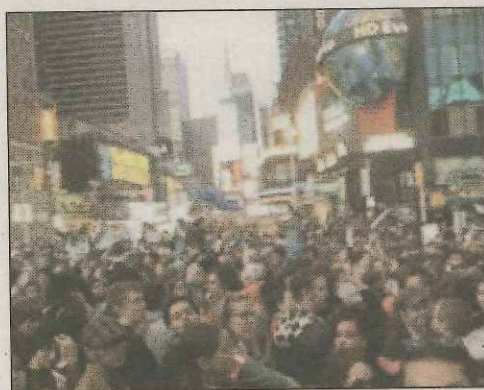


Photo Courtesy of DJ Condon

While in the protest on Wall Street, DJ snapped a picture on his cell phone.

ers but I managed to slip through the barriers set up. As a precaution some of the other protesters gave us a phone number to write on our arms in case we got arrested," says Condon. The police in D.C have cooperated with the protesters, even though the permit they have to protest has expired. The Park Police state that they can stay passed the permit's date as long as they are respectful and cooperate with other protest groups.

Occupydc.org is the primary site to find all the scheduled events happening in the protest along with messages about their goals, the community and any other information about the movement as a whole. The site is extremely informative and it has many opportunities for citizens and even West Potomac students to participate in the protest. Even students can make a difference and our generation will soon have to face the issues in politics and the economy occurring today.

While politics, protest and the economy may not be at the top of a student's list or priorities, there is always room for this to change. With the world entering economic reconstruction everyone's lists of priorities is about to change and students will be a major factor in what is to become of this government and our economic stand point.



Photo Courtesy of Emily Woods

Senior Christine Gannon:

"I went to the Occupy D.C. 'March for the 99 %' on Friday, November 4th with a friend. There were a wide range of protesters, including homeless people, students like ourselves, and businessmen in suits. The movement is something that should be experienced first-hand. I had been following it online and on T.V., but with all the bias in the media, I was unsure what to believe. After being a part of the rally, I have become more aware of what people want out of Occupy D.C., but the message as a whole could still be more cohesive."

What's up at WP

- Next Key Club Meeting is on November 17, in room 417
- Step Team interest meeting on Thursday, November 17 at 2:30 in the cafeteria
- Boys soccer winter conditioning is on November 19 at 2 p.m. in the small gym
- Class of 2012 Senior Meetings is on November 19-20
- Two hour early release on November 23, followed by the Thanksgiving Holiday
- The ACT is on Saturday, December 10 from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. in Quander

Can Fairfax County school tolerate "zero tolerance?"

Norris Brooks
Editor-in-Chief

Fairfax County Public Schools maintain a "zero-tolerance" policy when it comes to alcohol, tobacco, and drug violations on any school campus. According to the Student Rights and Responsibilities handbook, any student caught with alcohol or illegal drugs at school will be suspended, banned from any extracurricular activities, and possibly recommended for expulsion. In addition, any student in possession of tobacco products or over-the-counter drugs (such as Tylenol or cough syrup) can also receive the same punishment. The question is: Is this policy effective?

The American Bar Association, the National Association of School Psychologists, and the American Psychological Association say, no. So does the Fairfax Zero Tolerance Reform group, an organization founded in 2006 and made up of teachers, parents, therapists, and students. Statistics tell the story. According to a 2008 FCPS Youth Survey, 56% of students used alcohol, marijuana, or other drugs and 72% of seniors did so by the time they graduated. If the goal of zero tolerance is to prevent students from participating in these activities, it is losing the battle.

Anecdotal evidence illustrates how detrimental the policy can be. Nick Stuban, a high school student from W.T. Woodson, committed suicide last winter after receiving his punishment due to the zero tolerance policy. Stuban was an avid participant on the football team and received good grades in school. He had never received any disciplinary infractions but was removed from school when he was caught on school grounds with a capsule of JWH-018, a synthetic form of marijuana that was legal at the time.

The policy can be just as severe for students who are caught with over-the-counter medications. In the 2008-2009 school year, an Oakton High School honor student was caught taking a birth control pill during lunch. She was sentenced to a two-week suspension and recommended for expulsion. If the pills had been kept in the nurse's office, and she had checked in during lunch to take them, she would not have been punished.

The zero tolerance policy and Nick Stuban's suicide have stirred up intense feelings in our high school. Senior Lara Chilton remarked, "If infraction the talked to him and The substance obviously stayed Senior Maggie "The zero too intense. If with a legal drug, treated unfairly. able to go their worker and ask for help rather than be expelled." Junior Sophie Spriggs commented on the policy when she said, "Our county puts too much pressure on students who have made one mistake."

The FairfaxZeroToleranceReform group seeks to change the FCPS student disciplinary process "so that EVERY child's Constitutional, due process, and educational rights are protected, so the process is just, consistent, individualized, transparent, and monitored, and so it WORKS." Steven Stuban, Nick Stuban's dad, is currently running for an at-large position on the Fairfax County School Board. When asked about the reason for his candidacy, Stuban said, "There were so many instances where people could have done the right thing, and they did not." If Stuban achieves his goal, he will be in charge of Jack D. Dale, the current superintendent and a supporter of the zero tolerance policy.

"A 2008 FCPS Youth Survey stated 56% of students used alcohol, marijuana, or other drugs."

FCPS goes paperless

Lily Weisblatt
Assistant Focus Editor

The weight is finally coming off, West Potomac. The backs of students will no longer ache after carrying textbooks because Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) have decided to implement online textbooks for all Social Studies and History classes this year.

This past school year, eight middle schools and ten high schools in Fairfax County participated in a trial to test the effectiveness of e-books. The positive reaction to the online textbook has prompted FCPS to introduce them to the entire county. The online textbooks will be available through eCART and FCPS 24-7. However, there have been concerns voiced about students that do not have internet at home. When questioned, Principal Cliff Hardison responded to these complaints, "We understand that approximately 95% of students across the county have access to Wi-Fi at home. However, we are also aware that there are other constraints such as sharing access with family members, and unavailable computers. We as a school are providing the options of checking out laptops and we are giving information about libraries in this area." The county is aware of the issues that students may have and is addressing them as soon as possible.

Online textbooks are not merely the same paper textbook just published on the internet. They have many other tools that students consider to be beneficial. Some of the interactive features of the online textbooks allow students to highlight and make notes. E-books also provide special study materials. Flashcards are offered, as well as an instant dictionary and thesaurus. A student merely needs to click on a word that they do not understand in the text, and a dictionary definition will be provided. Additionally, there are options for audio readings and videos along with

chapters that expand on the lessons.

However, there are downsides to mandating online textbooks. The consequences attributed with constant computer use are not limited to the older generations. It has been proven that those who sit at computers for an extended amount of time can develop back and neck problems. Also, the repetitive movements of typing or clicking a computer mouse can cause a person to develop Carpal Tunnel Syndrome. This is when the muscle in the wrist becomes swollen and causes numbness, tingling, or pain. Headaches, dizziness and eye-strain are also possible effects of over using computers. In addition, there is the possibility that a student who does not have a computer at home will not be able to work on the computer at school. This means that they will be unable to access what they need for their homework.

The term "paperless" may be misinterpreted. For the foreseeable future, textbooks will not be purely exclusive to the internet. When an online textbook subscription is purchased, a set amount of print books will be provided as well. So don't worry students, if you are unable or unwilling to use an online textbook, you are not out of options. Furthermore, moderation is important. If eyes begin to burn, or brains feel overworked, take the necessary steps and move away. Online textbooks are there to help students learn, not to cause pain.

Online textbooks are a way for this generation to embrace the use of technology in an academic way. They allow students to be comfortable and confident about in studies. They provide tools that paper textbooks cannot, and enable students to lighten their load. Social Studies textbooks are just the beginning. FCPS plans to introduce textbooks online for math classes next school year. So shrug your shoulders, and be relieved that the weight of the world is no longer in your backpack.

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For more information, contact Kim Chance at kchance@fcps.edu.

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Students unite to defeat “disabled” stereotypes

Caitlin Schroeder
Copy Editor

You see students who have disabilities every day in school; they exercise in gym class, they walk in the hallways, they eat in the cafeteria a few tables down from you. Maybe you notice these students and say hello, maybe you avert your eyes in pity and pretend you don't see them or just maybe, you are one of the few working every day to make a positive difference in the lives of adolescents with intellectual or developmental disabilities.

Special Education programs in schools started in the 1960's after World War II. In 1975 the “Education for All Handicapped Children Act”, now referred to as the “Individuals with Disabilities Education Act” (IDEA) was passed by Congress to ensure that all students, regardless of any physical or mental disability, receive a public education

addressing their particular needs. But is that enough? West Potomac High School senior, Lyndsee Axline didn't think so. She formed a West Potomac chapter of Best Buddies, a worldwide club dedicated to forming friendships and generating communication between

students with and without disabilities. Axline began her mission to bring Best Buddies to West Potomac at the end of the 2010-2011 school year, when she discovered the global organization and pitched the idea of beginning a new chapter. She held a meeting with Principal Cliff Hardison to get his approval and support of the club, attended Best Buddies training sessions and workshops at Indiana University in Indianapolis, and found a sponsor and officers to help run the organization. Her hard work and determination paid off because Best Buddies now has an official West Potomac chapter. Axline is now spreading her passion for assisting

kids with disabilities to the entire student body, giving students the privilege of joining Best Buddies and assisting their peers in special education programs.

Freezette Ackah, Best Buddies club member and senior class Vice President explains the importance of equal treatment of student in special education, “Our generation is a generation where we don't have segregation and shouldn't see discrimination,” she states. “We shouldn't be afraid of kids in special education programs because they are just like us, and if students just took more time they would realize how much they have in common with kids who have disabilities.” Axline explains that one of the easiest steps teens can take to move to towards equal treatment for intellectually and developmentally disabled kids

“Our generation is a generation where we don't have segregation and shouldn't see discrimination”

is to stop the use of the word “retarded”. This medically inaccurate and outdated word is insulting and disrespectful not only to intellectually and developmentally disabled students, but also to their family, friends and peers.

When referring to a person with a disability you should refer to them as just that, ‘a student with a disability’ rather than calling them disabled or ‘retarded’. This makes the person the subject of the sentence rather than their disability. Even now, West Potomac Best Buddies is planning a month long “Spread the Word to End the Word” campaign in March to stamp out the use of the word ‘retarded’ in West Potomac's hallways once and for all.

West Potomac has a vast special education program with approximately 317 students and 40 teachers. Each West Potomac student in special education has their own, individual learning plan tailored to their own particular needs.

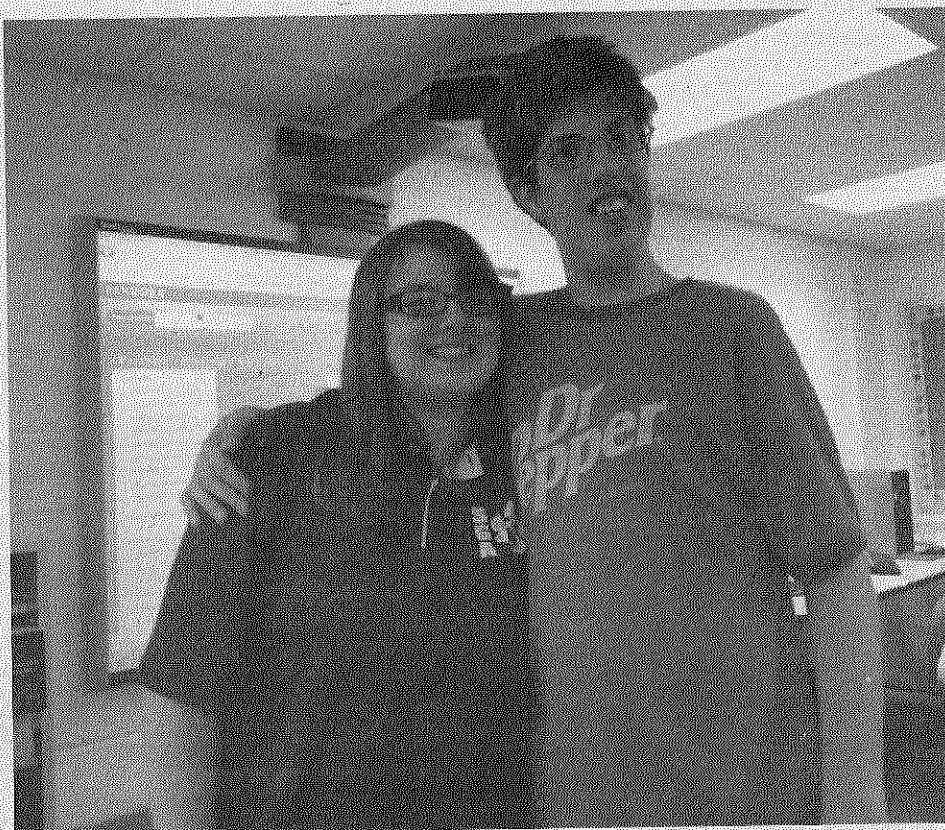


Photo courtesy of Caitlin Schroeder

Best Buddies founder Lindsay Axline poses with Dakota Rizzo. The Best Buddies program strives to develop relationships with students with disabilities.

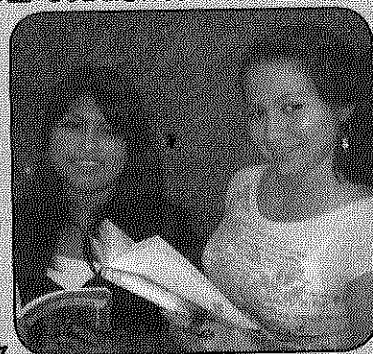
Their school days are similar to those of general education students, with most going to team taught classes with general education students and teachers rather than being confined to a single classroom for six hours. For David Houston, head boys basketball coach and special education teacher, assisting students with physical and mental handicaps is an issue close to his heart. “I grew up with a severely special needs younger sister,” Houston explains, “She taught me how to be patient and responsible as well as to recognize the small-step milestones and be proud of them. I lost my sister in 2002 and have been very active in the Special Education world ever since.” Houston, along with fellow Special Education teachers Kathryn Nelson and Gary Hoag, describes the most reward-

ing aspects of their profession, finding and implementing lifelong strategies that their students can use to succeed in life. “Everyone wants to be treated equally,” Axline concludes, “that's why I started Best Buddies here at West Potomac, I was sick of students in special education getting looked down upon and judged because of their differences, there is a long way to go, but right now I just hope we can get more students to participate so students can make a difference.”

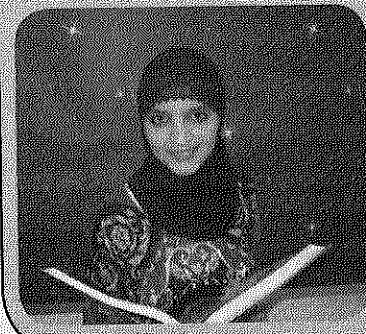
To get involved in West Potomac's chapter of Best Buddies you can log on to www.bestbuddiesonline.com and fill out a membership application. Then submit it to either Lyndsee Axline or senior Colton Thomas at bbwestpo@gmail.com.

Congratulations!

Congratulations to the ESOL students who participated in “Ms. Weeks Summer Reading Challenge” and to Mina Fageer, Mariel Ingrid Zambrana, and to Gladis Marisol Membreno Amaya for reading a combined total of 267



books over the summer! “I started the Challenge because I wanted to encourage my students to read for enjoyment and not just for school. Reading helps us learn and experience so much more. I am so proud of these students and I hope they enjoy a lifetime of reading!”—Ms. Aubree Weeks, ESOL Teacher



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S P O R T S

The "it" factor is commonly used by coaches, scouts, and commentators to describe players who have the potential to be the next great in their respected sports. The "it" factor is only a description used to define athletes who are young and inexperienced, but can make a large impact on the field, court and track. Here at West Potomac High School there are a lot of athletes who have "it."

From a young age, parents and players could tell that Brandon Pressely was going to be a star. "He was always a little fast, a little stronger, and a better athlete than everyone he competed against as a kid" commented youth league basketball coach Willie Holmes. During his first year at West Potomac, Pressely tried out for the freshman basketball team and ended up being good enough to be the only freshman on the Junior Varsity (JV) team. "Brandon defiantly had the 'it' factor, all the coaches and the team could tell that he was skilled enough to make an impact at a higher level. He was a natural, and everyone could tell" said Said senior small forward Jam Marinelli. As a freshman on the Junior Varsity basketball team, Pressely was a starter and lead the team in assists and steals. "I felt some pressure when I was moved up to Junior Varsity as a freshman, but when it came down to it, I was the same player on the court during games and practices. I played like I always had and began to have success" states Pressely. After a successful freshman year, the basketball coaching staff decided to place Pressely on the Varsity squad. As a sophomore Brandon started every game and played a major role on the court as the teams point guard. Starting center for the Wolverines, Todd Ferri commented, "You would never be able to tell that he [Pressely] was a sophomore and that this was his first year on varsity. He ran our offense great and played his role on the team perfectly. He distributed the ball to our play makers such as Scooter and Jalen but also could knock down the clutch three pointer if we needed him too. The team expects a lot out of him this year now that he has experience under his belt."

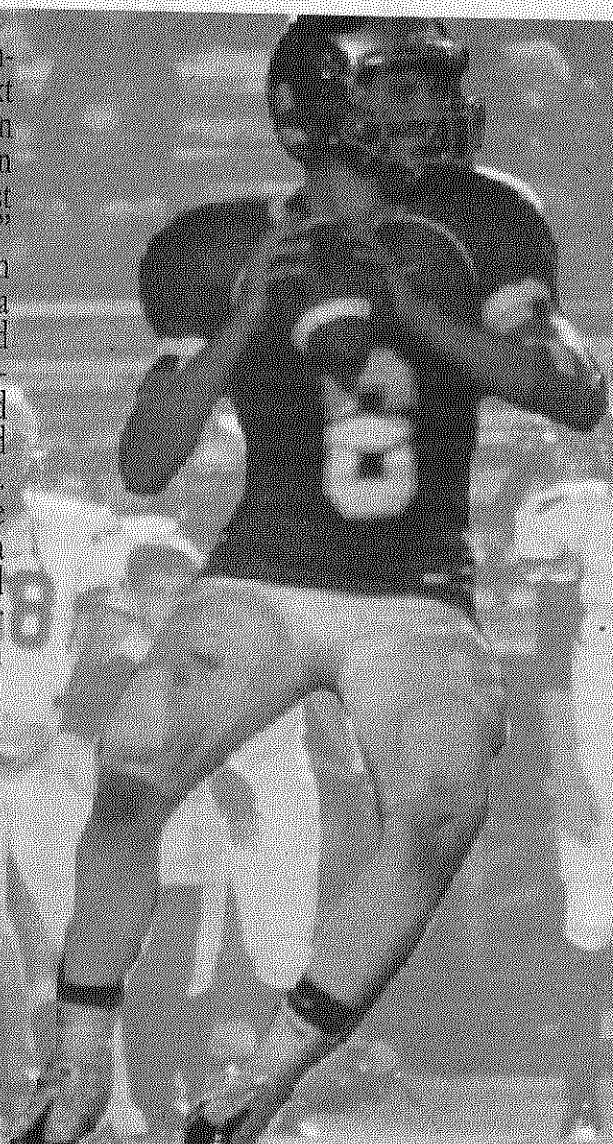
Caleb Henderson is also in the same position that Pressely was. "Caleb was a natural when it came to football. At a young age he could throw the football well and picked up on the game of football fast" commented Henderson's youth league football teammate Davis "Wheels" DeFore. "My dad had a big impact on

me playing football. He was and still is the head coach of the West Potomac football team so I was around football 24/7. I picked up on the game young because football is such a presence in my house." Henderson has helped the Wolverine to a 7-3 record and ranks among the top ten

Do you have "it" in you?

Tommy Friederich
Sports Editor

"He was always a little fast, a little stronger and a better athlete than everyone he competed against as a kid."



in touchdowns in the metropolitan area. Caleb was also honored with First team all District. "Not only is Caleb a sophomore but he plays arguably the most important position on the field besides center. He does a great job handling the huddle and making big plays for our offense," stated wolverine tackle Dan Murrar.

Photo By Katie Tes

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A Different Kind of Workout

Sonia Garakyaraghi, Clare Palo
Photographer, Style Editor

Frisbee Golf Club

Frisbee golf is a cross-breed of ultimate Frisbee and golf. As opposed to using golf balls and clubs, players use flying disc or Frisbees. A golf disc is thrown from a tee area to a target which is the called a "Pole Hole," an elevated metal basket. Similar to golf, players try to complete the obstacle course with the fewest strokes as possible. Math teacher Adam Riddell led the Frisbee Golf club last year, and is planning to pass it on to any willing teachers. Students will warm-up, learn Frisbee Golf techniques near the tennis courts, and watch fun instructional videos if there is bad weather. "This is definitely something that can be mainly student led and just teacher supervised, or you can go 100% and have 40-50 kids playing in exhibition matches on a weekly basis," said Riddell. Since it's just a club, there is not as much pressure or time commitment, it's purely fun.

Equestrian

Horseback riding, or equestrian, is not just sitting on a horse and telling it to 'go,' it requires a lot of skill and practice. There may not be people cheering on the sidelines, but it still has competitive a side to it. "I am a hunter, jumper, and equitation. Hunter is all about the horse and how perfect your horse is, while jumpers is about going fast to clear all the jumps to get the fastest time. Equitation is about position of your horse," explains Senior Victoria Minnis. Controlling a 1,000 pound animal requires working your leg, abdominal, shoulder, and back muscles. It may seem hard, but horseback riding brings upon many benefits including emotional release. "You develop a special relationship with the horse. It's all about learning to trust each other," said Senior Leila Gustavson. If you want to be in good physical shape, find a new "best friend," or get away from stress, horseback riding is the sport for you.

Ice Hockey

If you think ice-skating is difficult, try playing ice-hockey. Ice hockey combines skills of two sports, hockey and ice-skating, into one. Just like soccer, it requires a team that consists of an offense and a defense in order to score a goal. However, ice hockey uses a puck and ice instead of grass. Currently there are numerous students at West Potomac on the Patriots Junior Hockey Team. "This is my first year on the team, and I enjoy being on the same team with my school-mates," said Senior Micah Dabao. "I chose ice hockey because I wanted to play a sport that wasn't too easy and wasn't very popular in Virginia."

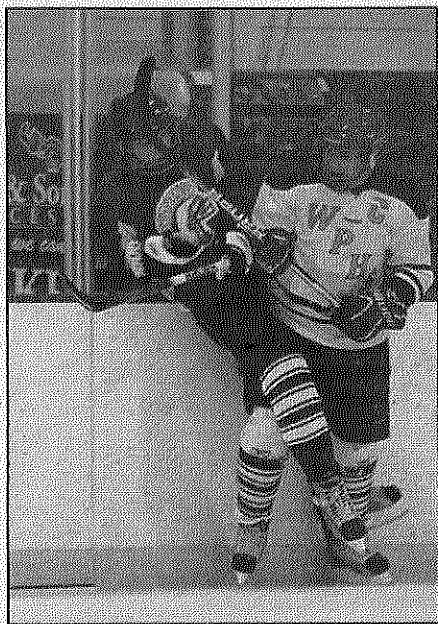


Photo courtesy of Micah Dabao

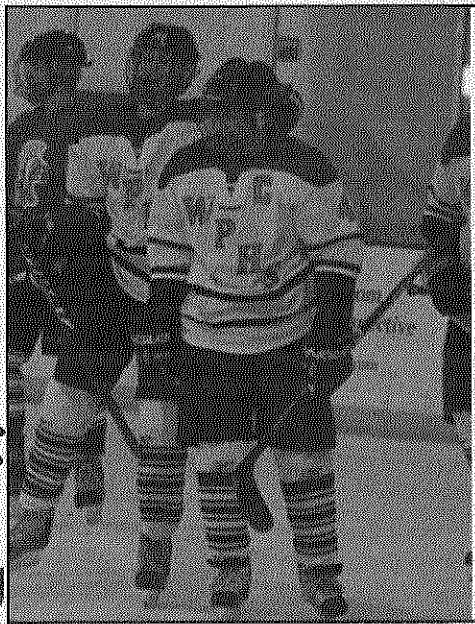
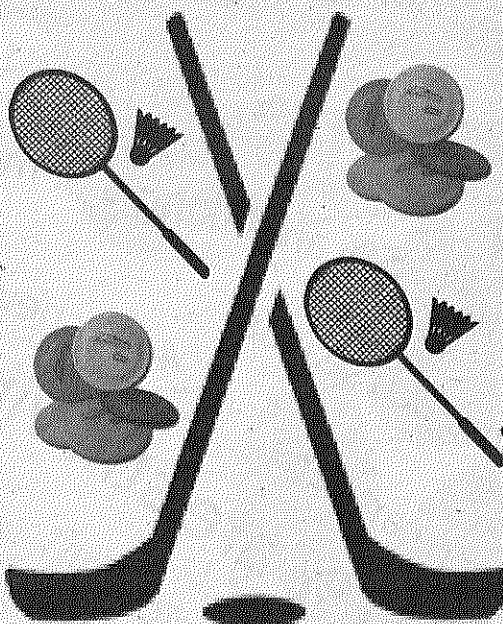


Photo courtesy of Micah Dabao

Rifle Team

Believe it or not, the rifle team is not only a high school sport, but it is also included in the Olympics. While there are only 12 members in the rifle team at West Potomac, rifle teams are very popular in the western and southern parts of the country. It requires competitive precision air rifles, and uses various shooting positions. Each target consists of ten bulls-eye rings, each ring being the size of a half-dollar. "The most important part about rifle shooting is being able focus and relax your body. It's a mental sport. It's all about doing the same thing over and over again, but exactly right each time. It's very tedious, but there is a satisfaction you get when you're "in the zone" that you can only achieve by shooting rifles. The best way I can put it, it's like playing chess, but with yourself: you're always trying to win by outdoing yourself," explains senior Russell Bradley, a current member of the West Potomac rifle team.



Photo courtesy of Russell Bradley

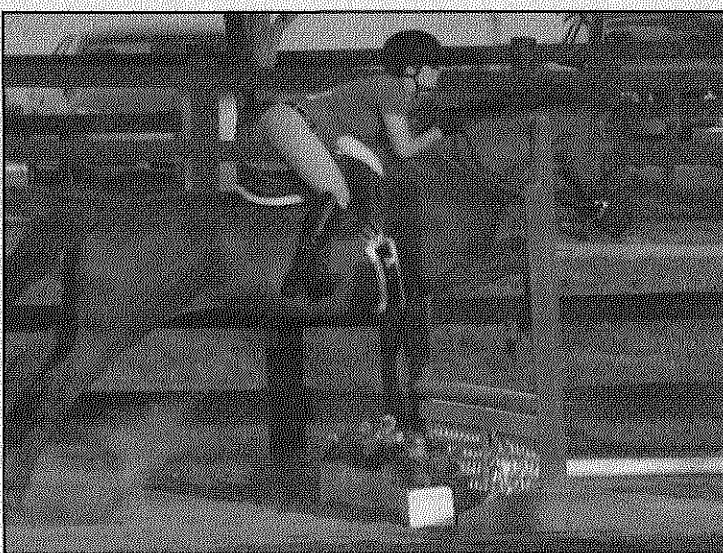


Photo courtesy of Victoria Minnis

Badminton Club

Did you like Badminton in gym class? You'll be relieved to know that counselor Madelyn Turner is the leader and sponsor of the Badminton Club at West Potomac. The game of whacking a shuttlecock, or "birdie," across a net with the opponent's racquet, was originally developed in England. It has also been an official Olympic sport since 1992. Badminton's main rules mimic volleyball and tennis, requiring players to be agile, quick and in great shape. It is known as the world's fastest racquet sport, so for all drivers with quick reflexes and motor skills, this is the sport for you. Players must be willing to learn powerful wrist-flicking techniques and dedicate time for improvement.

WOLVERINE WARRIORS: Tamaric Wilson

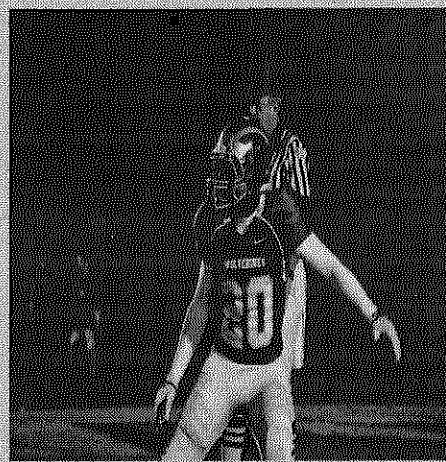


Photo by Clare Palo

Tommy Friederich
Sports Editor

"Interception by Wilson," "Three pointer by 'Buc'," and "goal by Tamaric" are three things all Wolverine fans have heard since Tamaric "Buc" Wilson arrived at West Potomac High School. There is one word to describe Buc, "athlete." He is a three year starter on the varsity football team, two year varsity basketball player and a varsity competitor on the lacrosse team. "Each sport has skills that make me a complete athlete, in football I gained footwork and aggressiveness that can help me in basketball. In lacrosse I learned strategy that helped me in football, and in basketball toughness and jumping ability helps me in football," said Wilson. "As far as athletes in this school, he [Wilson] reigns among the top of the list, natural athleticism combined with a hard work ethic is something not all people are blessed with," commented head football coach, Eric Henderson. Tamaric was a first team all Patriot district selection as a junior and is on pace for more awards this year. Not only is Tamaric one of the football team's best players, but he is also a captain. "Buc really runs the locker room, he is a great leader and practices hard. He leads by example more than vocally" commented varsity fullback Alex Amico.

Beyond the athletic ability Tamaric Wilson holds a 3.7 Grade Point Average (GPA) and is enrolled many Advanced Placement (AP) and Honors classes. "Tamaric is not only a leader on the football field but he leads in the classroom as well" commented fine arts teacher Melanie Mobley. "School is just as important to school because it shows that you can balance your life" Said Wilson in an interview after Friday's game. Buc will have many opportunities to play football at the next level. Local schools and schools far away away have been in contact with Wilson about playing for them. "As long as I'm playing football, I'll be happy. Every time I'm able to play football I feel lucky and blessed. I play every game, every play like it's my last because things can be taken from you really easy in life."

It may seem easy for Tamaric "Buc" Wilson but he has worked very hard for everything he has now. Tamaric Wilson is a true Wolverine warrior in all aspects of life.

Sound Bite

Reporter: "Did you visit the Parthenon while in Greece?"
Shaquille O'Neill: "I can't really remember the names of all the clubs we went to."

didn't know about
mates



side of the United States

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y day

care about something in school

is anonymous survey, we randomly selected
West Potomac students and asked them to
er 40 intriguing questions. You might be
surprised by some of the answers!

imately 25 students, both male and female, from each grade completed the survey.

#statswag

40 things you
your class

32% are afraid of heights

41% care about politics

40% have smoked something before

67% do their own laundry

37% have been in a fistfight

22% are jealous of a sibling

72% have been

26% chew their pens or pencils

35% have a pet

15% have been arrested

26% do not use the school bathrooms

22%

45% have been dumped

21% speak more than two languages

59% get lost

90% have been on a plane

23% drive a car older than them

46% believe in the supernatural

20% have gone scuba diving

46%

71% have told a teacher their Internet shut off

48% have been in love

54%

32% drink caffeine daily

25% have been hunting

54%

49% speak more than one language

19% do not use social networks

38% know

38% have bullied someone

73% like what most people think about them

5% are taking 5 or more AP tests

38% know

42% have been bullied

71% have met someone famous

44% chew 3 or more pieces of gum

37% are on a sports team each season

73% still watch cartoons

71% are still virgins

87% have pretended

24% have an iPhone

23% drive a stick shift

For

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a

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A world wind experience

Foreign exchange students add a twist of culture to West Potomac's classrooms

Laura Jacobs
News Editor

Heidi Ouf and David Strachan walked into West Potomac the first day of the school year having recently moved from across the world.

Though commonly overlooked, each student at West Potomac has a unique story behind their sleep-deprived lives. Heidi Ouf, a senior, moved from Cairo, the capital of Egypt, over the summer to live with her mom and step-dad. David Strachan, another senior, is attending West Potomac as his fourth high school. Though driven to West Potomac under different circumstances, for the immediate future, Virginia is their new home.

With slightly curly dark brown hair, trendy glasses, and a multi-colored scarf, Heidi Ouf blends in effortlessly with the 2,000 plus students at West Potomac. Born and raised in Egypt, her life in Cairo seems more than a twelve hour flight away. "Cairo is a dirty city, which makes it seem gross, but it is the most beautiful place," explained Heidi. Where Heidi was in Egypt, most students attended private schools rather than public schools. However, though her private school was almost as large as West Potomac, with 1,200 students, her school included K-12 grades. "Though my private school mainly taught English, we also learned Arabic," said Heidi. Fluent in English, Arabic, and French, and an active member in the student-life

organization, Heidi was enjoying her junior year of high school. Yet in late January, protests shook up her city, leaving her in the middle of the "war zone."

Egyptians protested against the regime of the Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. "He had been in power for all of my life, and most of my dad's life. Most citizens were sick of his rule. My uncle would go out with the protestors most days, and keep me updated," Heidi recalled. She explains that most of the violence broadcasted was over exaggerated. "I was never scared to step out on the streets," remarked Heidi. Even so, her school was cancelled for a month during the demonstrations. Furthermore, the govern-

ment imposed a curfew on citizens, though it was not strictly enforced. Heidi got a first-hand experience on a historical moment that most students only knew through watching the local news station or reading the newspaper.

Though not as close to the center of action, David Strachan's family was stationed in Crete, Greece for the past two years. Greek protests started in 2010 over rising taxes and plans to cut public spending. "I was in Berlin, Germany for boarding school although my family was still in Greece during the riots," said David. David has to move every two years, since his dad is in the Air Force. He has lived in a myriad of

"I am used to moving from school to school now, but I enjoy the experiences along the way."

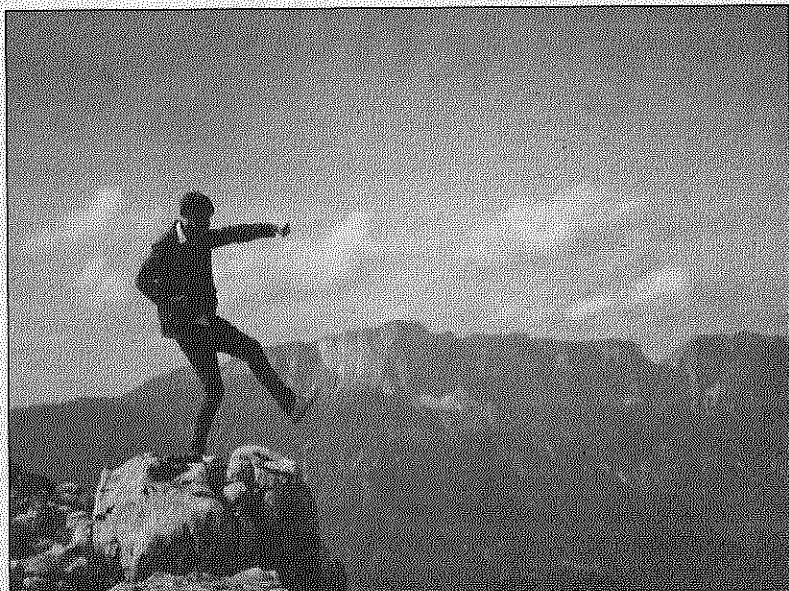


Photo courtesy of David Strachan

While on a family vacation in Austria, Strachan playfully posed for a picture on a mountain. He has had the advantage of

countries, including Greece and England, and different states such as Wisconsin, Nebraska, and Virginia. "At first in Greece, I tried to home school myself," he remarked, "do not ever try it, it does not work." However, after a year of being home schooled, he attended a boarding school for half of a year in Germany. He now plans to follow his father's footsteps and join the Air Force after high school. "I am used to moving from school to school now, but I enjoy the experiences along the way," finished David.

Each individual from different countries and cultural backgrounds have their own, unique life stories. Are you going to be the next one to listen to them?

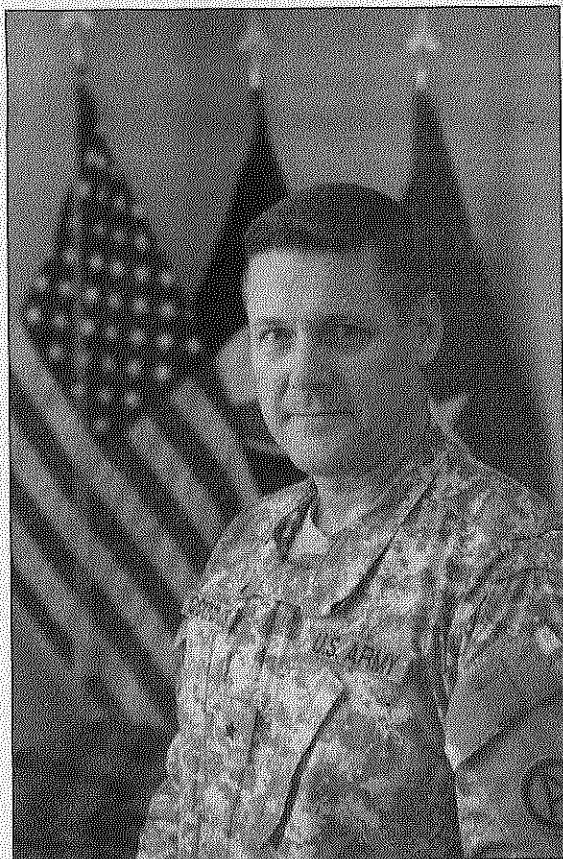


Photo courtesy of Meryl O'Connor

Brigadier General John O'Connor is proud to serve in the United States Army.

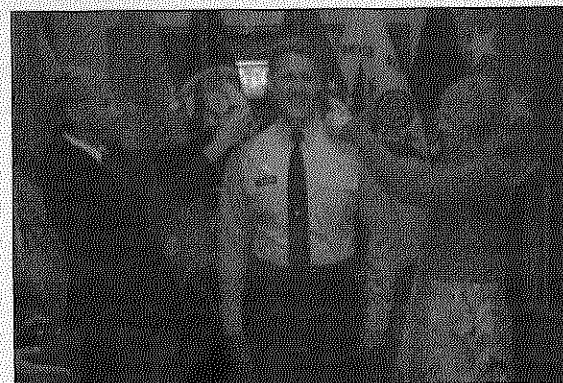


Photo courtesy of Meryl O'Connor

Meryl and her brother, Ryan, help celebrate with their father at one of his promotion ceremonies.

Military kids serve too

Many West Potomac students feel the "call of duty" without ever enlisting

Emily Woods
Editor-in-Chief

"That's my dad." The words pulsed through her head as her eyes welled with tears. 16-year-old Meryl O'Connor stood among the cheering fans at a Friday night West Potomac football game when she spotted her father, who had been deployed in Kuwait for the past year. As she ran out of the stands and into the arms of the man in uniform, it hit her: he was safe. He was home.

With fourteen moves and five parental deployments under her belt, Meryl gives a new meaning to the term "military brat." Now a senior, she reflects on her surprise at the football game as the most memorable of Brigadier General John O'Connor's numerous homecomings. "Nobody else in the stands could even come close to what I felt," says Meryl. "I was just so proud he made it back."

Meryl's story is a reminder of the sacrifices families on the home front are forced to make while their loved ones are away at war. For kids especially, these sacrifices can be overwhelming. It is often said that when you have a parent in the military, you serve just as much as they do. This idea hit home for freshman Jeremy Aylward, whose father spent eight months overseas. He explains, "At first I just helped out with everyday activities, like laundry or dinner. But then I started to take on more responsibility. It gave me a new appreciation for my dad, because I had to walk a day in his shoes."

While Jeremy felt his dad's absence around the house, other military teenagers find their deployed parents missing major events. Senior Angela Longo knows this feeling all too well. As an avid soccer player, she often missed her dad cheering on the sidelines at her games. Major General (MG) Richard C. Longo was deployed for over a year in Baghdad and Tikri. Now, when he is able to attend his daughter's games, it gives her "a deeper appreciation for his presence." She continues, "It's really special having him there."

However, it's not just games that these parents miss. Meryl's family was short one member for a high school graduation and a cross country move that felt like "tearing roots from a tree." To keep her spirits alive, Meryl views each of her frequent moves between five different states as a "new

adventure with new places and new things to do." She also recognizes the advantages of getting to call so many different locations home. "If it weren't for my military lifestyle, I wouldn't have a diverse range of friends," says Meryl. When their soldier is deployed, the O'Connor family sends care packages with his favorite foods, new DVDs, and letters. "It gives him sort of a home away from home," says Meryl.

Jeremy, Angela, and Meryl highlight an astounding number of West Potomac students who have experienced the trials and tribulations of having a parent deployed. Children on the home front are affected in more ways than we realize. The findings of one unprecedented study of more than 1,500 military families suggests the longer and frequent deployments of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom have caused great emotional trauma for military children, including symptoms of anxiety and depression, difficulty in school, and behavioral problems, such as fighting. On October 21st, President Barack Obama confirmed his plan to have all U.S. troops out of Iraq by January 1st. This means that in these final few months, military kids need our support more than ever.

Although the war may be ending, Meryl still aims to preserve her roots as she takes the next step in life. After high school, she plans to attend either Old Dominion University or her father's alma mater, Miami University. There she plans to study physical therapy and then enter the military. Her brother, Ryan O'Connor, is currently in Army ROTC, where he is training to go into the same unit as his dad. "It's the only lifestyle we know," says Meryl. "Joining the ranks will feel like we've accomplished something in our father's eyes."



Photo courtesy of Meryl O'Connor

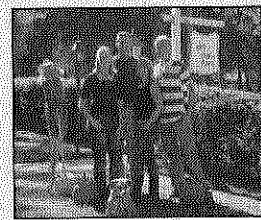


Photo courtesy of Meryl O'Connor

Orngechkn cooks up laughs

West Potomac's very own YouTube sensations!

Jack King
Editor-in-Chief

"Everyone out there has their thing. Some people play sports. Some people make music. We make videos," says Senior Toby Mananzan. Along with friend and fellow actor Matt Kubach, the two write, produce, and edit their own videos on their YouTube channel, *Orngechkn* (Orange Chicken). Over the last four years, the pair has created a comedic duo as strong as that of Will Ferrell and John C. Riley. Mananzan's awkward, unique wit and Kubach's happy, sarcastic humor gel perfectly together. From music video parodies to action packed spy videos, their channel has become wildly popular throughout the school. Recently, Mananzan and Kubach have brought their talents to West Potomac High School's *WPTV*, helping produce videos in West Potomac's television production class. Creating videos is not new to the twosome. "I had been making videos since fourth grade and when I moved here, I met Matt," says Mananzan. The rest, as they say, is history.

Mananzan came up with the idea to release a video called "Burgerlicious", a music video parody of the song "Fergilicious". "I came up with the idea for 'Burgerlicious' while I was in Spanish class. I remember we hyped it up for two months and finally released it and we got really excited cause it got about 200 views in one day, which was a lot back then," commented Mananzan. "It was like our first hit," adds Kubach. "200 hits was a lot back in the day. Now it's just kid stuff." Today the "Burgerlicious" video has over 12,000 views.

After the release of "Burgerlicious", Mananzan and Kubach went on to release more videos of all varieties. "Originally we didn't want to make a bunch of movies, we just wanted to make the one 'Burgerlicious' thing. The name *Orngechkn* was just this half done thing and then all the sudden we would just be like let's do this one thing just because we can," said Mananzan. From other musical videos like "If I Were a Boy", to spy videos like "S.S.A.S.", to random videos of Matt brushing his teeth to the song "Peanut Butter Jelly Time" in "Matt's Alone Time," they've done it all. Current and former West Potomac students have also been featured

in their *Orngechkn* videos. John McMillian, Musie Seyoum, Jaco Mananzan, Alex Cheng, Connor Chilton, Graham Dickerson and others can be seen in many of the videos on their channel.

This year, Mananzan and Kubach have both seemed to stray away from specifically *Orngechkn* material and enrolled in the West Potomac academy class of video production. In the class, they have gone to a more structured

system of creating videos for WPTV. "As freshman, all we had was a camera and an idea. But now that we have all of this, I don't think we'll ever go back," said Mananzan. They have continued to release their WPTV videos on the *Orngechkn* channel where the difference in the quality of the productions can be seen. However, they do still say they will continue to release videos for *Orngechkn*. "Now we know the in's and out's of T.V production as in actual film making. It won't be the same but we'll still release stuff."

The production of the videos is often a process that goes underappreciated. For each scene, the production staff has to take dozens of takes from all kinds of different views. Scenes and small moments in videos that last a matter of seconds

can take up to fifteen or twenty minutes to film. Everything is scripted; however they do not have to strictly follow the scripts. "It seems like it's a big deal but we just kind of do it. We just trust ourselves that it will be funny. It is scripted but it's not like 'Lights, Camera!' we just do it and have fun with it," said Mananzan. "Honestly the hardest part of production is just focusing. We procrastinate so much. But our policy is that if we're not having fun, we're not doing it right."

Currently the channel *Orngechkn* has nearly 55,000 total video views, and almost 400 subscribers. Over the last four years, they have grown from just kids with a camera and a dream to aspiring filmmakers that run full blown productions. Today, YouTube; Tomorrow, the Oscars. We can be sure this pair is going to rock Hollywood.

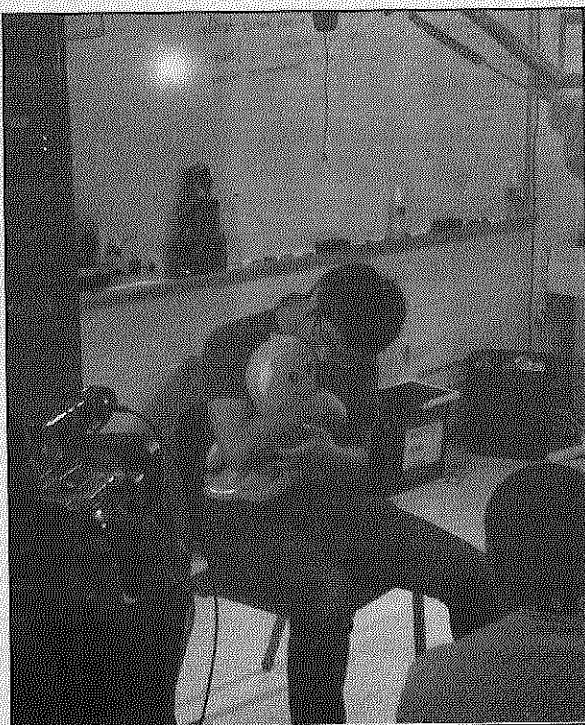


Photo by Jack King

Orngechkn's co-founder Toby Mananzan gets into character filming a scene from the WPTV production "Beowolf The Octopus."

West Potomac theater pushes the limit

Emily Woods
Editor-in-Chief

"Is there a place in this world for science and religion to co-exist?" This question comes from West Potomac's new theater teacher, Philip Clark, whose choice to direct "Inherit the Wind" for our school's annual fall play has the community talking. The play is a fictionalized version of the 1925 Scopes "Monkey" Trial, in which public school teacher John Thomas Scopes was convicted for teaching Charles Darwin's theory of evolution to his high school science class. Although our modern culture is more accepting of differing viewpoints (specifically creationism vs. evolution), selecting a play that brings these ongoing debates into the open is still a risky move.

Even so, it seems this potential controversy may be exactly what the ambitious Mr. Clark is looking for. "When choosing the play, I researched all the shows high schools in this area have done in the past ten or so years, and I went from there," explains Clark. He also points out that "when you do a show eligible for Cappies, D.C. Metro area's high school theater awards, you have to pick something that's edgy or else you won't get recognized." Clark's philosophy on theater is not exclusive to his play selection this year. The West Potomac theater department has a reputation for producing performances that push the envelope.

One such show premiered on the Kogelman stage in April of 2010, and had teachers and students alike wondering, "How are they allowed to do this in a public school?" Their questions were valid as "Godspell" retold the Gospel of Matthew and life of Jesus in fervent detail. However, as explained by Fine Arts Administrator Ivan Johnson, "We have more freedom when it comes to the art department. You definitely couldn't teach 'Godspell' in a

classroom." Mr. Johnson explains that the justification for this leeway comes from viewing touchy material "through the artist's lens." In other words, plays such as "Godspell" are allowed because they are not intended by the author to be offensive.

This creative license can be a valuable thing. It's the same reason the choir department gets to perform Handel's Messiah every December and the literary magazine, *Syzygy*, can publish pieces with mature themes. One such showcase of this artistic freedom was in One Acts last January. Several of these students wrote and directed works that dealt with topics such as sex, suicide, murder, religion, and politics. One of the pieces, however, was cut just days before the performance due to what the student director, junior Joe Quinn, describes as "overt sexual innuendos." Quinn says he does understand why his show was given the ax, but was still upset. "I think the audience could have handled it," he claims. Other materials that are condoned in high school theatre include underage drinking and excessive profanity.

Fortunately, "Inherit the Wind" contains none of these factors, but instead just enough controversy to get the audience talking. According to Clark, the cast is an array of talent. "I've worked with five other high schools in the area and have never seen this level of commitment," he says. "It's great to know that there are students in a high school verging on professionalism." "Inherit the Wind" captured the audience this past weekend. Write in to let us know what you thought of the performance! One of the reviews will be selected for publication in the next edition of *The Wire*.

Inherit the Wind

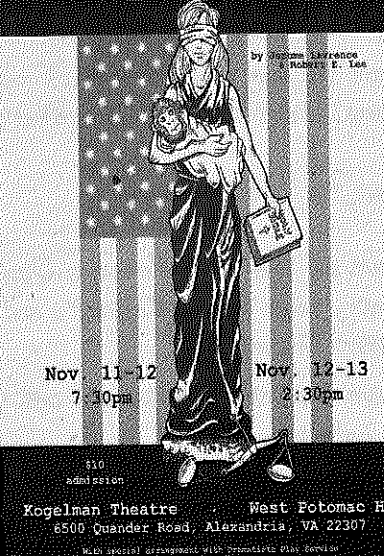


Photo courtesy of Philip Clark

This year's fall play was seen this past weekend. In the next issue, be sure to look out for a review of the controversial play.

It's All About Ambition

Johnny Muckerman
Reporter

Ambition(n): am-bi-tion; [ambish'n]

An earnest desire for some type of achievement or distinction, as power, honor, fame, or wealth, and the willingness to strive for its attainment.

For D.C.'s own Wale, ambition is a lifestyle. Wale is an American rapper who attended college on a football scholarship. He subsequently chose to drop out and focus on music. His first single to receive radio play was "Rhyme of the Century" in 2006 and he released his mixtape "Paint a Picture" the same year.

Wale's popularity has grown immensely. He recently joined Rick Ross's "Maybach Music Group" (MMG), who recently put out their first album "Self Made" which sold 53,000 copies on the first day. This album set the stage for Wale's sophomore album "Ambition." In his songs and interviews, he talks about the hard work and dedication that comes along with following your dreams. "Doing what you want to do is possible but it is also difficult," said Wale. Truly inspiring, he raps lyrics that have deeper meanings. Wale wants this album to become a way of life. He said, "Record sales don't show success to me, if I can change someone's life, then I did my job."

Wale has taught many the importance of what ambition truly means. High school students can learn a lot from that message. Students should never settle for anything less than perfect. Athletes know this well. When asked if ambition is necessary when playing high school sport, senior Joseph Marinelli responded, "It definitely is. I put everything I have into football and basketball because if you're not going to go 100% than you might as well not go at all."

Coach Ronald Spinner is a football coach at West Potomac and is friends with D.C. rapper, Fat Trel. Fat Trel and Wale are both affiliated with the "Board of Administration" which is a group formed by Wale to represent music talent from the DMV. Spinner has spent time with Wale, and when asked if Wale has the same ambition when the cameras aren't around Spinner responds, "You can see it in his eyes, the drive, the passion, the ambition. He has a vision for the whole DMV area, to get them on the map, and he's doing it."

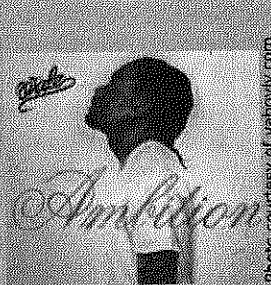


Photo courtesy of theaudiyard.com

Wale's second album dropped November 1st. Fans flocked to stores and iTunes to buy and download the hit album.

Switching out of AP classes receives a 1

Changing classes becomes an ordeal for West Potomac students

Clare Palo
Style Editor

Having AP Claustrophobia? If you are, you are most likely aware of West Potomac's policy and process of switching out of AP classes, and it is not a piece of cake.

The policy established by Principal Cliff Hardison and the administration team states that students are prohibited from switching out of Advance Placement (AP) classes before the end of the first marking period. Even if you still plan to switch out after the first quarter, conferences with your counselor, the teacher whose class you plan to switch out of, the subject area administrator, are required along with proof of student effort in the class.

"The policy was driven by sincere belief that students need to take challenges, and give an honest effort," says Hardison. But what if a student initially took the class to challenge themselves because there were no other options? The recent reduction of honors classes, requiring students to choose between only general education and AP classes has caused anxiety and increased stress for most students.

Many students do not want to take general education classes because they feel as if the classes are too easy. Due to the competitive college admissions process students feel obligated to take an AP course. As soon as they sign up for the course and realize it is harder than they expected, all they are left with is a failing grade and loss in motivation and confidence.

Not all AP classes are academically equal. A student can attempt to get a consensus on the difficulty of a class through their peers and administrators, but its difficulty is subjective depending on the student's abilities and the instructors teaching methods. "Some teachers can break [the material] down in just the right way so students can learn it," said Hardison. But what about the teachers who can't? Not every approach meshes well with every student, and students should not be liable for taking classes under false pretences.

A tiny gleam of hope does linger in the distance for the kids mulling over the switch: A pass/fail option. Students

can explore this option with their counselors in order to successfully complete the class without focusing on a letter grade. However, we again run into a wall—what if the student is not passing to begin with and there is little opportunity to even pass the course? The administration strongly recommends regular remediation; seeking help from peers and other teachers, and being "proactive versus reactive."

Yet, how much time can a student spend on one subject, without it impacting schoolwork or success in other classes? Students do not have the luxury of allowing one course to monopolize all their homework time. This isn't graduate school.

Hardison suggests, "Sometimes pain is good. It can help students learn how to work through some situations." This

may be true in some cases; however, the stress of working through the situation might be more than a student can take on. The student's confidence may suffer, and has anyone ever heard of anxiety attacks?

The story is even worse for first semester seniors.

Transcripts that are mailed to colleges include first quarter, or first semester grades, giving students an extra time slot to bump

up their GPA, and illustrate to admission offices that they are still working hard. In theory, a C+ in an AP or advanced course, rather than an A in a regular course, better prepares students for college. But what if that C+ morphs into an F? Now a person's last chance to show their academic skill has admission officers puzzled, confused, and skeptical about the students ability to handle college level work.

Surprisingly, the policy for dropping AP classes is similar in most Fairfax County public schools. To respond to criticism about the policy, school administrators and policy-makers should look into statistics regarding AP courses and how they affect students rather than how they are perceived from the outside world. In addition, if students are unaware of the policies and become blindsided by their inability to switch, the school needs to make exceptions. Finally, school officials should be careful about encouraging students to take on AP classes that may be more difficult than they can handle.

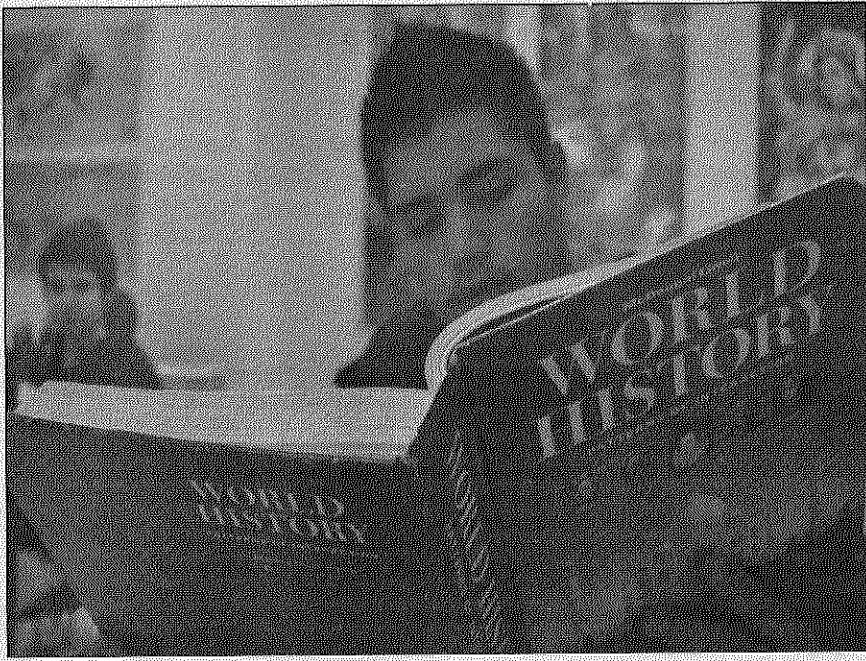


Photo by Clare Palo

Sophomore, Edgar Manriquez studies hard during his Advanced Placement (AP) World History class.

Asian Persuasion



Photo by Clare Palo

The University of Stress

Anna Dreyfuss
Opinions Editor

If you are an upperclassman, I guarantee you have thought about your GPA or SAT scores within the last 30 minutes. It's ok, we are all are going through the stress, but is this really necessary? Students these days have accepted the mentality that getting into a "good" college directly affects your chances of getting a top job and therefore enhances your chances of having a happy life. This is not true.

The monstrous pressure many parents put on kids now is the main source of this attitude. Researchers Alan Krueger and Stacy Berg Dale investigated this conflict in 1999 when they followed the income of students who went to Yale University compared to less prestigious schools. The students had the same average income 20 years later. They found out that the Ivy League student's incomes "varied little, no matter which type of college they attended." This shows that success is based on the student, not the school. If this did not convince you, get this. Out of the top ten CEOs of the fortune 500 corporations: only four went to elite schools.

The truth is: grades really do not matter. Calm down and let me explain. Students get so caught up in straight A honor roll dreams that they forget the main point of school, learning. I admit, sometimes I will scribble down random sentences five minutes before class to get a completion grade, but this really is not beneficial for anyone. You know it's true. High school is a place where students can explore various subjects to see what they are interested in, so figuring out the cheat codes to get the grades is really just cheating yourself. Unfortunately many kids who do not know how to work hard go out in the "real world" and realize this.

Parents are not the only people putting pressure on their kids. I am sure most students have heard or participated in a discussion comparing GPAs, test scores, number of AP courses, etc. A big problem is the fact that many students feel the need to one-up each other just to prove that they will be more successful at their ten year high school reunion. Blame it on the population increase or society nowadays, but the facts are easily at your disposal. Getting into your top college choice does not decide your life. What decides your life is what you do in college.

Rants and Raves

•RANT FOR COLLEGE APPLICATION DEADLINES

•RANT FOR THE CLOSED GATE IN THE SENIOR PARKING LOT

•RANT FOR CLASS OVERPOPULATION

•RANT FOR THE CLOCKS BEING OFF SCHEDULE IN EVERY ROOM

•RANT FOR THE DUGGAR'S HAVING THEIR 20TH CHILD

•Rave for the West Potomac Football Team winning Patriot District Championships

•Rave for Wolverine Time

•Rave for the West Potomac Girls Cross Country team winning Regionals and the Patriot District Championship

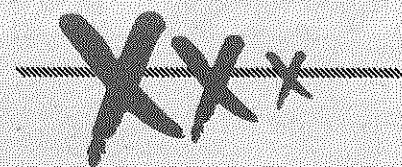
•Rave for being able to use cell phones in the cafeteria

•Rave for seniors who voted in the

FEATURES

(perfection) is in the eye of beholder...

In our modern culture, "beauty" is a term that cannot be defined. Although the media may try to set standards for physical perfection, here at "The Wire," we want all of our readers to remember that beauty is not about what you lack, but instead, what you have...down to every last ~~flaw~~, quirk, and freckle.



"I used to not like my freckles because I have so many, but now I recognize that they characterize my appearance."

-Senior Kim Walsh, on having freckles



"It took me a long time for me to get used to my hair, but now it's a fun part of myself. Embrace the curl!"

-Junior Sophia Passacantando, on curly hair



-Sophomore Mychelle Gyamfi, on having a gap tooth

"Beauty is not just physical. It comes from who you are, how you act, and how you care for somebody."



"All of my friends call me albino, but I've grown to love my pale skin because it's what makes me unique."

-Senior Julia Staples, on having fair skin

Leadership organization is in full swing

Jack King
Editor-in-Chief

The dictionary defines leadership as "the position or function of a leader; a person who guides or directs a group." However, to the students in the Fairfax County Leadership Program (FCLP), leadership is a lot more than just a definition. The FCLP is a group in Fairfax county that promotes leadership and teaches students about the functions and importance of the Fairfax County government. The group has made dedicated leaders out of regular students and is making a difference in how people perceive and recognize their government.

"The FCLP basically teaches a bunch of juniors who eventually become seniors what the Fairfax County government does for them and some of the various things that the Fairfax County government does," said senior Kevin Prescott. Prescott is a regular participant in the FCLP and has grown as a leader from the experience. The group meets monthly and have a guest speaker come visit to talk to them about certain aspects of the government. "One time we went

out to the middle of Fairfax to a detention center and we heard a bunch of speeches from the Fairfax County Police Department. We actually got to tour the detention center and saw a guy get tazered twice," commented Prescott.

While the club is popular and sought after, getting in isn't as easy as most clubs. All students are encouraged to apply, however the application process is rigorous. The club only selects one student from each of Fairfax County's twenty six high schools. The application also includes an essay in which student's share why they want to be involved in the FCLP. However, while it may be a rigorous process, the benefits of getting into the club are well worth it. "To be able to say that you were one of only twenty six students in the whole county to be selected for this club is pretty significant for college apps and things of that nature," said West Potomac's FCLP sponsor Mr. Coe. If you or a friend is interested you can see Mr. Coe or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dmb/fcylp.html for more information.

Diplomatic relations for West Potomac

Abby Jacobs
Special to The Wire

All my life, I thought I only had two sisters. Little did I know that in the summer of 2011, I was going to meet my twin - an exchange student from Osaka, Japan. I met Yahan through the High School Diplomats (HSD) program. Each summer for over 20 years, this program brings 40 American and 40 Japanese students to Princeton University for a ten day cultural exchange.

Each American student is paired with a Japanese roommate, with whom they spend almost every minute of each day. The program goal is to learn about each other as individuals and our respective cultures through a variety of language, music, and art activities. And of course there's discussion - lots of discussion and laughing.

The American students arrived at Princeton a day before the Japanese students. We were excited to get to know each other, but our real excitement was geared towards the arrival of the Japanese students. Soon enough, their bus rolled up and we ran to meet our roommates, and HSD had begun. The next ten days passed by in somewhat of a blur: staff members made sure our schedules were jam-packed with fun activities. We had a Japanese Cultural Festival Day (also known as Bunka-No-Hi), karaoke night, HSD Olympics, and even a Date Night! Yet some of my best memories are not from any organized activity, but simply the times when Yahan and I were getting to know each other. We talked nonstop, topics ranging from Avril Lavigne's new songs to the use of nuclear energy. I taught her the "Do-Re-Mi Song" and she

taught me the Japanese version - we sang until our voices gave out and everyone was ready to silence us themselves.

When the ten days of High School Diplomats came to a close, I could hardly imagine resuming my "normal" life after the program. I would no longer hover near Yahan to explain American slang, or try to describe why some Americans think it's acceptable to wear their pajamas in public. Yahan and I had become best friends in this short period of time, and it seemed impossible that we would soon be half a world apart. We agreed at the end of the program that this was not a "goodbye" - only a "see you later."

When I first learned about High School Diplomats, I was skeptical about applying. Would it be just another boring summer program? It turned out to be a life changing experience. Not only was I given

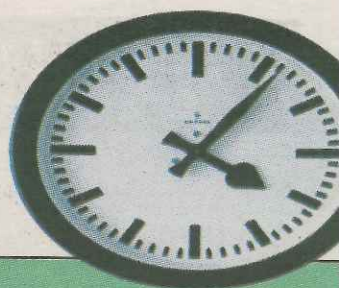
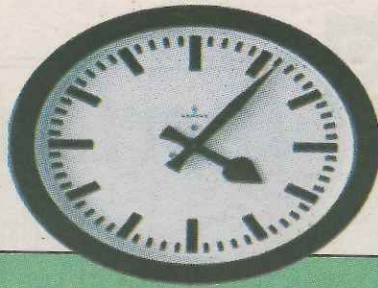
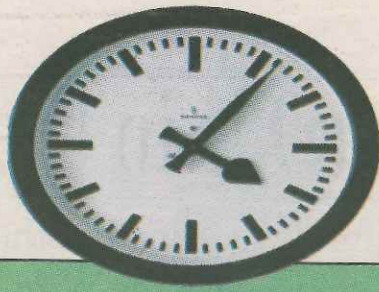
the chance to surround myself with 79 other incredibly motivated students, but I had the unique opportunity to learn about an entirely different culture from someone just like me. The friendships I have formed and the memories I have made are utterly irreplaceable. The HSD mantra is that "These will be the best ten days of your life," and they were. After all, how often do you find your twin from halfway around the world?

If you are a current sophomore or junior, I highly recommend that you check out this opportunity. It takes place from July 31 to August 11, 2012, and all costs are completely covered by scholarships. The application deadline is January 8th, 2012 and interviews will be held in early March. For more HSD details, visit www.highschooldiplomats.com.

"I could hardly imagine resuming my 'normal life' after the program."

SENIOR 12 SESSION

By Sami Kadonoff



WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR THE FUTURE???



Frezette Adkah

photos by: Sonia Garakyraraghi



Noah Feinstein



Christine Gannon



1.) I want to be a play-by-play commentator for the Vikings. I want to be married to Kim Kardashian with two kids and a goldfish.

2.) I want to be a dermatologist and live in Fiji with my husband and two kids. One girl and one boy

3.) I want to become president of Africa and unite Africa and call it The United States of Africa. I want to be married to professional soccer player Kevin-Prince Boateng and have one son and a blonde monkey named sexy monkey.

Can you match these seniors with their responses?

Correct answers: 1.Noah Feinstein 2.Christine Gannon 3.Frezette Adkah

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Cafeteria and Auditorium

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HELP US SUGGEST A NAME FOR HIM!