

Thursday, September 4, 2008

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Photo Courtesy of Goulding/KRT

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Photo Courtesy of Takahashi/KRT

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Photo by Laura Howell

Before retiring, one of the last acts of Joan Reynolds, former English and Leadership teacher, was approving a \$10,000 check from Student Government Association (SGA) account towards a school SmartBoard.

## Reynolds Retires After Many Years

MARIYA ILYAS  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Her teaching career lasted about 40 years, half of which was at our school since it opened in 1985.

Joan Reynolds, an English and Leadership teacher for years at our school, decided mid summer to end her teaching career and retire.

According to Principal Rima Vesilind, Reynolds never announced her retirement and sent her retirement papers on graduation day. "I had heard about it through the grapevine and had spoken to her several times, but until the last week of school she hadn't wanted to announce any decision," said Vesilind. "She felt it was time to retire, but didn't want to quit."

Many remember her as a tough and a fair teacher, but "she is also amazing!" said her former student and Class of 2008 graduate Dereck Parada, who knew her for three years during his high school career. "She is always there to help out students with either personal or educational problems."

Reynolds was known as a teacher to some, a mentor to others, a great colleague to many, as well as a guiding light. "She has really helped me foster my leadership capabilities," said

Parada, now a freshman at Hampden-Sydney. To Parada, Reynolds resignation is "definitely a mixed feeling," because she was "an amazing teacher and help, but at the same time she deserves a vacation."

Reynolds said, "While I will miss West Potomac terribly, I won't miss getting up at 5 A.M. at all."

Reynolds presence was known throughout the West Potomac community. With invaluable experience about not only teaching, fundraisers, and student government, Reynolds possessed a charisma known to many. "She was a wonderful teacher who loved her job," said Vesilind. "She is a delightful, creative, and sensitive person who I hope to always count as a friend."

With Reynolds gone, and Iris Cox sponsoring the Class of 2011, the new Leadership class is now being taught by Alex Case and LaTrease Rich (see full story below). The Student Government Association (SGA) as a whole is being restructured and redesigned to improve for the best.

"She was a good teacher and figure in the school," said senior Jessica Harrington, a former student of Reynolds'. Harrington is now the school Treasurer and remarked about Reynolds, "We will miss her a lot."

## New Leadership for Student Leaders

MICHAELA ACCARDI  
NEWS EDITOR

Change has been the highlight this year in not only national government, but in our very own Student Government Association (SGA) as well. Two new teachers have revamped the Leadership class with a new structure and curriculum in place.

Social Studies teacher Alex Case and Business teacher LaTrease Rich, will replace last year's Leadership teachers, Joan Reynolds (who retired past summer) and Iris Cox.

Both Rich and Case have previous experience working with government, business and student governments. "I was part of a very successful student government association when I was a student. Having worked as a student activities director in two different schools I've seen the kind of work SGAs do," said Case. "We took the necessary changes we thought would be beneficial to West Potomac students," said Rich.

The "new" leadership class, as it has come to be called, began making changes last spring

Last year's seniors and SGA members were asked what they liked about Leadership and areas that they felt needed improvement. This was taken a step further when Case and Rich were told that they were taking over the new position as Leadership class teachers and SGA sponsors.

On Friday, August 22, a summer meeting was held at school with all SGA officers and this year's new members to discuss the new structure of the class and get a head start about Homecoming. The students were divided in groups in which they talked about the past performance of SGA and what they would like to see in the future, much like in the spring. This meeting allowed the SGA members to set goals for themselves for the upcoming year which included raising the level of school spirit, becoming a more inclusive organization, making SGA the leader of all student groups, and building leadership skills to "become a cohesive group that functions well together," according to Case.

In addition to the feedback received from officers and students, the class will have a new

## Turnitin.com Busts Plagiarism

ALEX FABRIZIO  
FOCUS EDITOR

Think twice before plagiarizing.

No longer will students be able to copy the works of others thanks to the new use of a website called Turnitin.com. The website is useful to students and teachers alike, but for very different reasons.

According to the website it "[provides] a reliable, efficient, and powerful deterrent to digital plagiarism."

While students may find the site beneficial for searching for resources and references when writing major papers, teachers have the advantage of identifying any plagiarism that might take place.

Head librarian, Adriana Meeks, said, "Turnitin is not a tool to 'catch students' cheating," but rather a tool to prepare students for college. "We're not here to hurt them," she said.

Meeks trained teachers in various sessions before school started, and is going to review how to use Turnitin.com for students when she teaches how to use the online resources.

The training Meeks gives shows how to create an account. "Each student with an account will be able to see their papers and re-edit them if the paper is written too close to its source without proper citation. I will be training teachers in its use and hopefully students too," she said. When a student submits a paper to the website, they should be able to see what percentage of it matches online sources like websites, databases, etc. It shows how much of whichever portion matches a source.

Senior Paulette Nginn believes students will have a negative reaction to the website. "I think most students will be very skeptical and unwilling to use these tools," she said. Nginn expects a "negative reaction" because, "I think it will affect the way a lot of students write their papers because many students have plagiarized, [and] this will prevent them from doing [that]."

Meeks thinks otherwise. "I think how the students will view it depends on the student."

She has been giving students an avoiding-plagiarism lecture for six years and has been pushing for this "tool." At the end of this year the English department requested Turnitin.com and presented it to Principal Rima Vesilind.

Our school is not the first in the county to use Turnitin.com; 19 other high schools have had it for at least a year.

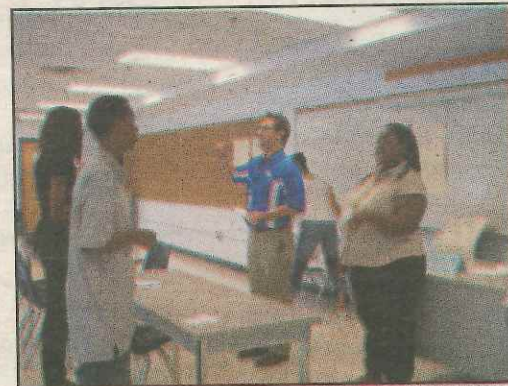


Photo by Mariya Ilyas

Alex Case and LaTrease Rich talk to SGA members about the changes being made this year to the class.

protocol in which it will become student-driven with a defined grading system. "We want them to make the decisions but also learn how to be leaders and how to be effective leaders at West Potomac," said Rich. "We want them to be seen as effective leaders by their student peers."

See Leadership, page 4



## The New Facebook: More Trouble Than it is Worth

In this day and age, everything seems to need a facelift, even social networking websites. But not all procedures go exactly the way they are planned. Just take a look at the "New Facebook."

In February of 2004, former Harvard student, Mark Zuckerberg launched Facebook to fellow Harvard students. Facebook became an instant hit with Harvard students and by March 2004 it was expanded to Yale and many other Ivy League schools in both the U.S. and Canada. By September 2005, high school students and business workers were also a target for new members, as the Facebook team added more networks.

Facebook was originally based on simplicity and accuracy. No HTML to hassle with made it easier for users who lack savvy internet skills to keep in contact with their friends. Users also have the access to special privacy locks.

What is the best thing about Facebook? Users must give

their correct name, which will pass through the Facebook team, who will then have to approve. No more "AliCA: [iS In FLORiDA UNTiL FRiDAY]" as display names. Step up the Myspace maturity level, Tom Anderson, please.

In spring of 2007, Facebook started to go under the knife. Applications were soon introduced to users as an optional way of expressing themselves beyond the simple "About Me" section. Sounds exciting, right? It was until users started logging on to their accounts and finding that they were getting at least five "requests" to add a certain application. "No, I would not like to take the 'Which serial killer are you?' quiz. Thank you very much."

Application junkies are another annoyance as they have tens, sometimes even hundreds, of applications placed on their profile, making it difficult for friends to find their wall so they can post information on a party this weekend, and slowing their friends' computers down

due to spyware programs in the applications themselves.

Another feature Facebook has added recently this past year is Facebook Chat. However, unlike the applications, this is an incredible tool for those who have given up on AIM, or other instant messengers. Of course, there is a catch. The chat occasionally dies at the worst times, like when exchanging class schedules.

The most dramatic feature to come along in the long line of Facebook updates is "The New Facebook." By September 2008, all users must conform to the new layout. Say goodbye to the toolbar at the top that allows you to switch back to the original layout. New Facebook is beyond overwhelming. Many members have started groups as a petition against this new layout. Honestly, scrolling through application junkie's profiles is a lot more fun and less of an eyesore than figuring out how to use this foreign object.

## Advice from a Graduate

Dear West Potomac and its fabulous new *Wire* editors,

Welcome back to another year of high school (or for some, welcome to your first). I graduated from this school only last spring, yet sitting here in my Virginia Tech dorm room, my time at West Potomac feels like a lifetime ago. I am excited for those of you who are just beginning high school, after all I am in the same boat in college, but I want to make sure you and your upperclassmen peers are informed enough not to make some of the same mistakes I made in your position. So, these are my last words in *The Wire*, my final advice to a West Potomac audience I catered to for so long.

First of all, don't be afraid of taking APs. I assure you, they are invaluable. When I arrived at college, I already had 30 credit hours (the equivalent of an entire year in college) thanks to my high school AP classes. And, the AP exams are NOT a joke. You can only get college credit if you do well, and trust me, you want the credit. It will allow you to pursue a double major or graduate college in three years rather than four.

Second, please get involved in West Potomac. You may think that there is too little school spirit or that the clubs and organizations are too fraught with apathy to be worth your time, but things don't have to be that way. The only reason our school is like that is

because everyone believes it to be true. Be the one to take initiative and turn a good club into a great one. Doing so not only teaches leadership skills, it makes you a more interesting person (which colleges also love to see). *The Wire* would be delighted to have you, as would any number of clubs and teams.

Third, I want to explain to you what "cool" is. In high school, students somehow get the impression that slacking off, talking back to teachers, and calling classes "stupid" is cool. In a few years, you'll realize that that mind frame is foolish and juvenile. Here in college, being cool is synonymous with being interesting and being interesting means going above and beyond just surviving school. It means sitting in the front of the class, asking questions, and choosing to use your teachers as resources for advancing your own knowledge rather than obstacles in the way of your fun.

So, I ask you to use your time at West Potomac wisely. There are so many amazing teachers and upperclassmen there willing to help you accomplish great things. If you do them now, you will be even more prepared for the challenges and opportunities ahead of you. Throw yourself into whatever you love and watch as the world opens its doors.

Have a fantastic year,  
-Kate O'Connor

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

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## RANTS and Raves

A **RANT** for school starting.

A **rave** for our new *Wire* adviser, Ms. Zitnik!

A **RANT** for summer assignments.

A **rave** for season premiers of fall TV shows.

A **RANT** for having to eat school lunches again.

A **rave** for new agenda books!

A **RANT** for *Gossip Girl*.

A **rave** for meeting new teachers.

## A Word From Our New Advisor

The first "real" paper I ever wrote was as a fifth grade student. I was assigned to write a research paper on a historical American figure, and chose Mary Hays McCauly (a.k.a. Molly Pitcher). Honestly, I don't remember much about her except that she used to bring water to thirsty men on the battlefield.

What do I remember most about the whole process of writing a paper? Well, I did burst out into tears at the public library because the task seemed so daunting. More importantly, I received an award from the Daughters of the American Revolution. I was quite surprised when this was announced during an assembly, and even more nervous when I was asked to read what I wrote in front of the entire school. Overall though, this was when I became "hooked" on writing. It was so thrilling to have an audience, and to have people hear what I had to say.

When I started at La Salle University as an undergrad, I knew that I wanted to do something creative and with writing, so Communications seemed like a good major. I bounced around for a few years, working as a public relations/marketing assistant, television scheduler, and finally as an

advertising sales representative for *City Paper*.

I have to admit, I wasn't someone who always wanted to be a teacher. To be perfectly honest, I began graduate school at Johns Hopkins wondering how much I'd really like teaching. In one crazy and hectic year, I had earned my M.A.T. degree and had completed a one-year internship in a Baltimore City high school. All I knew was that I loved it, and I couldn't picture ever going back to the corporate world again.

I'm in my second year at West Potomac now, and am thrilled to be taking over the position of adviser of *The Wire*. I'm hoping that my combination of real world media experience, love of teaching, and adoration of the written word will help me meet your expectations.

As I sit here now on this Friday afternoon before Labor Day weekend, *The Wire* staff is hard at work writing, editing, and creating the layout of our first paper of the year. I feel truly lucky to work with such a talented and dedicated group of students. We're thrilled to have you, the West Potomac community, as our audience, and we're glad you're willing to hear what we have to say.

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## Effectiveness of Political Ads



**GWEN FISHEL**  
COPY EDITOR

With the 2008 presidential election fast approaching, both candidates are trying to gain the support of new voters, some of whom have declared themselves ambivalent or independent on many political fronts. One of the ways that candidates try to accomplish this is through political advertisements, which are mostly seen on television during primetime hours. Both candidates also have their own channels on Youtube.com, a fairly new technological development utilized by politicians.

The overall effectiveness of these ads is difficult to determine. Many voters complain these advertisements are annoying and confusing. According to a published source from the Scripps School of Journalism at Ohio University, there are three types of political advertising used by politicians: image, issues and negative advertising.

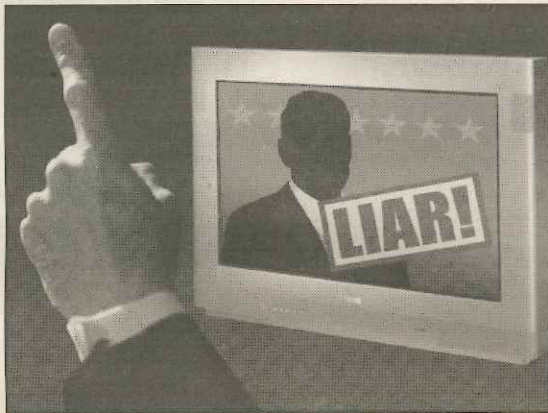
One can see the use of these types of advertising by both Senator McCain and Senator Obama. Take the newest

ads, for example. John McCain tries to peg Barack Obama, as a person who believes that he is God, painting a negative and an egotistical image of the candidate. Barack Obama fought back by releasing an ad playing up the number of houses that McCain owns, while many Americans struggle with the ups and downs of the economy, including the active foreclosures. This ad was intended to portray McCain as insensitive to economic issues.

Junior Erin Spangler said, "I've seen a few ads on both sides that begin with attacks on the other candidate and then say what the 'right' candidate will do differently, but other than that, the ads confuse voters more than help them."

In a recent controversy of political campaign ads, Senator McCain released a video that compared the celebrity of Barack Obama to that of a Paris Hilton and Britney Spears, posing the question "Is he ready to lead?"

This video was then countered by Paris Hilton, who was upset with McCain for placing her image in his campaign ad. The controversy continued when Senator Obama released an ad asking if American citizens think that John McCain is ready to lead, as he is Washington D.C.'s biggest celebrity. It is ads like these that make a parody of American politics and undermine the seriousness of political issues and the importance of choosing the right person for president. These kinds of ads provoke a response, not necessarily a good one, among viewers.



Government teacher Alexander Case said, "On the matter of whether or not ads like John McCain's Obama-Paris Hilton-Britney Spears Celebrity ad really work, the simple fact is they do. Due to the ripple effect, ads like that get such follow-on media attention, they get replayed on all the major news outlets, they get talked about on websites, and in that way, their message really gets circulated and repeated (played over and over for free) and that has an effect on all audiences—not just the initial target audience."

Many students at our school may remember the last election, when Democratic candidate John Kerry was under attack from a group of veterans who tried to disavow his service in the military through a group of television advertisements known as the "Swift Boat" ads. Many political strategists believe that ads of negative imaging like these cost him the election.

In this year's election, ads like these are commonly referred to by political commentators as "swiftboating." However, one should not take ads like these at face value; most of them are a product of misplaced words and misguided agendas. The real question is: Do they really accomplish what they are supposed to? Junior Taylor

Pierce said, "I think the commercial ads are really biased and they only try to sway voters in their way, by adding clips of information without giving full detail."

While watching these campaign ads, it is obvious that both McCain and Obama have taken each other's words and given them new implied meaning. This raises the question as to whether America is really learning what they

need to know in order to make an informed decision on who should be the next president.

Objectively speaking, political ads are not effective in terms of reality because they are not projecting facts that are true. They are changing the original context of the words in order to mislead voters. However, many people believe all the ads that they see. In these cases, one could argue that the ads were effective. That is not necessarily good though. Pierce agrees and said, "They're annoying because [the candidates] try to play their opponent off as someone they're not, or try to make it seem like they believe in something they don't. Unfortunately, I think most people don't realize this aspect to advertisements and believe most of what is said unless they've done their own personal research on the matter."

The next time another political ad flashes across the television, think twice before believing everything it says. Then ask, "Who is truly ready to lead?"

gfisfel@wpwire.com

## AP Assignments? What is the Point



**ALEX FABRIZIO**  
FOCUS EDITOR

Many sophomores, juniors, and seniors have been plagued with the final rush to complete their Advanced Placement (AP) summer assignments.

Each AP class has its own assignment; some classes like AP Chemistry and AP Psychology do not even have one while classes like AP English Language, AP English Literature, and AP World History have somewhat lengthy assignments.

For example, the AP English Language assignment was to choose a fiction and a non-fiction book from the list that was provided at the end of the year. While students read, they were required to keep a composition notebook that tracked

their reactions to different parts of the book. Kimberly Thompson, an AP English Language teacher at our school said, "Each AP Language teacher will use this assignment differently."

Some students, like junior Kate Mullen, whose selection of AP courses this year are: AP US History, AP English Language, AP Chemistry, and AP Psychology, said, "I assume that [the assignment] will be useful later in the

course ...or a good review for the course." Mullen makes an interesting point that perhaps an amendment to summer assignments should be making them extra credit or even optional for students. This is like a "half-way" approach to either

having a lengthy assignment, or no assignment.

Garry Relton, the AP Chemistry teacher, said he has, "tried two types of assignments in the past; review and science project ideas." He found that neither usually benefited the students in the way he intended them to so he decided to stop assigning them. Thompson, on the other hand uses the books for the first writing assignment.

Mullen does have a novel idea about extra credit for the assignments, though. Who wants to do homework in the summer anyway?

afabrizio@wpwire.com

## HANGING OUT WITH THE HEAD HONCHO

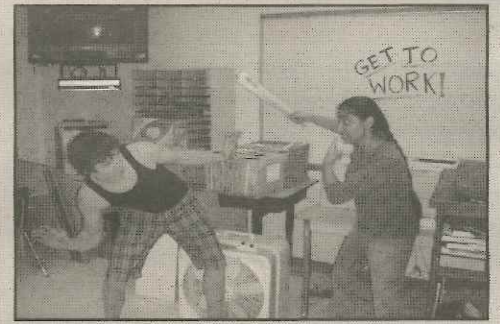


Photo by Laura Zitnik

**MARIYA ILYAS**  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

I can not believe it. No, I cannot. Senior year is here! Ahhh! (That is anonomatopoeia for fright, not excitement, by the way.)

Unlike the start of this year, however, this past summer was much more exciting. 2008 was probably one of the most historic summers of all time. A little of everything happened everywhere.

Starting with this very newspaper you are holding, the staff welcomed a new adviser, Laura Zitnik. At first, I thought this year was going to be difficult, but after getting to know her, I am glad to have a compatible member on board. I look forward to a great, fun-filled year!

The school also started with many changes. (See pages 6-7 for more details). So let us see: I like the "Wacky Wednesdays" idea—that means 30 minutes of extra sleep! The new agenda books are pretty awesome too, definitely much lighter to carry. And it looks like the new Leadership class is in good hands with Mr. Case and Ms. Rich. (Too bad I am not in that class...they made be choose between Calculus BC and Leadership)

The Young Democrats, of which I am a member of, spent hours volunteering with the Obama campaign. One of the highlights was the appearance of Kal Penn (known as "Kumar" from the movie *Harold and Kumar*) at Sacramento Drive on Route 1. How many times do you get to meet a celebrity while campaigning? Yeah, it was pretty awesome. Too bad if you missed out.

At the county level, cameras are being placed in cafeteria food lines this year to prevent food theft. (Fairfax County is monitoring lunch lines in six high schools, luckily not at our school, or Stephen, Michaela, and I would have to sit down with Penny McConnell again). Our school system's Food and Nutrition Services department estimated a \$1.2 million loss in food theft in the past year alone. I think it is pathetic that students have to steal food from lunch lines. Whatever happened to morals, people? Do we *really* want the county to waste money on stupid things like surveillance cameras?

Talking about wasting, I wasted a lot of my time watching the Olympic Games in Beijing, China and keeping up with the presidential race. I saw history made on my television set; it was actually pretty awesome now that I think about it. Michael Phelps brought home eight gold medals, breaking many world records along the way; Usain Bolt of Jamaica earned the title of being the fastest man on earth by running a 100-meter race in 9.69 seconds.

Not all news was positive though. Comedian Bernie Mac passed away from pneumonia, shocking many of his fans and leaving them in tears, not laughter. Internationally speaking, Russia tried to invade the small nation of Georgia. It is funny how the timing worked out; just as President George W. Bush has a few months left in the Oval Office, he is posed with a new dilemma to solve, thus involving the United States in yet another world affair. This led to the two presidential candidates having to add another thing to their agendas.

Still in Asia, President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan resigned August 18, ending nearly nine years of military rule under his leadership. His resignation signified the end of an important relationship with the United States, as Musharraf was the first Muslim leaders to declare alliance with U.S. after the September 11, 2001 attacks. He was pressured to step down by the newly-elected civilian government. Earlier in December 2007, Benazir Bhutto, the prime minister of Pakistan, was assassinated by a bomb. The country's government is obviously in turmoil, I guess that is the dirty game of politics worldwide.

So yeah, a lot happened this summer. I only hope senior year is as exciting. Let us see what the journey brings...

P.S. - I still can not believe it. milyas@wpwire.com



# A Place For New Faces

**GWEN FISHEL**  
COPY EDITOR

This year, there are thirty new teachers and faculty members, along with one intern. Of those new to the school staff, eight are beginning their teaching career here at our school and twenty two of them come to us with previous experience from other high schools.

*Wire* has conducted a survey with several new staff members, asking them to explain some more about themselves.

## Michelle Grice - Math



Photo by Gwen Fishel

Tell us about a unique or quirky habits of yours: "I often like to pretend I'm auditioning for 'So You Think You Can Dance!'"

## Ed Chapman - Biology



Photo by Gwen Fishel

Tell us a unique or quirky habit of yours: "I collect river stones."

## Aubree Weeks - ESOL



Photo by Gwen Fishel

Tell us a unique or quirky habit of yours: "I can catch a stack of quarters resting on my elbows."

## Caitlin Jenkins - Geosystems



Photo by Gwen Fishel

Tell us about a unique or quirky habit of yours: "I tend to laugh out loud very loudly."

## David Fink - Math



Photo by Gwen Fishel

If I could be anybody besides myself, I would be ".... [Comedian Stephen] Colbert."

## Laura Stryjewski - Counselor



Photo by Gwen Fishel

If you were an ice cream flavor, which one would you be and why: "Jalepeño....zesty and full of flavor."

## Christopher Kamar Pharmacy Technician



Photo by Gwen Fishel

What is one goal you'd like to accomplish during your lifetime: "Contribute to a malaria control program, aiding Sub Saharan Africa."

## Christina Romanelli-English



Photo by Gwen Fishel

If I could be anybody besides myself, I would be... "as long as I don't have to be someone else, I think I'll stay me, thank you very much."

## Jamie Heath - Spanish



Photo by Gwen Fishel

What is one goal you'd like to accomplish during your lifetime: "Give tours of D.C. in Spanish - be a Spanish speaking tour guide."

## Hau Tran - Chemistry



Photo by Gwen Fishel

Tell us a unique or quirky habit of yours: "I'm very picky about what I eat."

## Akon Otoyo - Counselor



Photo by Gwen Fishel

If I could be anybody besides myself, I would be the ".... Dalai Lama."

## Jackie Livelli - English



Photo by Gwen Fishel

Tell us about a unique or quirky habit of yours: "I crack my neck when I teach."

## Melissa Christensen Theater Arts



Photo by Gwen Fishel

Tell us about a unique or quirky habit of yours: "Sometimes I will sing phrases like 'awkward.'"

## Staff Not Pictured

Regina Dee  
Janet Schuresko  
Malik Carlos  
Drew Hamlin  
Shane Mills  
Celena Cruz  
Melody Colebrook-Jones  
Jamaal Dixon-Hawkins

John Chapman  
Mark Bentz  
Julia Landry  
Kevin McMahon  
Kasué Watlington  
Sheri Kirkland  
Erin Reel  
Christie Crowley

# SGA Takes a New Turn with Case and Rich

*Continued from Page 1*

To do so, the "new" class will begin with the leadership of student officers followed by class discussions and open dialogue about how to be a leader and what makes a good one. Class assignments will vary depending on the event currently being organized in which students will have different assigned duties. Students will be expected to keep a portfolio of all the activities in which they participate and will turn it in twice a quarter. Students may also turn in their portfolios at any time they wish to find out how they are doing in the class. This new system will allow students to work towards the grade that they wish to achieve. "This means that the grading scale will be more concrete than last year," said SGA President John Rice, a senior. By recording and reflecting on SGA sponsored events, Rich and Case not only hope to create a solid, specified grading system, but want

portfolios to become a learning process in which the SGA will improve from now on.

After the August meeting and other deliberation, Case and Rich discovered one of the main problems with school events and school spirit to be effective communication. "I think that the most positive thing is that this year the class is very diverse, even as of today students are calling and saying I want to be a part of this," said Rich. By having a well represented student government association, the program will reach many students, aiming to communicate with the entire school through both old and new methods. Throughout the year, during Leadership FLEX, SGA officers will walk from classroom to classroom informing the student body, as well as teachers, about SGA sponsored events - another way of improving communication.

Through such communication, hopes are that events will have greater turnouts and more students will participate in school-wide and class-wide functions and fundraisers.

Last year, SGA made a stride in the elections process by making them online via the online FCPS-24/7 Blackboard facility, eliminating the concern with counting and possible stuffing of ballots. Case and Rich plan to continue this method and in addition, publicize it more efficiently beginning with the freshman class elections to be held in September. They plan to do so by teaching every freshman how to vote and have a "practice vote" as well. Once again, laptop stations will be in the cafeteria during all lunches to provide everyone with an opportunity to vote. Election days will also be clearly defined in advance so that everyone is aware of the dates. "It will be

like the national elections," said Case.

SGA also looks forward to more participation in the organization itself. Before the end of last year, an application process was developed in which students were selected for officer positions as the program lacked many willing students excited about being school leaders. Through effective communication and successful events, the new sponsors hope to see a competitive school election next spring.

"This school has such high spirit and so many energetic people that we hope that SGA can harness that spirit and excitement about West Potomac," said Rich. Through their method of successful communication and a student-run class with clear expectations, Case and Rich hope for the entire school "to be on the same page," said Rich.



# A Debate on Drilling

LUCAS ALEXANDER  
OPINIONS EDITOR

With the 2008 election quickly approaching, the candidates are forced to debate the issues that our country faces. One of the biggest ones is the energy crisis.

Our country has a huge dependency on foreign oil and because of it, gas prices have reached all time highs. Everyone is trying to come up with ways to produce our own energy, like hydrogen powered cars for example. However, one of the most prominent ideas for a short term solution is offshore drilling in places like the Gulf of Mexico, Alaska, and out west where there are known oil reserves.

Republicans and Democrats have very different views on offshore drilling. Basic conservative thinking is that offshore drilling can help reduce the dependency on foreign oil, therefore lowering gas prices and creating a short term answer to the energy crisis. They believe this would give us time to come up with more ideas for long term answers to the problem.

Junior Republican Matt Campbell said, "I am very supportive of the plan for offshore drilling. It would help lessen our dependency on foreign oil, and help lower gas prices, which are reaching all-time highs throughout the country. However I believe that exploration of new environmentally friendly and efficient drilling/refining techniques will be necessary for major US oil companies. I am also a major supporter of alternative energy sources like nuclear, wind, water, and hydrogen power. Mostly because I believe that the world's oil reserves are dwindling and we need to find another way to solve our energy crisis."

However, some Democrats believe that offshore drilling will only barely decrease our dependency on foreign oil and it is harmful to the environment. Oil rigs are unattractive and if Americans are not careful, they can cause great damage to the ocean through oil spills.

Junio, Democrat Brian Linnell said, "My opinion about offshore drilling is that it not only ruins the environment with numerous oil spills and constant pollution, but also makes Americans, and in turn other countries, dependant on oil. Personally, I believe that money going towards offshore drilling should instead be used for discovering new alternatives for oil, such as wind and solar power."

"I think it is important for the US to become energy independent but offshore drilling should only be seen as a temporary solution" said independent Junior Alex Gheesling. "Offshore drilling can only provide a moderate amount of oil while endangering the environment, and has also been responsible for massive oil spills. Our primary goal in energy independence should be the development of alternate energy resources while things like offshore drilling should only be temporary relief from a bigger problem."

Ideas like nuclear, wind, and water power pose great ideas for the future, but more money and time needs to be invested in them to find out how we can use them. Depending on how the results of the election comes out, we will see how we will deal with the energy crises at hand.

While John McCain supports offshore drilling and therefore it is very likely McCain will choose to use it, to coincide with President Bush's lift of the executive ban on offshore drilling. Contrastingly, Barack Obama does not support offshore drilling and plans to spend money on other types of energy solutions and research to find new solutions.

No matter what, a solution needs to be brought to the attention of the American people, but there is still question as to whether or not offshore drilling is the answer.



Photo Courtesy of Steve Deslich/KRT

An oil worker for Unit Drilling Company, works on a rig on a drilling pad.

# Booting Up for Better Scores

GRACE POWELL  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Junior Eunice Achiaa knew things were going to be different when her friend grew sick last year.

"After I heard he had cancer, my life sort of changed," Achiaa began to rethink her life and the areas she wanted to change. "I became more social and interactive," she said. So when she received a letter from the school inviting her to attend a new program called AP Boot Camp, she welcomed the opportunity as another way to enhance her newfound dedication. "I decided to do this program to help with organization," she said.

The Advanced Placement (AP) Boot Camp program was designed to equip rising sophomores, juniors and seniors with the necessary tools for a successful year within an AP class. AP Government/ Leadership teacher, Alexander Case, thought the program would be beneficial to help students as he said the program is designed to teach students to "learn to work smarter, rather than harder." Case noticed other local high schools had a similar program, but none of them were free to students. "This was something that I was very passionate about," said Case.

Case applied for a program grant, and received \$5,000, making it free to our school's students. Fifty students were chosen for the program. According to a letter sent out by principal Rima Vesilind, teachers recommended any dedicated students that they felt would benefit from the program.

Students attending the "Boot Camp" were armed with a folder, notepad, and pen upon entering the building. They then sectioned off into different sessions. Throughout the week, students alternated between classes covering organization, life skills, reading, analytical writing, as well as critical thinking in English, math, social studies and science. Students also got a chance to work on any AP summer projects they still had to finish, allowing program facilitators to give feedback and advice for improving their projects. During the organization session, students were

given a box filled with folders, a ruler, post it notes, a stapler and note cards. This package was designed by Career Specialist Barbara Conner, who avidly stresses time management, organization and self evaluation in order for each individual to figure out their personal learning style. Other speakers include: English Teacher Colin O'Grady, former West Potomac teacher Heather O'Grady, Math teacher Allison Satterwhite and Science teacher Garret Hubbard. Administrators who ensured that the program ran smoothly include history teacher Emily Millians, PTSA member Phylliss Jordan and Freshmen Administrator Nancy Kreeloff.

Case said the program was not a form of remediation for previous AP scores. However, Case, as well as the other administrators of the AP Boot Camp, hope that the program will help to prevent AP/ Pre AP students from getting overwhelmed or dropping out. The program received positive feedback, "The program was great, and yes it did help me with my organization, the teachers were well prepared," said Achiaa. After each session, surveys were given out for the students to rate how effective the lesson was for the day. Case said he was very pleased with the results of the program and hopes to continue it in future summers.

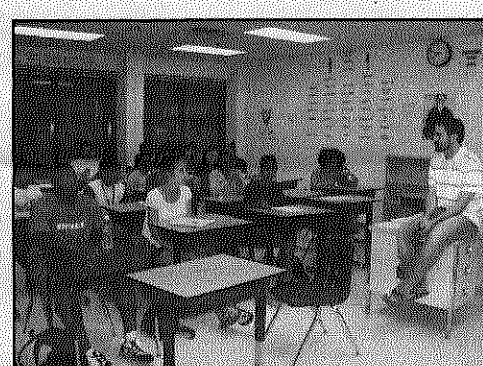


Photo by Grace Powell

English teacher Colin O'Grady talked to students about improving their reading skills during AP Boot Camp.

Achiaa's friend passed away last year, but she did not allow the tragic event to stop her from seeking success, "I will apply every thing I learn in this program," she said.

# Students Able to Choose Which Scores to Send

EMILY SMITH  
MANAGING EDITOR

For juniors, sophomores, and freshman, a new SAT policy may help ease the stress.

Starting March 2009, students will be able to choose which SAT scores to send to colleges. Within nine days of taking the SAT, the student must decide if they feel confident about the test. However, this is before the student has actually seen their SAT scores. If, after they receive their test scores, they decide to send the results to colleges, they must pay another \$9.50. "Should a student feel ill on test day, having this option may help them feel that they don't have to report those scores to colleges," said Barbara Conner, College and Career Center Specialist.

The existing policy allows college admission officers to take into account only the highest scores, but the new rule will allow students to hide the lower ones. "We found this was a good way to make the test more comfortable

and less stressful for students, while maintaining the integrity of the SAT test," said Laurence Bunin, senior vice president of the SAT in a *US News* article. Currently, college admissions officers are able to see the number of times a student has taken the SAT, and how the scores vary. In addition, admissions officers are able to note increases in scores, and are sometimes wary of the roles tutors play in higher scores, stated a *Los Angeles Times* news article.

"This new score-reporting policy will give students greater flexibility in which scores are reported to colleges and universities and reduce the stress that is associated with the test-taking experience," said College Board spokesperson Anna Klein in an e-mail to *The Daily Californian*.

Although this system may benefit those financially comfortable enough to take the test multiple times, some people are worried lower income students will be at a disadvantage. College Board waives fees for low income students to take the SAT, but

only twice. After that, the students must pay the full \$45 to take the exam.

Though this new policy may seem advantageous to students, some universities and colleges disagree. For example, some private colleges take the best scores from different sections, so a student who scored well in writing on one test, but better in math in the other, would have the better scores taken. With a single test, this system would not be as effective, and the student might be at a loss.

Not all colleges will enforce this new decision, and will still be allowed to view all test scores. *US News* advises students to apply only to the schools that allow them to hide their scores. University of Southern California is one of these schools, and told the *Los Angeles Times* that it may still require students to submit all of their SAT and SAT subject test scores.

But will multiple test takers be at an advantage? "I don't think this new option is going to have a significant impact on

most of our students," said Conner. In a *US News* article, the College Board said that because the average increase in test scores the second time is only 40 points, "there's no advantage to taking the SAT more than twice, and our fee waivers let low-income students take the test [free] twice." Time will tell the effectiveness of the new policy.



Photo by Michaela Accardi

Senior student can now choose which SAT scores to send to colleges.



# Did you Get the M

## Wacky Wednesdays

This year, something known as "Wacky Wednesdays" will be incorporated. Like every year, the administration changes the school schedule somehow. This year, however the changes are big. When a 'B' Day falls on a Wednesday, school starts at 8:00 a.m. instead of the usual 7:30 a.m. The last 30 minutes will be cut from that day's FLEX period. The late opening does not, however, affect the bus schedule, which will continue to run at its normal time. Students arriving to school by bus are expected to stay in the cafeteria to finish work, seek extra help from teachers, or make up work for teachers before school. Others, arriving to school by other means of transportation, can sleep in the extra 30 minutes or finish up a project.

## Year-Long Projects

Starting this year, ALL students are required to get involved in their community in some form. English and History departments are working collaboratively to incorporate service hours as part of their curriculums. Freshmen and sophomores will be required to complete service hours through English classes, while juniors and seniors are to submit their hours to their history teachers. These are not requirements for graduation, but are heavily weighted in the course curriculums so that it is difficult to pass the class without completing the hours, according to history teachers Matthew Toothaker and Hassan Mims. The new initiative encourages more than just volunteering; "it is designed to connect students to the community, prepare them for college, and help develop variety of projects," Mims said. Seniors' projects will continue as last year; seniors are required to do 30 hours of community service, complete a research paper with peer editing and opinion activities, as well as prepare a presentation and portfolio at the end of the fourth quarter.

## WPHS Wins CEP Promising Practice Award

This past summer, our school received the prestigious Character Education Partnership (CEP) Promising Practices Award. According

to [www.character.org](http://www.character.org), CEP is a "national advocate and leader for the character education movement" that is based in Washington, D.C. and is "committed to fostering effective character education in K-12 schools." The Character Education Partnership (CEP) gives the annual awards for unique and specific exemplary practices that encourage the ethical, social, and academic growth of K-12 students through character education.

## New Agenda Notebooks

Many students were pleasantly surprised with the new, slim agenda notebooks. However, the new agendas do not feature a world map, math formulas, an English punctuation guide, and other nifty information in the back, like last year's did. The slim books are personalized with words of the week in the top left of every page, labeled with 'A' and 'B' days for every school day, and include school start time listed for every Wednesday to correspond with the

Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, and Senior 411's written by Asma Ahmad

All other stories written by Mariya Ilyas

Photos and Photo Illustrations by Alex Fabrizio



mo?

#### FRESHMAN 411:

- Do arrive to class on time: There is nothing worse than a bad first impression.
- Do learn to accept your place on the social hierarchy scale: You are the lowest of the low and remember, do not try to act older than you really are.
- Do try to get involved with the school community: By joining clubs, organizations, and sports teams, you can get your high school career started on the right foot.
- Do meet new people: It can be intimidating, but expand your horizons and be open-minded of others. Sit with someone new at lunch.

#### Sophomore 411:

- Do take challenging courses: There is no time to slack off this year so try to do the best you can in all your classes and maintain a decent GPA.
- Do develop strong note-taking skills: Good notes can be priceless if you are a careful listener during lectures and a critical reader.
- Do get involved with school community: If you did not get a head start as a freshman, it is still not too late to help the elderly in your community (volunteer!), lead your team to victory (sports!), or do something you love (clubs/school organizations!).
- Do not get in the habit of skipping: You are solely responsible for your success or failure.

#### Junior 411:

- Do stay focused: Your junior year is by far, the most important year in high school and the last thing you need are bad grades when all you can think about is college.
- Do take the SAT once during winter of your junior year: It will give you an idea of where you stand and will help you prepare for a second attempt in the spring.
- Do not panic: Failures and triumphs are all a part of life so take it easy and follow the famous Japanese proverb, "fall down seven times, get up eight."
- Do not consciously make bad choices: Though you may be tempted by your friends or classmates, tell yourself that have better things to be involved with.

#### Senior 411:

- Do celebrate! You made it this far, now it is just a matter of finishing off nicely and getting into your favorite college. Hang out with friends, help out around school and cherish your final moments of high school.
- Do start college applications as early as possible: Needless to say, you will be very busy later on.
- Do participate in class activities.
- Do not develop senioritis until *after* first semester.

#### Blackboard Accounts for Parents

According to FCPS-24/7 Learning website ([www.fcps.blackboard.com](http://www.fcps.blackboard.com)), parents now have the opportunity to "access all of your children's class sites, review and update emergency information in weCare, and access Family Connection for your high school students by registering for your own FCPS 24-7 Learning account!" Parents can now track their student's classes and see everything teachers post through "Parent View" by signing up for an account on the online FCPS-24/7 Learning Blackboard facility, a website used originally as a communication tool between just teachers and students. The Superintendent directed all teachers to be actively involved on Blackboard.

#### Login Here

Enter login information here and click the Login button below.

If you are having difficulties logging into FCPS 24/7 please check the Login Tip Module on the left.

Username:

Password:

Login

#### Register for a Parent View Account Now!

Access all of your children's class sites, review and update emergency information in weCare, and access Family Connection for your high school students by registering for your own FCPS 24-7 Learning account! Keeping your email information up-to-date in weCare ensures that you will receive Keep in Touch notifications.

Select the following link for step-by-step instructions for registering.

[Creating a New Parent View Account and First Time Login](#)

place (see "Wacky  
important dates and  
descriptions are also use-  
at of the agendas, not  
their lighter weight).



## One World, One Dream: The 2008 Beijing Olympics

Since the birth of the Modern Olympic movement in 1896, athletes from many countries have been competing against one another for the top prize: a gold medal.

The 2008 Summer Olympics were held in Beijing, China, over the course of sixteen days and Team USA once again showed the world that it was a powerhouse in world sports, gaining the most medals garnered by a single country. With two hundred and four countries and territories competing, the Olympics was able to unite "One World" with "One Dream," which was the official slogan of these games.

Team USA Gymnastics Team made a valiant effort to come out on top, but was bested by the People's Republic of China. Nevertheless, the team brought home ten medals. Nastia Liukin took home the gold in the best All Around finals, while fellow gymnast Shawn Johnson took home the gold in the Women's Balance Beam event. Team Captain Alicia Sacramone took home the silver, along with the rest of the team, in the Team Finals, but only placed fourth in the Women's Vault Finals. However, the injury of Chellsie Memmel knocked her out of further competitions after the Team Finals, not allowing her to compete in any further events. Varsity Gymnast Cara Yaworske said "I was definitely excited to see the Olympics this year; I've been looking forward to it for a while now. I was extremely happy for the USA team in Girl's gymnastics. I think they performed very well with the pressure they were under when a teammate got injured in warm-ups."

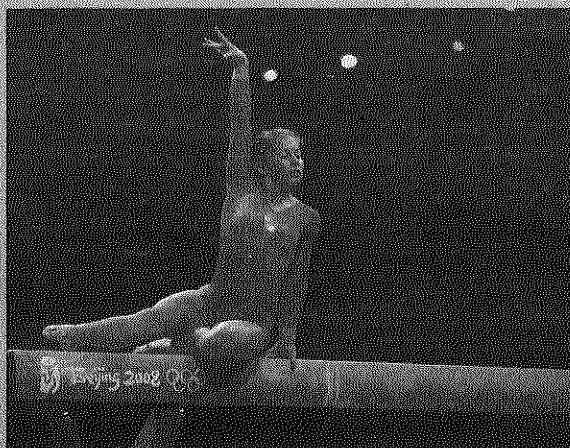


Photo by Fox/KRT

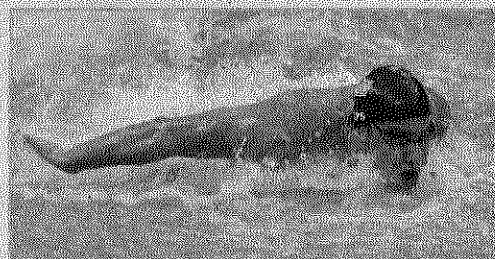


Photo by Schlegel/KRT

Most people worldwide know that the frontrunner in United States swimming as well as world competition is 14-time Olympic gold medalist Michael Phelps, who is 23 years old. As a three time Olympian, Phelps won eight gold medals in this year's summer Olympic Games in Beijing in the 200 meter freestyle, 100 meter butterfly, 200 meter butterfly, 200 meter individual medley, 400 meter individual medley, 4 x 100 meter freestyle relay, 2 x 200 meter freestyle relay, 4 x 100

medley relay, 200 meter freestyle, and the 4 x 100 freestyle relay.

Five physical attributes particularly suit Phelps to swimming that professions credit his success to: his long, thin torso, arms which span 6 feet 7 inches (disproportionate to his height of 6 feet 4 inches), and relatively short legs coupled to size 14 feet (providing the effect of flippers) by hyper mobile ankles, enabling him to whip his feet (as if they were fins, for maximum thrust through the water).

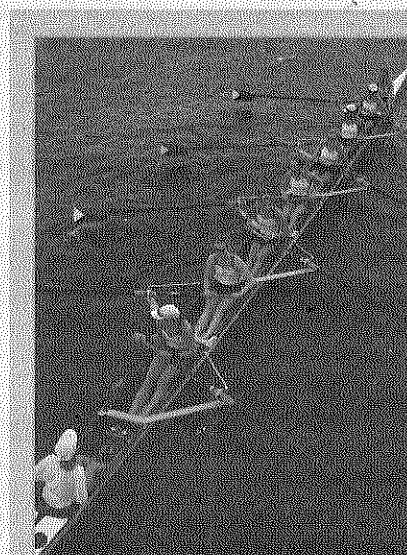


Photo by Eulitt/KRT

U.S. Olympic Women's 8 rowing team won the coveted gold medal. The nine women were coxswain Mary Whipple, Caryn Davies, Caroline Lind, Susan Francia, Anna Cummins, Eleanor Logan, Anna Goodale, Lindsay Shoop and Erin Cafaro. "We felt like we could win. We were all there in it together, and it's an incredible feeling when your dreams come true," said Goodale to the *Portland Press Herald*.

Dara Grace Torres is the first U.S. swimmer at the age of 41 to compete in five Olympics. In this year's 2008 Beijing Olympics, she competed in the 50 meter freestyle, 4 x 100 medley relay, and the 4 x 100 freestyle relay and won silver medals in all of these events. Torres' performance this year was especially touching as it is most likely her last Olympics and she lost the 50 meter freestyle by a mere .01 of a second. With her two year old daughter attending the games to cheer her on, Torres was a face to be remembered this Olympic games, but unlike others, not for the medal winnings, but for her pure athleticism at what is considered "old age".



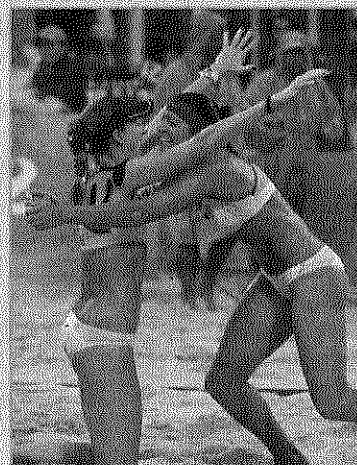
Photo by Fox/KRT



Photo by Schlegel/KRT

The women's Olympic softball team suffered their first defeat in 12 years to Japan. "Their loss to Japan (earning them a silver medal)

proved that [softball is] not completely an American dominated sport and international interest is growing," said Varsity softball player junior Maggie Berrigan. The cleats left on the softball field symbolized the end of the softball team's career, as softball is one of the sports to be eliminated in the Olympics by 2012.



The dynamic duo of Misty May and Kerri Walsh took home a gold medal in Olympic beach volleyball, after defeating Brazil's Adriana Brandao Behar and Shelda Kelly Bruno. May will be long remembered for her question to President George W. Bush: "Mr. President, want to?" inviting him to tap her butt, a tradition in beach volleyball. The President politely tapped her back instead. In indoor volleyball, the U.S. Men's Volleyball, coached by Hugh McCutcheon, won an Olympic gold medal for the first time in 20 years. The team defeated Brazil 3-1 in Beijing.

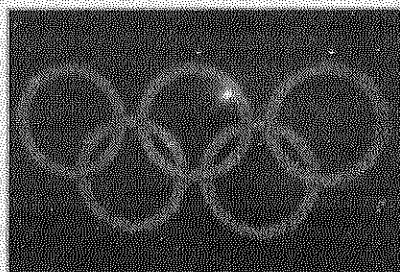
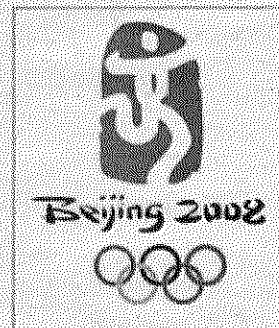


Photo by Eulitt/KRT



RISEING HOPE MISSION CHURCH

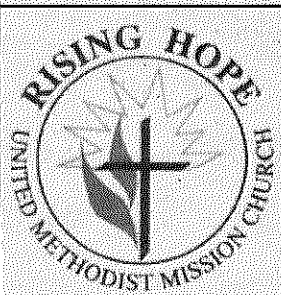
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# Bolting Across The Finish Line

**LUCAS ALEXANDER**  
OPINIONS EDITOR

Most of the focus from the 2008 Beijing Olympics has been on the fastest swimmer in the world, Michael Phelps, as well as the fastest sprinter in the world, Usain Bolt.

Phelps lived up to this hype. He won all eight gold medals, the only Olympian to accomplish such a feat, and broke seven world records. Many people believe that he put on the greatest performance in Olympic history. Junior swimmer Molly Bowdring said, "Michael Phelps' performance in the 2008 Olympics was great; it is so inspiring to watch an athlete like him."

In one race, Phelps won by the smallest margin possible, and was a part of the greatest comeback in Olympic history. This is proof that he really is the best swimmer of all time.

Usain Bolt's performance in track in the second week was also amazing. He participated in all three male sprint events, the 100 meter, the 200 meter, and the 4x100 relay, and got gold in all three. He broke all three world records as well.

However, what is most impressive is his 100 meter run was the most amazing. He ran with no wind advantage, his shoelace untied,

and he didn't sprint the whole way. Bolt decided to flex his arms and pound his chest during the last few meters of the race. Bolt won easily, earning a world record of 9.69 seconds, breaking the world record that he previously held. The second place finisher, Richard Thompson finished in 9.89.

This has brought up some controversy, as to whether or not Bolt was taunting his competitors. "I don't think he should have done what he did [even if it was intentional]." "..... To be leading the group, getting a world record, and taunting at the same time is like a slap to the face to the other runners who have trained very hard to be where they were," said junior track athlete Frankie Gerow.

"That's not the way we perceive being a champion," International Olympic Committee President Jacques Rogge told the press. "I think he should show more respect for his competitors...and not make gestures like the one he made in the 100 meters. He might have interpreted that in another way, but the way it was perceived was 'catch me if you can.' You don't do that. But he'll learn. He's still a young man."

Bolt responded to the comments and said, "I wasn't bragging. When I saw I wasn't covered, I was just happy."

Bolt, who turned 22 on August 21, competed in his first Olympic Games in Beijing. This means if he stays on track that he has a wonderful future ahead of him. He became the fourth man in Olympic history to win gold in all three sprint events, and the first to break all three world records.

Even more amazing is that he probably could have a better time in his 100 meter time race. In the 200 meter, Bolt ran all out against a wind disadvantage, sprinting the whole way and even stretching to cross the line. "I think he could have run faster if he did not taunt," said Gerow. After the first 60 meters of the race, Bolt was on pace for a 9.52 second time, which would have shattered the previous record.

Bolt, who is from Jamaica, was only one of the many Jamaican athletes who did such a superb job. In total, the Jamaicans won five gold medals. For an island with a population of only 2.7 million, this is very impressive. So impressive, in fact, that it gave Jamaica the highest gold medal to population ratio in

Olympic history.

Bolt and Phelps certainly did steal the show at the Olympics. While there were many triumphs and losses like the United States Men's Indoor Volleyball team winning the gold after the coach's father-in-law was murdered and his mother-in-law was injured, the Chinese girl gymnast age questions and others, Bolt and Phelps took the cake. Because of both athletes' young ages, many ask, "How will they fair in London in 2012?"

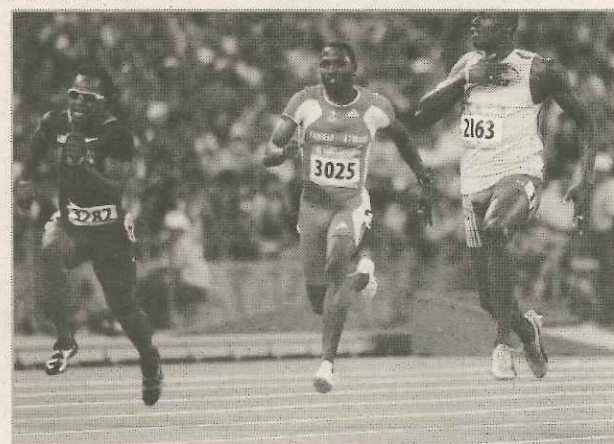


Photo by Paul Kitagaki Jr./KRT

Jamaican athlete, Usain Bolt, earned the title of being the fastest man on earth after running 100-meter race in 9.69 seconds.



Photo by Rosey Carmichael

## Cross Country Goes Across the Country to Train For Season

**BEN HAMMOND**  
ONLINE EDITOR

From August 9 to August 18, the beautiful landscape and small town atmosphere of northern Michigan became home to a rigorous training camp for our school's Cross Country runners, gearing up for the fall season.

Roughly thirty athletes, including several incoming freshmen, attended the camp this year along with three coaches: Don Beeby, Amy Kraut and Jenn Dietze. Both Kraut and Dietze are new to our school this year.

The team spent ten days running in two-a-day practices and partaking in other activities to get into tip-top shape for the upcoming season.

Our Cross Country team has been going to Michigan for several years now. Both the athletes and coaches cannot seem to say enough about the remarkable benefits the camp had in improving both physical fitness and developing a strong team bond among the collective group. In a highly competitive and strenuous sport like Cross Country, camaraderie is essential for keeping each athlete motivated and focused on achieving the team goals for the season. "Without camaraderie, there is no team," said Thom Hammond, a senior captain.

Following the week-long stay in Michigan, the team had become a more united and cohesive force as a team, with big plans for the fall season. As the Cross Country team enters the fall 2008 season, the amity and comradeship developed in

Michigan will continue to carry over and play a crucial role in leading the team to success in the district, regional, and state meets.

Physical conditioning was also an equally important part of the Michigan camp, and the grueling two-a-day practices helped team members to increase strength, stamina, and endurance – the three essential needs of successful Cross Country runners, during the season. Over the course of the week, athletes took to the many picturesque trails and roads of northern Michigan, a scenic escape in comparison to busy northern Virginia.

However, the Michigan Cross Country camp would not be complete without several workouts featuring the notorious Sleeping Bear Sand Dunes, which infamous for their steep-sloping sides that make even the shortest hikes exhausting. Considered by many to be the most difficult and dreaded part of the camp, the sand dunes of northern Michigan gave the runners a unique training opportunity that could not be found anywhere in Virginia.

The training proved to be highly beneficial for the returning athletes. Back in Virginia, those who went to camp are now able to carry over the training and lessons learned in Michigan to build a strong team focused on having a stellar season this fall. The team's first meet will be the Monroe Parker Invitational at Burke Lake Park on September 6. The entire team will be competing and has high expectations in this opening event. There is sure to be fun and excitement in this year's Cross Country season.

## Sports Teams Hoping Not to Fall This Season

**STEPHEN HOWELL**  
LAYOUT/NEWS EDITOR

Teachers have not been the only ones coming to school before the September 2 start date. Student athletes began practices for their respective sports, starting as early the beginning of August. Each team has been gearing up for what appears to be a victorious season all across the board.

### Football

Our school's football team hopes to repeat the success of last year's senior-led team, who had an 8-4 record and a regional semifinal appearance. The team has been busy practicing in the infamous two-a-day practice schedule since August 4. The team will need the top-notch conditioning gained during these practices to run their fast-paced spread offense, which ranked third in the region last season. Coach Eric Henderson is optimistic about the upcoming season and hopes the team will become the Patriot District champion, as the team was two seasons ago. However, the Patriot

District looks to be challenging this year, with teams like West Springfield, who has sixteen starters returning this season. Coach Henderson will be counting on players like senior lineman Will Kreger, senior receiver Kristian Rodriguez, and senior linebacker Aaron Lonely.

### Field Hockey

After losing with less than one minute left in overtime against rival Mount Vernon, our school's Field Hockey team anticipates a season of redemption after last year's 2-9 record. Senior goalie Taylor Smythe and senior defender Catherine Bradley will lead the young team this year. The field hockey team will again be coached by Betty Sixsmith.

### Volleyball

New coach Molly Schholesky will lead the volleyball team, with hopes of winning the District Championship, after last year's squad lost in the final game against West Springfield. Key returnees Leigh Blair and Katy Bradley will guide the team; however volleyball, like many other team sports, relies on all players to be dependable and consistent on the court.

### Cross Country

Last year, the Boy's Cross Country team won the District Championship, and will be returning thirteen seniors. Ben and Thom Hammond, both captains, will lead the team this year. The twins are both known for their hard work and leadership in and outside of the classroom.

### Golf

Lastly, the golf team has been busy practicing, hoping to improve their 1-1 record so far in the season. The team will rely on seniors Forrest Wilson and Andy Lutz to win the district after it fell just short of that goal last year when they finished second.

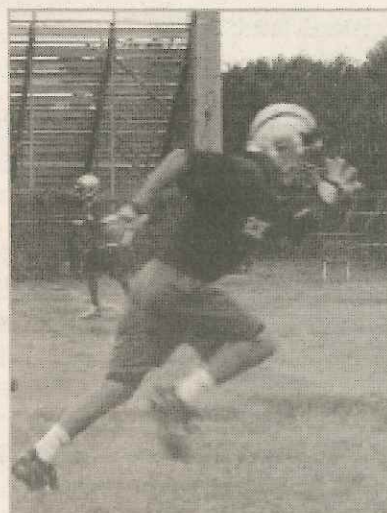


Photo by Erin Parker

Junior Kevin Fowler is hard at practice before school starts.



## 10 Ways to: Increase Gas Mileage

**MICHAELA ACCARDI**  
NEWS EDITOR

### 1. Clean Your Air Filter

Replacing air filters and keeping them clean can improve your car's gas mileage by as much as 10%, so it is a good idea to have your engine's air filter checked at each oil change (every three months or 3,000 miles as recommended by *The Car Care Council*). Taking care of air filters is important because air filters clogged with dirt, dust, and bugs force your car's engine to work harder and become less fuel-efficient.

### 2. Keep Your Tires Aligned

Tire alignment becomes crucial because proper alignment keeps your tires from wearing down faster which, in turn, causes your engine to work harder. This also reduces fuel economy by as much as 10% or up to 28 cents per gallon. Also remember that keeping your tires pumped up is important because under inflated tires will also cause your tires to wear more quickly.

### 3. Regular Tune Ups

By fixing a car that is out of tune or has failed an emissions test, you can improve gas mileage by about 4%, so be sure that your car is in tip top shape. It is also important to watch for worn out spark plugs, as a misfiring spark plug can reduce a car's fuel economy by up to 30%!

### 4. Check Your Cap

It is estimated that 17% of cars on the road have broken or missing gas caps, which not only reduces gas mileage, but harms the environment. Replace gas caps if they are broken or missing. Also be sure to tighten the gas cap because gas can be released from the tank and evaporate. According to *The Car Care Council*, loose, missing or damaged gas caps cause 147 million gallons of gas to evaporate annually.

### 5. Slow Down

We all know that teenagers, as new drivers, have that need for speed but slowing down can be beneficial, for every 5 mph you reduce highway speed (from 70 mph to 65 mph), you can reduce fuel consumption by 7%.

### 6. Keep Off the Brake

When driving, try to keep your foot off the brake and instead release from the acceleration to slow down. Riding the brakes not only wears down the car's brakes but decreases gas mileage by up to 35% or 96 cents per gallon.

### 7. Do Not Be Idle

Idling, not only causes pollution but also wastes gas. If you are stopped for more than 30 seconds, turn off your car. By avoiding idling, you can save up to one cent per gallon for every two minutes not spent in idle.

### 8. Lighten Up

Unless you are going on a road trip, try to pack lightly and only bring the necessary items with you in the car. Every 100 pounds added to your vehicle loses 1% to 2% in efficiency (this may mean being selective about the friends that get to hitch a ride!).

### 9. Use Your Garage

If you have a garage, clean it out and make use of it! Parking in a garage keeps your car cool in the summer and warm in the winter which saves gas used for the air-conditioning and defroster when you drive.

### 10. Use the Right Oil

Using the manufacturer's recommended grade of oil can improve gas mileage by 1% to 2%. Choosing oil that has the words "energy conserving" on the API performance level can also improve gas mileage as it contains friction-reducing additives.

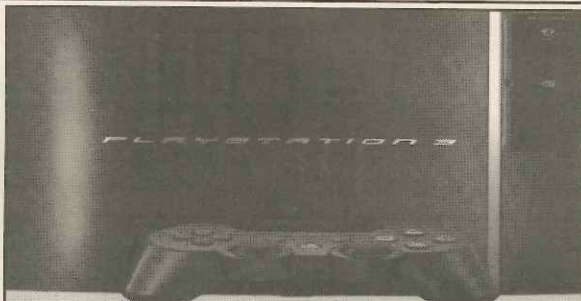


Photo Courtesy of KRT Handout

Sony's new game, "Fat Princess" has created a dispute between the feminist and the game bloggers.

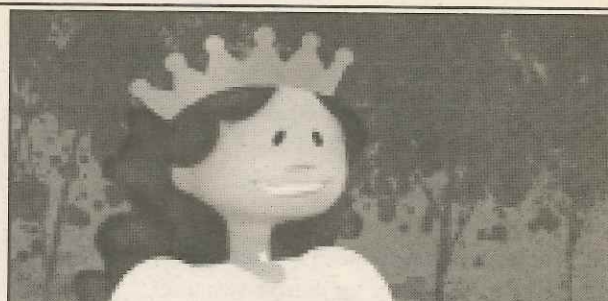


Photo Courtesy of White/KRT

"Fat Princess" has received many awards including "Best Downloadable Game" according to Gamespy.com and IGN.com.

## Time to Capture the "Fat Princess"

**EMILY GRIFFIN**  
ASSISTANT STYLE EDITOR

The saying "you cannot have your cake and eat it too" is completely inapplicable to this matter. The "Fat Princess" is an upcoming Playstation Network game, made by Dark Star Industries. The object is to kidnap a princess from your opponent's team and then to force her to eat cake till she is too fat to move. This makes it harder for the other team to get her back.

The only good part of this game is that it differs from the "usual" Playstation games.

So, just how are the feminists in our world responding to this game? The obvious answer: not well. According to MSNBC, feminist bloggers said the concept and the title are hostile to women. MSNBC also said that some people believe these bloggers should just keep their mouths shut.

The game has created a lot of stir on the internet with some people saying that it is just a game and women should not be offended by it. Sony has been sitting on the sidelines during this controversy. The only comment they released to the public was that they "didn't intend for the game to be controversial, just fun."

In an attempt to clear the air, Sony said that by entitling the game "Fat Princess," it did not mean to offend anybody. The only purpose and meaning of the game was to watch a princess eat cake until she cannot move. However, in order for this game to be shown at the E3 press conference, Sony had to buy the game from Dark Stars Industries, indicating that Sony checked the game out and thought that the game would be funny to the players before it was put on the market.

"We did not, in any way, shape or form, intend to mislead

or offend or distract people with the title of the game," said Deborah Mars, senior producer on "Fat Princess" to MSNBC and Sony employee.

Sony did mention that "Fat Princess" was a last minute edition to the E3 press conference that took place in early August in Los Angeles. However, last minute or not, there must have been a person who approved whether or not the game would be shown at the press conference. In other words, this means that there was someone who either overlooked the game's controversial potential or genuinely thought that the game would attract players.

Therefore, Sony takes partial blame from the feminist bloggers and the praise from the game bloggers.

So what are the game players really saying about the "Fat Princess"? Some game bloggers told MSNBC that the game was enjoyable with an odd twist of humor. The game has even won a few awards like "Best Downloadable Game," according to Gamespy and IGN.com.

What stemmed this big controversy? The first bloggers to give their opinion were those who considered themselves to be feminists. These bloggers believed the only reason that Sony bought "Fat Princess" from Dark Stars Industries was for money making purposes. The controversy, however, has only sparked the interest of more individuals eager to try their hand at gorging a princess.

Videogamesonline.com and MSNBC both had good questions about the decision to name the game something so controversial. Videogamesonline.com wanted to know why would Sony not rename the game or call it "Capture the Princess?"

The question is, "Would the game still make the projected profits if it were named something other than 'Fat Princess' and what would happen if it were changed?"

## Students Suffer as Gas Prices Rise

**ASMA AHMAD**  
ONLINE EDITOR

As expected, gas prices took a roller coaster ride this summer as teens scrambled for ways to pay at the pump while still trying to have a good time.

Once the school year is over and all the exams are through, most students just want to go out and enjoy their well deserved vacations. This summer, however, was a whole new ball game.

While some teens left it up to their parents to make sure the fuel gauge did not reach the dreaded 'empty' line, others decided to take on the responsibilities of part time jobs in order to ease their financial situations. "I worked at *Browne Academy Summer Camp* as a swim instructor and lifeguard as well as at the *Mount Vernon Recreational Center* to save money for college," said Senior Danielle Davis.

Despite the sufficient paychecks most teens are able to earn nowadays, the increase in the cost of living made it hard for many to splurge on fun activities, such as entertainment and food. Rising gas prices also affected how much money teens were able to save for later activities.

Although gasoline prices have been easing, they remain significantly higher than where they were at this time last year. With less money to spend on day to day things, Davis recalls how she and her co-workers would pitch in to get pizza for everyone.

"My co-workers traveled from all over Northern Virginia and Maryland to get to work, so gas prices were affecting these college kids, which indirectly affected me and my spending habits," said Davis.

According to a recent poll from *Junior Achievement* and *The Allstate Foundation*, "Nearly 70 percent of teens (68.6%) are using credit cards to buy gas, that's up from 51.9 percent in 2007 and 45.9 percent in 2006. Gas is now the top item teens buy with credit cards, surpassing clothes, which had led the list in previous years."

There is no doubt that teens are feeling the crunch just as

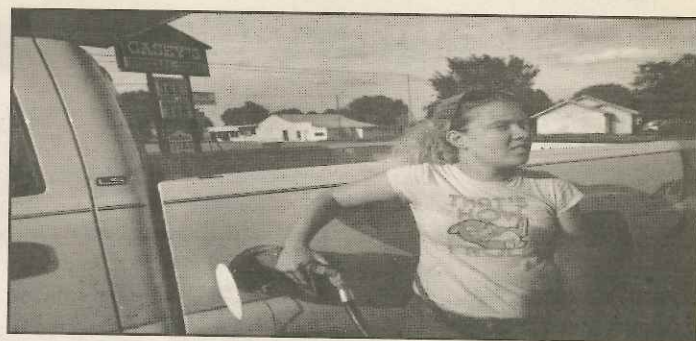


Photo Courtesy of Allison Long/KRT

Students learn to budget due to the raising gas prices that have affected many students summer vacation.

much as their parents are from these tough economic times. "Gasoline is really taking a bite out of what these kids are making," said Stephanie Bell, director of marketing and media relations for *Junior Achievement*, based in Colorado Springs, Colorado. "They are going to have to go on a budget just like the rest of us, and that's a painful lesson to learn."

Nonetheless, many teens tried salvaging their summers by enjoying nearby theme parks while remaining within their budgets.

"The most I did was go to Kings Dominion, but even that was a pain at the gas pump, considering my boyfriend spent over 50 bucks on gas that day alone," said Davis.

While students can cross their fingers and hope for a better economy to get better, web sites such as [www.gasbuddy.com](http://www.gasbuddy.com) and [www.gaspricewatch.com](http://www.gaspricewatch.com) keep track of gas prices across the country helping people to find the cheapest gas in local areas.

Some families had to find other alternatives in order to get to place to place, due to the raise in gas prices. The other common alternatives include taking the bus, biking, walking, or carpooling to nearby locations. Though many may feel helpless during these tough times, it is best to remain optimistic while learning how to manage one's money.



# Harry's Big Let Down

EMILY GRIFFIN  
ASSISTANT STYLE EDITOR

As many devoted Harry Potter fans know, the release date for the sixth installment of the Harry Potter series, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* was pushed back to July 17, 2009.

On August 14, Warner Bros. announced that the *Harry Potter* movie was to be released later in the summer of 2009. This decision was so sudden, even Warner Bros. failed to notify *Entertainment Weekly* in time for its fall movie preview. So, *Entertainment Weekly* printed its issue with the face of Harry Potter on the cover, just hours too late to correct the release date.

The fact that Warner Bros. said the new release date was last minute is most likely true, since the teaser trailer they released for the movie has surfaced on the television and on the internet.

Why did they change the date? Warner Bros. released a few statements on the issue. According to *Hollywood Insider*, Warner Bros. stated that the summer time is an "ideal window for a family tent pole release."



Photo by MBR MCT

Later on, Warner Bros. released another statement to *Hollywood Insider*. The second statement clarified further and said "Like every other studio, we are still feeling the repercussions of the writers' strike, which impacted the readiness of scripts for other films—changing the competitive landscape for 2009 and offering new windows of opportunity that we wanted to take advantage of. We agreed the best strategy was to move *Half-Blood Prince* to July, where it perfectly fills the gap for a major tent pole release for mid-summer."

Director of *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, David Yates commented to *Hollywood Insider* and said, "even as we put the finishing touches on this latest film, we are already beginning preparations on the final two films—we start filming in February—and I am excited to bring this remarkable series to the exciting and moving conclusion its loyal fans deserve."

Other rival studios, such as Universal Studios said that one reason that *Harry Potter* was pushed back is because of the success of the movie *The Dark Knight*. Another reason for the push back is Disney's animated movie called *Bolt*, which includes the voice of Miley Cyrus. According to *Muggle.net*, some speculate Warner Bros. believed *Bolt* would attract some of the *Harry Potter* viewers.

It looks like fans will have to wait until July 17 to see the newest *Harry Potter* movie.

# Hamlet 2 Rocks the House

EMILY SMITH  
MANAGING EDITOR

"My life is a parody of a tragedy."

This is true not only of main character Dana Marsch's life, but also of the play he writes and directs, *Hamlet 2* and of this film—*Hamlet 2*.

In Tuscon, Arizona, Dana Marsch (played by Steve Coogan) is a middle aged drama teacher, struggling professionally, personally, and financially. At home, he is trying to have a baby with his wife Brie (Catherine Keener), and worrying about his fertility. Meanwhile, at work, his drama class is overrun by students whose main choice electives have been cancelled and care nothing about his passion: drama. Comparing himself to the likes of "Mr. Holland" in *Mr. Holland's Opus*, and "John Keating" in *Dead Poet's Society*, he enthusiastically tries to involve his reluctant students by using nudity, violence, and profanity.

Marsch is quite the eccentric character, with hints of a troubled past. His father doubted that he would ever become a great actor, and was correct, seeing as Marsch's few roles included a stint in *Xena, Warrior Princess*, a juicer infomercial, and an ad for herpes medication.

With a DUI in his past, Marsch does not own a car, and is instead forced to rollerblade to work every morning, along the busy streets of Tuscon. Marsch's personal life is pitifully humorous, where everything that can, goes horribly wrong.

The history of Marsch's acting and directing career may be the funniest storyline in the entire movie.

The opening scene reveals the lack of talent that he possesses. The idea of a high school production of *Erin Brokovich* starring only two high school students is funny, but Marsch's vision of *The Lakehouse* is even better, as the original movie was mediocre to begin with. However, one cannot deny that Marsch has enthusiasm for his terrible acting and directing, making him even more pitiful.

After criticizing his terrible production of *Erin Brokovich*, a student reporter inspires Marsch to write and perform his own play. The basic plot of this play involves Jesus Christ, Hamlet, and a time machine. However, in Marsch's production, gone are the white robes and holiness of Jesus, replaced by a wife-beater, jeans, and "sexiness." In fact, one of the main songs has a refrain of "Rock me, sexy Jesus, all night long."

When the strict principal reads a copy of the controversial play, he forbids the musical to be performed.

The "troubled youth" work together to build sets and practice in an abandoned building, while outside, the story of the play is being picked up by journalists, angry Christians, and worried parents.

This movie offends Christians, Jews, Latinos, homosexuals, and a myriad of other groups, but the humor more than makes up for any discomfort. The small roles of Amy Poehler as a lawyer and Elisabeth Schue as herself only add to the movie's charm.

Steve Coogan played his role well, getting the overly dramatic persona of Marsch nearly perfect. The boarder, Gary (David Arquette), was hilarious. Tagging along with the Marshz whether at dinner or at the sperm bank, the few lines he had were delivered with believable stupidity. Of the students, the best actor was Joseph Julian Soria who played the rebellious student, Octavio.

Genius? No. Offensive? Probably. Hilarious? Yes. And, definitely worth the \$9 ticket.



Photo by Lionel Hahn/KRT

Amy Poehler, star of *Hamlet 2*.

# Fall Television Season Previews

ASMA AHMAD  
ONLINE EDITOR

## Grey's Anatomy: Return Date→September 25



Photo by Handout MCT

The award winning show *Grey's Anatomy* returns this fall with more drama, crazy love interests and intense medical tragedies than ever before. Last season, the awkward lust between Callie and Eirca Hahn left viewers confused about where Marc Sloan would fit in the mix. Well, it seems as though McSteamy will be taking a break from his amative days, and will focus on rehashing his reputation around Seattle Grace Hospital. On the other end, Cristina who practically

gave up on life last season, may be reacquainting herself with dating after her sudden breakup with Preston Burke. Without giving away too much, viewers should be very excited for the return of Denny Duquette, in a different form.

## The Office: Return date→September 25

Though no one ever seems to get their work done at *The Office*, there are still plenty of other happenings to keep everyone busy. Shockingly, the last scene most fans witnessed was the unexpected image of Dwight and Angela-together. Where does that leave Andy? Well, there is something telling me he will continue making a fool of himself for Angela's affection. While Michael and Jan did experience some rough patches last season, Michael is ready and willing to help Jan with a baby that is not his. And as if that is not hard enough, he will also be involved with Holly, the new office assistant who is led to believe that Kevin has a mild mental disability.



Photo by handout MCT

## Gossip Girl: Return date→September 1



Photos by MCT Handout

After Dan and Serena's impulsive breakup, Dan spent the summer hanging out with his best friend, Vanessa, while Serena took off for the Hamptons with her previous love interest, Nate. However, it seems as though Serena will have a lot of explaining to do, considering both Dan and Nate made their way back into her life around the same time. Shocking? Not at all. Then, there is Blair and Chuck who were going away to Paris at the end of last season but now, it appears as though there is some jealousy between the two self-centered elites due to Blair's charming new rebound guy, whom she is using to make Chuck jealous. In the Hamptons, Nate gets into a relationship with a new girl, while Serena reexamines her relationship with Dan.

## Desperate Housewives: Return Date→September 28



Photo by Hahn-Khayat MCT

Last season left viewers a little puzzled by the fast forwarded scenes showing Susan married to a man other than Mike, Bree with her own cookbook business, Lynnette with uncontrollable teens, and an unkempt Gabby with a pair of daughters to match. This season, fans will have most of their questions answered through frequent flashbacks but there will also be a brand new mystery to solve on Wisteria Lane. Oh, and do not worry Mike fans, he will also be paying visits from time to time.

## Prison Break: Return Date→September 1

In the last season, Michael Scofield was left in Sona Prison where he remains while Lincoln Burrows finds his way out. Burrows then comes in contact with The Company learning about that his son, LJ, and the woman that Scofield is in love with, Sara Tancredi. Burrows is also told that The Company wants Scofield to break James Whistler out of Sona. With Scofield and Whistler trying to form an escape plan while Burrows deals with the deathly beautiful Company representative, Scofield fails to meet the deadline as Burrows double-crosses The Company. Tancredi was beheaded and her head was sent to Burrows as a warning sign, while Whistler was traded for LJ. In the new season, the producers have said that Tancredi might not have actually died and that there will be new characters, such as FBI Agent Wyatt. Also, a Fox Rep has said that two characters will die in the season premiere.



Photo by Nicolas Khayat/MCT

## One Tree Hill: Return Date → September 1



Photo by Lionel Hahn/MCT

In the season finale of *One Tree Hill*, Lucas starts a relationship with his book editor, Lindsay Strauss, who wants him to write another book. Nathan, who is paralyzed due to an accident that occurred four months ago, and Haley are raising their son Jamie in Tree Hill. While Brooke deals with drama that her new CEO of her store *Clothes Over Bro's* takes off in New York. Peyton is in LA working for an assistant at a record company. She eventually quits due to a feeling of lower status. She and Brooke decide to move back to Tree Hill. Lucas goes to the airport and Brooke, Peyton and Lindsay all answer the phone. He tells one that he has two tickets to Las Vegas and that he wants her (one of them) to marry him. Not much has been released on the new season of *One Tree Hill*, but of course one thing is guaranteed, drama and romance.



## Senior Session

MARIYA ILYAS  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Photo courtesy of Rashida Moore

## PROFILES

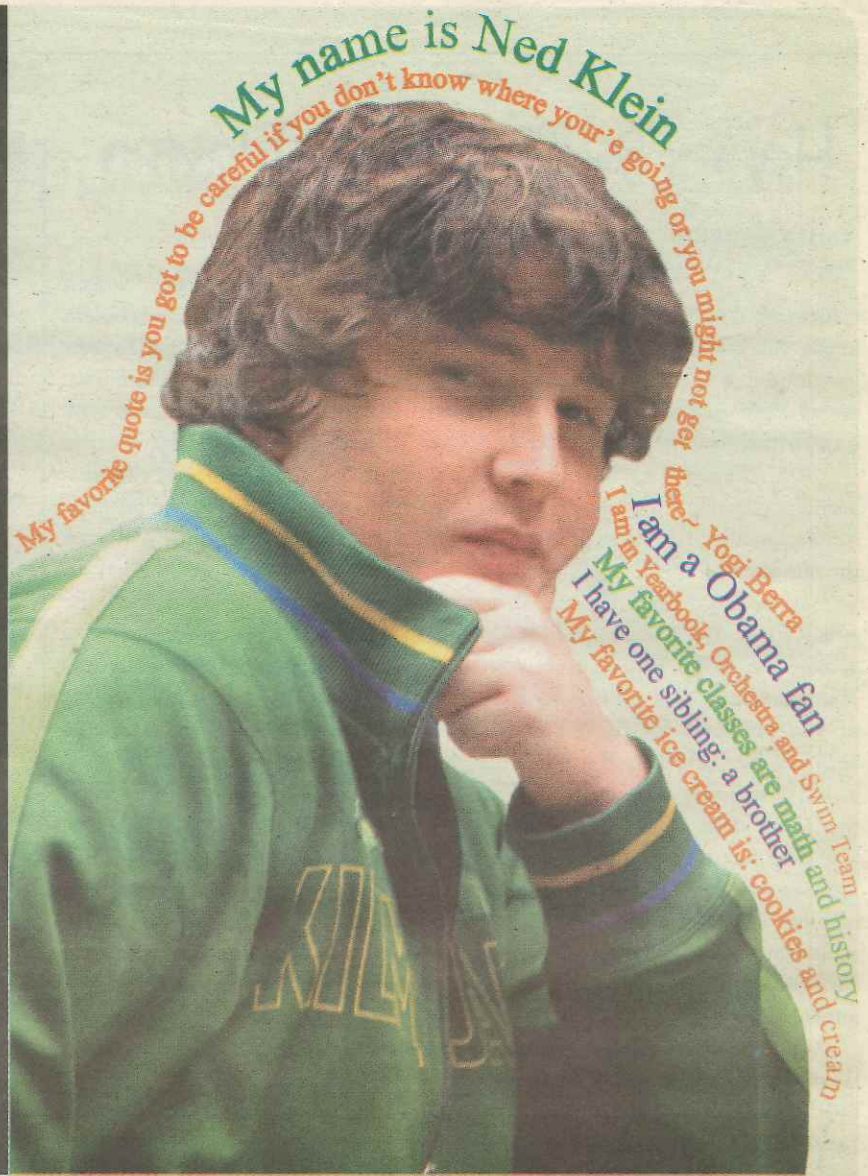


Photo courtesy of Will Klein

### Describe an event in your life that has impacted you greatly:

When Ms. Mobley [Photojournalism teacher] made me Photo Editor in Chief my junior year. To be honest I was more scared then thrilled simply because I didn't think that the seniors (or anyone as a matter of fact) would listen to me at all. However, I was wrong. I learned how to be in charge of my superiors and still respect them at the same time. So to sum it all up, it truly was a great year.

The single most impacting event in my life has got to be the moment of my birth. The details of this momentous occasion are a little fuzzy, but had it not occurred, my life would not be the same.

### How would you sum up your biography in 3-6 sentences?

My name is Rashida but most people call me Shida. I'm a loud, outgoing person who loves to speak her mind, but I have a much serious and quieter side to me that people don't really get to see much of. My ultimate goal is to graduate high school and go to college so that one day I can thank all the wonderful people that have done so much for me.

I am an indescribable person, who can only be fully grasped by having a conversation with me. I can rarely be serious, however, can be just as often profound.

# New Counselor with New Stories to Share

GRACE POWELL  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

There is nothing out of the ordinary about Counselor Laura Stryjewski's office.

There are papers on desks and post-it notes on her computer monitor. There are frames and pictures waiting to be displayed for the new school year. Stryjewski herself is so friendly that it is easy to ignore the walls of her office. Walls that hold two unique posters that begin to tell the story about how Stryjewski lived in Africa for three fulfilling years of her life.

Stryjewski is the epitome of a Northern Virginian. She graduated from college in Chantilly, Virginia, attended graduate school at George Mason University and lives in Washington D.C. with her family close by in Fairfax. Yet she longed for something beyond the comfort that this area could bring her, "I was fortunate to come from a middle class family in the area and so, my needs were met most of the time," it was these needs that had Stryjewski aching to see how she could manage without them, "I finished college and I finished graduate school and then I thought 'oh my gosh, I'm twenty four years old' and I thought to myself, 'what am I going to do, get a job for the rest of my life?' " Stryjewski figured, "I was really young and I wanted to take an opportunity to maybe go and see a little bit of the world." So she signed up for the Peace Corps, an organization dedicated to promoting peace and service in various countries. Her mission: Gabon, Africa.

On her on, Stryjewski was sent to an isolated village in Gabon where the native language is Nzebi and French. Gabon is one of the more prosperous countries in Africa. Yet still, Stryjewski saw what she describes as cliché poverty, "I lived in a community where, the kids didn't have anything, I taught in a school where we didn't have

running water or electricity." The students of the village were taught with one book, one book to serve nearly sixty individuals. After an afternoon break, Stryjewski said students would return to school in the evening and could be seen huddling around the one book in order to complete their homework. "If I had been a product of that school system, I don't know if I would have made it."

Stryjewski taught and she learned in Gabon. She learned that sometimes teachers did not return to class when school began for a new year, "They just didn't show up," she said commenting that most teachers were not paid for their job. She learned that there was no school when it rained even though they lived in a rainforest. Most of all she learned that she was no longer truly in America, "You completely change your priority of what work is. If you can't let go of like your timelines and the deadlines...and the goals and the guidelines...you'll end up early terminating your service. You got to, you have to let go of it or you won't make it."

This idea flourished when Stryjewski formed a meeting to talk about spreading AID's awareness in the village, a meeting which was supposed to start at 4:30. An hour and a half later, people finally dropped by for the meeting, "I'll never forget this, we spent I don't know how much time talking about the sandwiches." Stryjewski said her friend began encouraging her, "I kind of understood that I'm trying to force my values and the way I operate on people that don't come from the same place I do, it doesn't mean that their lazy or slackers, or that their ways are wrong, just

different!"

Stryjewski is on a new mission now, "I'm really excited about coming to West Potomac...I have a lot to learn but

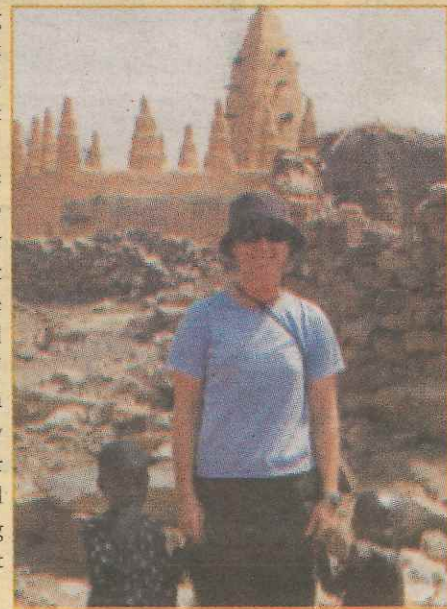


photo courtesy of Laura Stryjewski

Counselor Laura Stryjewski poses with two children Mali, Africa.

I also have a lot of energy and a lot of enthusiasm." She brings to her office an ear that is open to many needs, "Kids are coming from all different corners of the world...sometimes if they don't know where their dinner is coming from, how can you expect them to care about English 10." She brings honesty and release from the stress of educational priorities, "Grades are very, very important and getting into college is super important, but kids bring a lot, you know? Kids come with a lot." She brings hope for even the students who may not seem as dedicated as others, "Success can be calculated in so many

different ways...I see success in any kid that comes through my door, there's potential there." Stryjewski brings the experiences from Gabon, the stories and the lessons she learned and passes it on to the individuals who come to visit her office. This in itself is another mission, a new adventure.