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The Westword

Student voice of the Westhill community

"The test of good journalism is the measure of its public service."

Looking back at the football team's season

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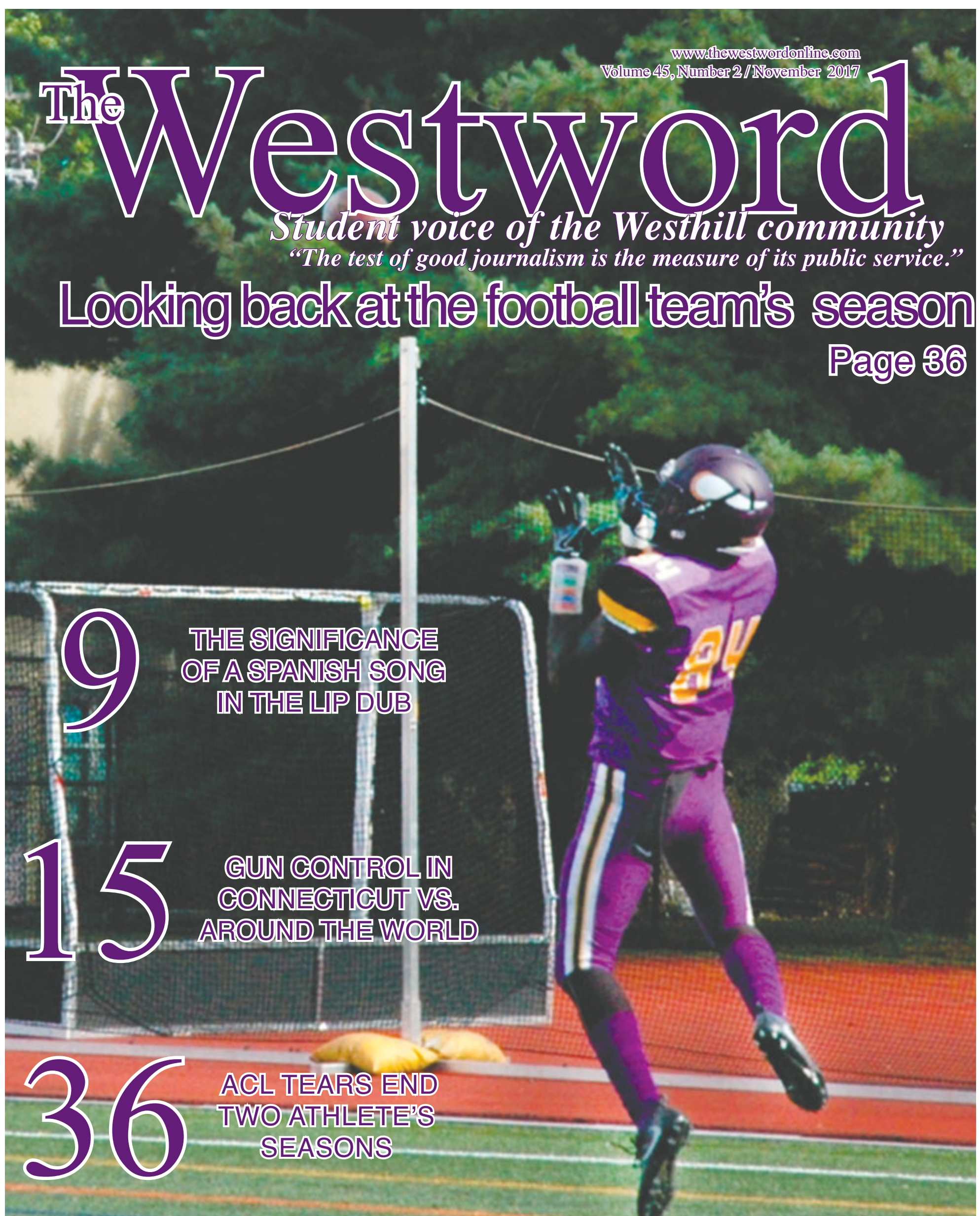
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November 2017

Note from the Editors

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the second issue of the 2017-2018 school year. We hope you enjoyed our first issue and we are pleased to be bringing you the November Issue.

Our Editorial this month focuses on the idea of adding a college counselor to our schools as well as the effect it would have on the college process for our students.

In News, you can learn about the food drive organized by Interact, one of Westhill's clubs, as well as the Westword's coverage of the recent Lip Dub video.

In Viewpoint, we discuss the different opinions surrounding the issue of gun control, as well as the effectiveness of athlete's taking gym.

Moving on to Las Noticias,

vemos el proceso de aplicando a la universidad y como mejor prepararse. Our Special Report covers gun control around the country and throughout the world.

Our Supplement this issue details digs and the impact they have on the high school experience. In Feature, you can get to know the Student Resource Officers and the new security guards.

Limelight shines a light on the recent misconduct unveiled in Hollywood. Taking a look at Scatterbrain, you can read about Marcos Pinto-Leite, our Slay of the Month, as well as our holiday shopping tips.

In Express, we feature our Artist of the Month, Djesnie Glaude, as well as other student work. In Sports, we spotlight two athletes

who were unable to finish their seasons due to injuries.

Online we continue to bring current news from the community as it happens, Be sure to check out recent game recaps, as well as an online version of the Hungry Vikings. We also encourage our readers to listen to our new podcasts. They can be found on thewestwordonline.com.

We encourage any and all readers with comments, questions, or concerns to contact us by either dropping a letter into Noah Klein's mailbox in room 224 or emailing us at westwordwhs@gmail.com.

Sincerely,
Noah Klein & Addison Magrath
Editor-in-Chief & Executive Editor

Editorial Policy

The Westword will be guided in the publication of material by a concern for truth, human decency, and human benefit. It is published during the school year by the late night staff, along with the Journalism and Communications classes. Letters to the Editor, advertising requests, comments, criticism, or suggestions are always welcome. The views expressed in Viewpoint and the Op-Ed page do not necessarily represent the opinions of *The Westword*.

The Editorial Board consists of Noah Klein, Addison Magrath, Josh Eimbinder, Max Zussman, Daniel Greco, Rachel Plotzky, Nicholas Zarrilli, Lexi Boccuzzi, Bailee Esposito, Alexandra Watkinson, Rachel Deutsch, Molly Cannon, Jude Ponthineu, Tamar Bellete, Guilmar Valle, Mr. von Wahlde, and Mr. Wooley. The Editorial can be found on page 3.

Announcements

The Westword has no announcements at this time.

Corrections

The Westword incorrectly used the word el, to describe the word destruction in Spanish which is a feminine term. It should have read "la destrucción."

If you have an announcement or an advertisement you would like published in the next issue, please e-mail us at westwordwhs@gmail.com.

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EDITORIAL

Calling for an even playing field

There is a secret weapon that some students are using to gain access to their choice schools, and they sound a lot like a resource in every high school in America, but what they provide is something altogether unique. College counselors (CCs) guide students throughout the college process. CCs help pinpoint specific goals for a student to help get them into a specific school, or schools a student is striving to get into. College counselors can be highly beneficial to high school students. College counselors are expensive, but a useful resource when looking for advice about the college process. According to the *Huffington Post* “Most private college counselors focus on college applications and essay writing. They help brainstorm essays, outlines, and a school list.” CCs are expensive, but an incredibly useful resource when looking for advice about the college process.

Westhill High School is lacking this resource, yet it is a necessity that the school should have. While there is no guarantee that a counselor will get a student into a specific college, it is a guarantee that they can provide valuable advice that will certainly help you. “[My college counselor] made the college process a lot more bearable. She recommended schools that I was not even thinking about and really put things into perspective of my chances getting into the schools I am applying to,” said John Edwards (’18).

CCs guide students throughout the college process. What do we mean by this? College counselors will help pinpoint specific goals for a student to help get them into that school. According to Princeton Review, “your college

counselor will help you position the rest of your application to tell the story of who you are through your essays, extracurricular activities, and letters of recommendation. CCs know which essay topics are overdone, how to make good use of supplementary materials, and how to explain an uncharacteristic bad grade to admissions committees.” College counselors could be that extra push for students to get into their top schools.

Guidance counselors (GCs)

Bottom line: Hiring a college counselor would allow all students to be on the same playing field and allow students to be much more informed and better prepared during the college process.

are a resource for students, but not in the same way as a college counselor would be. GCs help send transcripts and discuss senior year goals, but some GCs do not help with essays and targeting “reach” schools. A CC would likely help all students have a better chance of getting into their top school and/or find “good-fit” schools for the student.

This is not to say guidance counselors are not helpful however. GCs have more responsibility than getting students into the best possible fit for them. According to Katherine Cohen, CEO and founder of IvyWise Opens a New Window (a company specializing in college counseling for Ivy League applicants), the average public high school guidance counselor to student ratio is 434 to one, leaving most students without individualized attention and plans. GCs are more-so trained to help students successfully complete

high school. Training typically revolves around mental health and managing scheduling or in-school issues. Because of this, some may lack college expertise. Head of Guidance, Ms. DeLuca did cite however, that part of gaining a degree in Guidance does consist of training on college counseling. This training likely still lacks the inside information that CCs may provide.

Although counselors have college meetings for seniors as

well as parents of seniors, many students walk away from their college meeting feeling he or she learned nothing beyond the basic information. “My meeting was not particularly helpful. My guidance counselor has helped me with the basic application process but could not recommend other colleges that [he] thought would suit me well. Everything we went through during the meeting I likely could have found online,” said Olivia Weiss (’18).

Although these meetings attempt to be a resource to students, the counselors may not have specialized information on colleges and the guidance that most students are looking for. This is why some students turn to college counselors.

However, Mr. Stepkoski, a Westhill guidance counselor, disagrees with the effectiveness of a college counselor. “There is really no hard data out there that shows that an independent college

counselor will vastly improve your chances of getting into a particular school,” said Stepkoski.

While CCs may help a student, a CC cannot guarantee anything. DeLuca agreed with Stepkoski. “Every one of our counselors has gone through a two year program and knows how to do college counseling,” said DeLuca when asked if she felt WHS needed a CC.

However, one can only work with a college counselor through payment, some may feel this system is an unfair obstacle. There is a visible range of economic status within the Westhill student environment. The heavy price of a college counselor puts those on the lower end of the economic scale at a significant disadvantage. According to the *Huffington Post*, many college consultants charge around 85 to 150 dollars an hour. Package deals are pricier, according to the *Huffington Post* with the national average hovering around 3,600 dollars.

Many students in our community are likely not able to invest in a college counselor who will help them select a school. Having a CC at Westhill for all students, would allow students with a financial disadvantage to have the same opportunities as their classmates who possess the money to pay for a college counselor.

A CC would be beneficial, but may not be incredibly significant if only one or two counselors were contracted to work with a large student population.

Additionally, some disagree that college counselors should be a priority. “If you are not having a great experience with your counselor you can refer to anyone from our team of counsel-

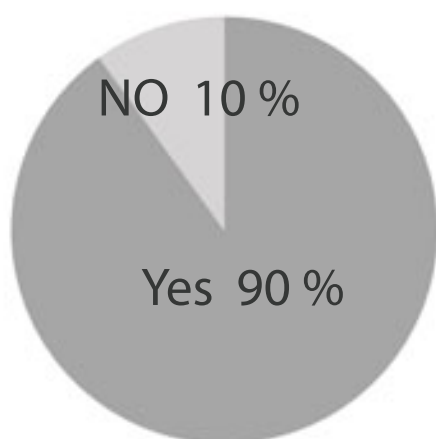
ors. We all have different takes and ideas on colleges,” said Mr. Stepkoski, a Westhill guidance counselor. “With the internet and free advice you have today, you are likely overpaying for something you can figure out on your own or with your college counselor,” said Stepkoski.

Some may view a college counselor as an unnecessary step in the college application process. “If we already have counselors, it would seem like a logical fit to re-train them instead of hiring a new one,” said Dean of Students, Mr. Pereira

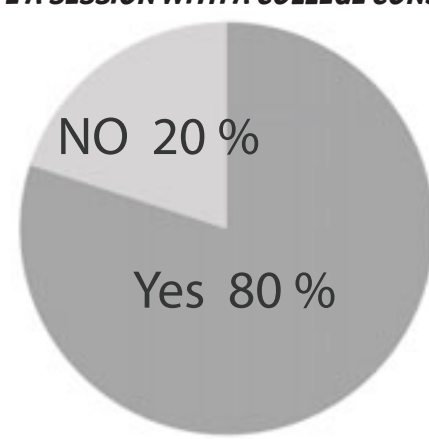
Often times GCs will look up information from a college’s website, or call the admissions office if questions arise. “If a kid does need to contact a school or learn something about a school I do not have a problem calling that school or giving the student the admissions rep number for our region,” said Ms. Midy, a Westhill GC. Westhill already has 12 employed GCs who can assist students with their college applications. It may be helpful to adjust or apply more training on colleges for GCs in order to better equip GCs to help their students.

But as aforementioned, guidance counselors have other jobs to attend to in the school, including guiding their underclassmen and juniors, who are not filling out college applications yet. Having an independent college counselor at Westhill would give all students the opportunity to have the same help with their college applications. With the amount of students at Westhill who simply cannot afford a counselor, this would change the game for many students who feel they are at a disadvantage.

HAVE YOU SPOKEN WITH YOUR GUIDANCE COUNSELOR ABOUT COLLEGES TO POTENTIALLY APPLY TO ?



IF GIVEN A FREE OPPORTUNITY, WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE A SESSION WITH A COLLEGE COUNSELOR?



Poll conducted by **Zainab Jafri** / Pollster. *Poll out of 106.

Thanksgiving Food Drive 2017

Westhill joins together and collects food for the holidays

Valerie Neyra
Social Media Manager

Thanksgiving is a day to give thanks and to appreciate everything and everyone. To give back to the community, members of the Westhill Interact Club put on their annual Thanksgiving Food Drive. The food drive provides families with food for the upcoming holiday season.

Interact has run the food drive for 14 years under the eye of club manager, Ms. Berkley. Ms. Berkley did not originally start the Food Drive, but she was happy to take over and continue the long standing tradition. Berkley also described how staff

and students at Westhill have continuously shown their compassion for those going through tough times. Westhill has donated food to hundreds of families in the past, and they plan to do the same for years to come.

The goal of the Thanksgiving Food Drive is to help feed those who are in need of some help. President of the Interact Club, Jessica Wallen ('18) has worked alongside Ms. Berkley, making sure everything runs smoothly. When asked to describe the food drive Wallen described it as "Asking the community to donate non-perishable goods, to be used by families throughout Stamford during the

holiday time," said Wallen.

"[It is] the school collecting food for families in need throughout Stamford," said Kyra Jance ('18). Jance and other members of Interact have come together to help promote and arrange this important event. Members have spent many weeks planning and organizing this year's food drive.

This year, all of the food donated will go to Inspirica, a company devoted to breaking the cycle of homelessness. Inspirica has helped hundreds of families and plans to help many more. Inspirica improves the lives of so many people, and Interact is glad to be a part of that.

In order to collect food from everyone around the school, Interact members placed boxes in every classroom, hung up colorful posters around the school, and distributed a list of food items that they encourage staff and students to donate. These food items include: canned goods, pasta, boxed stuffing, rice, jello, cereal, apple juice, and much more. As long as it is non-perishable food, they will happily be accepted.

To get more people to contribute, Interact raised awareness of the cause by spreading the word. The club encouraged students to tell their peers about the food drive. Interact explained that by telling one person, your

message could help an entire family. Interact hopes this tradition will continue and Westhill students will be able to spread the word in the following years.

November 17 was the last day that the Interact Club was collecting food. As the deadline grew closer, the community saw more and more people bringing in food. It was predicted by Berkley that students had brought in hundreds of products this year.

If a student wants to join Interact, it is not too late. "Students may join by coming to meetings on Mondays in room 407 at 2:05 p.m.," said Berkley. Interact looks forward to helping the Stamford community for years to



GIVING BACK Interact members spent the weeks leading up to Thanksgiving collecting food for those in need.

Photos by **Jessica Wallen** / Copy Editor.

NEASC and its effect on our teachers

Shaira Sunbeam
Reporter

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) is a nonprofit institution that maintains high standards for all grade levels through accreditation.

The process of accrediting a school is done every ten years, and has three steps: self-study, peer review and follow-up. In 2016, Westhill began its two year self study for our second accreditation process. For the self study, there are seven standard committees that are divided up among all the teachers. These committees are the core values committee, the curriculum committee, instruction committee, assessment committee, school resources committee, community resources committee and school culture committee.

Each section must create a report and narratives on their assigned area, some teachers have described this as a time-consuming process. This extra paperwork is placed on their already very heavy workload. This is why some teachers show

displeasure when someone mentions NEASC to a teacher. “Writing the narratives is actually quite lengthy and it can be difficult especially with our busy schedules and so many personalities,” said Mrs. Grant, science teacher.

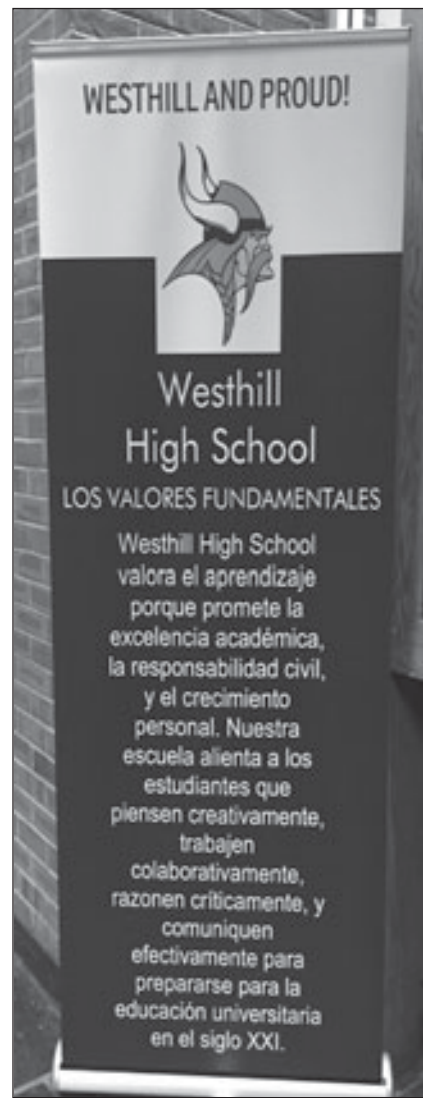
After completing the self study, one teacher in the steering committee must upload it onto the online portal for NEASC.

Thereafter, the peer review will begin. For Westhill, the peer review will be in March, when 16 members of other schools will begin the four day process of observing Westhill by analyzing teachers and students while using our self-study as a check list. The observers will randomly choose students to shadow and classes to observe. On the last day of their stay, the observers will have a meeting with the faculty pointing out the strengths and weaknesses of our school. It will take a couple of months until the faculty will know if Westhill has been accredited or not. If accredited, the staff will continue improving our school and work to change our weaknesses to strengths. If

not, Westhill will be placed on a year-long probation where the school will be closely monitored until given the chance to earn accreditation again.

Even though the process of getting accredited by NEASC is maybe looked by at by some as an extraneous task, most would agree it is necessary. “If you are against it, then you are against us being an accredited school, and you want to teach at an accredited school,” said Ms. Tintle, one of the steering committee members. Attending or teaching at a school that is accredited means it reaches the standards to continue as an educational institution.

Some teachers are looking at NEASC as a positive experience. “I was a chair of one of the committees and there were probably 35 people on the committee and it helped me get to know other staff members that I didn’t know,” said Ms. Benedict, a school librarian. Westhill has been working towards accreditation for over a year now, and the process will continue well into 2018.



Photos courtesy of Lexi Boccuzzi/News Section Editor

Gender neutral bathrooms have found a new home

Petra Ramirez
Staff Writer

As of the school year of 2015-2016 there have been gender neutral bathrooms at Westhill for trans, nonbinary, agender, gender-fluid, etc. Students need bathrooms to use where they will be safe and feel comfortable without being afraid about choosing between which bathroom might be the safest for them to use.

“As for the presence of the gender neutral bathrooms in the school I believe that it makes our school environment more accommodating and safe for trans and queer students who don’t feel comfortable in gendered bathrooms” says Ali Cogan (‘18), president of GSA.

The idea was proposed by several gender nonconforming students who said they did not feel safe using the other rest rooms due to targeted harassment and bully-

ing because of their differences.

“They were located by the cafeterias because it is a relatively central area of the school, so it was most convenient. It’s also easier for security to monitor them and make sure they are not being abused,” said Ms. Handy, Gay-Straight Alliance club advisor. “They have definitely been a benefit- some students in GSA didn’t actually ever use school bathrooms previously.” She also mentioned one of the only minor drawbacks about these gender neutral bathrooms is that now students just use them because they are there.

In 2017 the gender-neutral bathroom changed places. Instead of having one stall for each bathroom, the new bathrooms have an open door and two individual stalls.

Ms. Manning said, “[I think] it’s great! If it’s a problem, the people should ditch the urinal and put stalls because it doesn’t really

matter.” This might allow people will be less embarrassed walking into one. Providing a gender-neutral bathroom is a representation of Westhill’s support of LGBTQ students and teachers.

“I am glad they switched it but I wonder why they moved it?” said Ms. Grant. A bathroom with no stalls may not be the best option as it is slightly uncomfortable for those who use it since everyone who passes by can see them entering the stalls.

Cogan (‘18) further explains, “My opinion thus far on their [the bathrooms’] location is that it is an improvement. Each facility having private closing stall doors will accommodate more people.” Nevertheless, everyone should be accepted especially when it comes to using the bathroom. By having these gender neutral bathrooms Westhill is providing a service to students of all-genders and forms of self identification.



RESTROOMS BREAKING BARRIERS Westhill relocates its inclusive gender neutral bathrooms to a new location in the 400s. Photo courtesy of Jessica Wallen/Copy Editor

Homecoming and spirit week

Westhill kicks off Homecoming week with unique spirit day outfits



Nicole Vantman
Staff Writer

Westhill students and faculty recently took part in another spirit week. Westhill students had the opportunity to come to school in their coziest attire, wear their most tropical outfit, and dress in their purple and gold spirit wear. Many felt the week was a huge success. When asked, several students had very positive opinions on the spirit week sequel.

“Going to school in my pajamas is the best feeling in the world, it is so fun to see everyone wearing cozy outfits,” said Allison Wilson (’18).

On Pajama Day, students wear head-to-toe in fluff and slippers. From footie-pajamas to matching sets, many took the chance to wear their most comfortable clothing. Some teachers took the opportunity to retire from their jeans and button ups to take part in the festivities. The

students who participated loved all that came with their outfits, including the cheesy jokes.

“Tropical day is such a fun concept, it is like having a vacation feel brought into school. We got to enjoy some beach music in some classes and -tropic- like it is hot,” said Jessica Ostroff (’18).

While Pajama Day and Tropical Day were great warm-ups, everyone could agree that the Lip Dub was the highlight

of the week. Purple and Gold pride was seen from every corner of the building. Viking spirit ruled the day with students and teachers alike sporting school spirit wear. From a rave in the auditorium to a color run on the football field, the entire half day was jam packed with excitement.

“By the end of the day, everyone was covered in purple and gold dust, and they were chanting and jumping around like it was the biggest celebra-

tion of the year. The Lip Dub was a great way to spend my final homecoming week at Westhill. We are all in this together,” said Noa Tovia (’18).

Many of the students and teachers were proud to be a part of the Viking community.

Visit the thewestwordonline.com to view our interview with Mrs. Cohen, the codirector of the Lip Dub. Keep an eye out for more spirit weeks and festivities coming this school year.



WESTHILL PRIDE Students joined together throughout the day to film scenes for Westhill’s very own Lip Dub. Every period was set in a different location of the school featuring different clubs and activities. Photos by **Ms. Jeffries, & SAGA**

VIEWPOINT

Analyzing gun control

Isiah Walker
Staff Writer

In the past two months there have been seven mass shootings in the U.S. The shooting in Las Vegas, Nevada occurred when a man using an automatic weapon fired continuous waves of bullets from his hotel room into the audience of a concert across the street. The shooting in Sutherland Springs, Texas involved a mentally unstable man who was able to buy a gun without a background check. With these mass killings happening often, it is clear that the existing gun control laws are not strict enough. According to data compiled by BBC in 2016, gun control exists to help lower the amount of gun related

deaths by limiting the availability of rapid fire and high capacity firearms for civilians. Gun control also requires background checks to keep guns out of the hands of criminals. “As a 15 year old African American girl, I have seen and witnessed lives being taken by people illegally having guns. In order for lives to be kept safe, guns have to be held only by licensed and legal people with the correct training and registration,” said Aliyah Carson (’20). The problem that some gun owners in the US. do not understand is that this is not an issue on freedom, it is about protecting lives. With no restrictions on the amount of guns a citizen can own, the amount of guns per household has gone up in the last couple de-

CADES. According to a study by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, in 1994 there were 4.2 guns per household, while in 2013 there were 8.1 guns per household. Some say if they want to make this country safer, gun control is a step in the right direction. This is not a left or right issue or an issue of people’s freedoms it is to protecting people. “I think we should limit certain types of guns like automatics that cause the most damage in a short amount of time to prevent mass shooting like the Las Vegas shooting,” said Anissa Jahaj (’20). It is understandable that some people want to protect themselves and there is nothing wrong with that, but automatics, semi-automatics, light

machine guns, and Submachine guns are exclusive. One reason why people do not want semi-automatics banned is because the National Rifle Association (NRA) says they are not fully automatic, unlike machine guns that are used in the military. However, *The Washington Post* reported in October, that a modification called bump stocks which the NRA does not want to ban, turns semi automatic into full automatic guns. The NRA is not in favor of a ban on assault weapons, they argue reduced weapons will not reduce crime rates, but this is not true. If you look at countries like Japan, the U.K., Canada, and Australia, which have the strictest gun laws in the world, their gun murder rates are less than

America’s. Specifically, Japan’s gun laws involve major background checks and citizens having to report to police on how they will use that gun. As a result the homicide rate in Japan, is one in ten million. Since the 1996 mass shooting in Australia at Port Arthur, the Australian government took action and made a series of gun control laws that banned pump shotguns and high capacity semi-automatics rifles. These laws created a decline in gun homicides. Our country needs to come together and put our differences aside. The country has to come to an agreement that protects people from mass shootings and not step on people’s 2nd Amendment rights, giving guns to responsible gun owners.

Thoughts about gun control in the United States

Not strict enough
66%

Way too strict
34%



Rayshawn Gipson
Staff Writer

One of the most controversial topics in our society today is gun control. Some think that there is nothing evidently positive about obtaining a weapon. Others believe they do have positive effects. It really depends on the type of person you are; people trying to protect others, there are street thugs, and then there are people like those from Columbine High School and Sandy Hook Elementary School. Since 1968 there have been 1,516,863 gun deaths in the United States, and there are 33,000 violent gun deaths each year. Having gun control laws has both positive and negative effects, which can seem contradicting at times.

“Guns do not shoot people; people shoot people. Guns are not bad people; people are bad people,” said one of Westhill’s School Resource Officers (SROs), Officer Edwards. Gun control laws do have their bad parts and it is our job as a society to inform others, including the youth. Gun owners believe that many children should learn about gun safety. However, adding more gun control laws would not necessarily help. The National Rifle Association has specific rules such as knowing your target and what is beyond it and understanding how to shoot a gun (using the correct ammunition for your gun). There are a lot of rules that can help people understand more about guns. Learning about guns and their op-

eration is an important aspect to be informed on. According to many officers and owners, one of the main reasons for owning a firearm is to enforce self protection from the outside world. Gun violence takes lives everyday. Although the number one cause of death is not from weapons, they still play a huge factor into our world today. Adding more gun control laws would not improve things, it would evidently cause more casualties. “I am against it, I believe in my 2nd Amendment rights to bear arms, but high capacity firearms should be banned,” said security guard Ronny. Civilians use guns about 67,740 times a year for self defense according to Bureau of Justice. Not only do people use

guns for self defense, it has been reviewed that people who own guns feel more safe. A lot of people do not meet the standards to own a weapon, which can be seen in the most recent tragedies. A majority of the shooters involved in mass shootings had some mental disorder. This leads to the question about background checks, not only for the sick, but for the “Average American” too. When Americans think of guns, some people may think of street thugs. Many of these gun control laws are directed towards the inner city and poor black communities who are portrayed as dangerous. In the 1960s, gun control laws were put in place because of political parties such as the Black Panther Party, who carried firearms in

order to survive during times of oppression. It all depends on the person and where they come from, but also what goes on inside of one’s brain. “I am against gun control, if you meet the criteria to carry a gun, then you should be able to carry one,” said SRO Felix. If you have a clean background then you should be able to own a firearm, but if you have used any controlled substance, or if you have been ruled as mentally defective, then you should not be able to own one. “I am against gun control laws, a lot of people die from them, but it all depends on how you use it,” said Yaseen Tazzi (’18). If I lived in a high crime city, I would feel more comfortable having a gun because of the protection it provides.

Graphic by **Emma Cali** / Creative Director.
Poll conducted by **Isabella Vaccaro** / Pollster. *Poll out of 250 students.

Physical education for student athletes

Nathan Isenstein
Staff Writer

Student athletes have the skills necessary to complete various types of activities. These skills include being able to know the benefits of physical activity, participating in physical activity, and being physically fit. With this being said, students who participate in sports should not be required to take physical education.

According to Shape America’s national standards for K-12 physical education, the goal of physical education at all levels, is to develop physically literate individuals who have the knowledge, skills and confidence to enjoy a lifetime of healthy physical activity.

To become a, “physically literate individual,” the guidelines include the following:

“Has [the] learning skills necessary to participate in a variety of physical activities, knowing the implications and the benefits of involvement in various types of physical activities, participating regularly in physical activity, and [be] physically fit.”

Although these guidelines are great for the general student body, most athletes however some student athletes see a positive purpose in being required to take gym. “As a baseball player, I find that gym keeps me active during the offseason,” said Alex Cordone (’18).

Nevertheless, if a student has gym while in season, why would it be necessary? If a student has to participate in gym class and their sport after school, gym class is unnecessary to them.

Why take an extra class slot to fulfill your physical education requirement when you already

meet the requirements through sports? For athletes, this class slot can be used for another core requirement class.

From my own gym experience, being a soccer player, I found gym useless. I already obtained my fair share of physical activity through soccer. I could have used gym to fulfill another one of my class requirements such as civics or unified arts requirement.

Also, participating in both physical education and a sport, I had to find the right balance between putting effort into gym class and my sports. I didn’t want to try too hard and run the risk of getting injured.

“There is a difference between physical activity and physical education. Athletes can also serve as role models for other students. Many of our athletes have been identified through physical education

classes,” said Mrs. Quarttrocchi, Health Department Head.

However some may disagree with this. To begin, I do not see a difference between physical activity and education at all. Most students, as well as myself, can attest to the fact that there is not much education happening in gym class. Gym class consists of either playing sports or if you do not like sports, you walk around the track. “Athletes are active enough. Therefore, gym should be optional for them,” said Carl Cubarrubia (’21).

I also believe athletes are not role models in the first place. Whether or not athletes take or do not take gym, it should not affect the others in the class. Students should already be motivated to be fit and not need athletes to show them. Besides, if playing a school sport meant no gym, kids would want to participate in sports to fill the gym requirement.

Finally, there is an argument that we find many of our athletes through gym. I agree with this, as I personally know many kids who have played sports in gym class and were recognized as athletes. If athletes did not have to take gym, would athletes in gym classes then become more interested in joining the school volleyball team.

For example, say if a volleyball player in a gym class found out that if they joined the Varsity Volleyball Team, they might be more motivated to join the team to get rid of their gym requirement.

The main goal of physical education is to help students obtain and maintain a healthy physical lifestyle. However, if athletes fulfill this goal through playing a sport at Westhill, why should they be required to take gym class?

Incorporation of Spanish music in the lip dub

Maria Mirafuentes
Staff Writer

Recently Westhill completed a lip dub style video as part of the initiative to increase school spirit. One of the songs chosen was “Danza Kuduro” by Don Omar, a popular Spanish hit. Being a school where the main language spoken is English it raises questions as to why we have a Spanish song in the lip dub.

A large percentage of Westhill’s school population are Hispanic or from a Spanish-speaking background. This allows those students to feel welcomed, and it shows that Westhill is willing to be open so everyone can fit in.

The second most spoken language of the United States is Spanish with the Latino population rising up to over 58 million. To include a Spanish song in the lip dub was a great school decision.

There were three Spanish song choices that students had the chance to vote onto be part of the lip dub. The three song choices were “Danza Kuduro”, “Despacito” by Luis Gondi, and “Bailando” by Enrique Iglesias. Danza Kuduro, released in 2010, is one of the most popular Span-

ish songs in the past decade. Seven years later the song’s popularity showed, when it was chosen instead of the other two recent hits. In fact, “Danza Kuduro” was the first song to get filled up for the solo parts. Behind every hit there is a great recording artist. In this case Don Omar is the Puerto Rican legendary musician. Omar has his other hits such as “Taboo” and “Salio El Sol.”

None of this would have occurred if it was not for Mrs. Cohen and Ms. Tintle. It was their decision to make the Spanish language and community a part of the lip dub.

“The reason to start the lip dub was to allow every student to be able to have fun while making it as inclusive as possible, which included language,” said Mrs. Cohen.

“[There] are a lot of Hispanics [in Westhill], it would be weird if we only had English songs...with a Spanish song we can identify ourselves,” said Kevin Bravo (’20).

“Most definitely #ExpandTheCulture,” said Noel Martinez (’18). There has been positive feedback when it comes to including a Spanish song.

“I think it is a very clever

idea to have a Spanglish song in the lip dub, because it spreads the cultural love [and] it shows that we are diverse,” said AJ Laccona (’19). With that being said, Westhill cares about making people feel like they are a part of something.

“We cannot make everyone happy, but this is a good first step,” said Mrs. Cohen. Maybe the future lip dubs will expand its language and it will not only be Spanish and English. At the end of the day, it is all about making sure everyone fits in and that no Viking is left out.



WESTHILL GETS SPIRITED Students and teachers show love for the school. Photos by SAGA.

Hunger does not end when the holidays do

Alyssa Goldberg
Staff Writer

Throughout the Thanksgiving and December holidays there is a massive outpouring of generosity and “giving back.”

“The Interact food drive collects cans and other non-perishable goods in classrooms all over Westhill on the days leading up to Thanksgiving. I think it is a way to give back to the community, and it is great to know that you’re making even a small difference for those in need,” said Tricia Kober (’18), one of Interact’s food drive organizers.

With the holiday spirit in mind one might feel compelled to donate, whereas they usually would not think to do so. School food drives seem to be the most convenient outlet, but it brings up the questions; Why do we not have these drives in February or June? And can these pantries really accept the excess food being donated around the holidays?

Despite hunger being brought to people’s attentions during the holidays, it is a year-long problem. Donating once a year is not going to help those needing food

next summer. While school is not in session, the need for donations is high, as no one is going through different fundraisers in order to collect items and advocate for the causes.

According to the official Connecticut Food Bank website, a family must provide more than 100 extra meals during summer vacation for each child who would otherwise be provided food at school. This can be very difficult for low income families, although there are some summer meal programs in place, they are not as extensive as those offered within schools.



FOOD DRIVE Students from all around the school helped collect and organize the donated food.

Photo by **Jessica Wallen** / Copy Editor.

People also tend to underestimate the hardships that families can be faced with in the late winter months, where expenses such as holiday shopping, medicine for possible illnesses, and heating bills can start to accumulate. Even with the amount of food donated just one to three months earlier, food pantries still suffer from a lack of incoming donations.

Canned food is not equivalent to a sufficient meal and often other foods go to waste due to the numerous items coming in. Most organizations would actually prefer money over food, as they can use that in

a way which fits their strategic plan, and is more economically sensible.

While a can may cost a regular buyer anywhere from 99 cents to over three dollars, organizations can buy in bulk and get a can for under 50 cents, sometimes even for just a penny each. It is simply more financially efficient to give money over canned goods, as the pantries will get more out of the same value and can also save the funds to provide food during the winter and summer months, where, as previously stated, donations drastically slow down.

Though on a large scale, cash donations and frequent spread out drives are ideal, it is important to assess the different aspects of our food drive. We have to account for Stamford’s demographic, the ages of who we are asking for donations from, and our affiliations with the food bank Interact works with.

“[It is] important that we delineate between what is good for [the food banks] versus what teaches young people to give or partake,” said Ms. Berkley, a social studies teacher, who has helped run the food drives for

the last 14 years. Students understand food, as we can see it and know where it is going to. When only giving money, it is easy to forget what it is actually doing.

Inspirica, a social services organization in Connecticut, relies on the Westhill drive at this time of the year. Despite trying to hold multiple drives, we have seen little contribution in later months, which furthers goes into the lack of awareness in the spring and summer. “Demographics change, biggest struggle is understanding who the new student groups are culturally,” continued Berkley. Different cultures do not “give and share” in the same process, and many of the students in the school are those that need the donations themselves, so can only give so much.

Though changing the date or methods of the food drive may not be logistically best for Westhill, on sheer principle it is still beneficial to the organizations. If you are feeling generous this holiday season, you should consider opening your wallets over your cabinets or saving your donations for after New Years.

Tyler Fisher
Staff Writer

Yale University is not only a prestigious school, but a pillar to the New Haven community. The university’s tax exempt status has raised many questions about whether they should be taxed.

Last year a bill proposing the taxation of private colleges on certain real estate was proposed to the Senate. Colleges with real estate valued at more than two billion dollars would be required to pay taxes on certain properties. Yale, with an estimated property value of 2.5 billion dollars, would have been the only school affected by the bill.

In 2016, Richard Jacob, Yale’s Vice President of Federal and State Relations, presented a list of Yale’s contributions to the New Haven community to the Committee on Finance, Revenue and Bonding.

“Yale is an economic anchor for New Haven, and in turn, the State [it is also a] powerful economic engine in the region,” said Jacob in his testimony.

Yale is New Haven’s largest employer and Connecticut’s fifth

largest, and one third of the university’s 13,000 employees reside in New Haven.

Yale has made numerous donations to cities in Connecticut: 96 million dollars to New Haven, four million dollars to West Haven, and one million dollars to Orange.

“Yale is deeply committed to the quality of life in New Haven, and has dedicated itself, perhaps more than any other university in the country, to building stronger neighborhoods, stronger schools, and a stronger tax base in its hometown,” said Jacob. In 2013, the Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges estimated that Yale contributed 8.8 billion dollars to Connecticut.

“Yale should [have to] pay taxes because there are other places in Connecticut that need the money,” said Brenden Reed (’18). Others disagreed that Yale University should have to pay taxes just as any other institution might and would have to. “Yale already makes great contributions to the city of New Haven as well as the state of Connecticut,” said Brendan Pierre (’18).

Other students agree with this and believe that, “based on how

much Yale has provided to the New Haven community it is not really necessary for Yale to pay taxes,” said Katherine Alfaro (’18).

Despite not paying taxes to the city, Yale University recognizes that it has a responsibility to help the city and the citizens of New Haven financially. The university contributes to its hometown through the employment of many of New Haven’s residents, and through donations and investments made to the city.

These investments included the redevelopment of commercial properties in the downtown shopping districts of Chapel Street, Broadway and Lower Whitney Avenue. There are now 90 new tenants in these properties. These investments have helped to revitalize the area, even leading to *The Washington Post* describing New Haven as “a city transformed.”

Yale pays property taxes on all of these non academic properties (4.5 million dollars in 2014), meaning that Yale University is one of the top five sources of property tax revenue for New Haven.

The question that remains is, should the university still be required to pay taxes? Simply put, no.

Richard Jacob explained why Yale should not pay taxes. “Everything Yale does to improve the quality of life in New Haven: funding the New Haven Promise Scholarships, using the Homebuyer Program to encourage faculty and staff to live in New Haven, working in local schools, making voluntary payments to the city totaling 96

million dollars to date– is ultimately made possible by Yale’s careful stewardship of its endowment,” said Jacob.

The payment of property taxes would make it difficult for Yale to continue to do everything in their power to help New Haven succeed both in the present and the future.



YALE UNIVERSITY Yale has an estimated property value of 2.5 billion dollars.

Image courtesy of **pixabay.com**.

Why high school football matters

Most of Westhill's senior football players will never put on shoulder pads again. It is the bittersweet moment all high school athletes have at the end of their career. Although football is under immense scrutiny at this point in time, it is my duty to explain why high school football, and the lessons the game teaches, matters.

There is no other game that will knock you down as many times as football. It makes you respect yourself, your team, and coaches more than just the game itself. The sport teaches real life lessons to kids who may never receive those lessons from parents or guardians.

Many students in our school may not have someone to place restrictions on them, or punish them when they do something wrong. Football teaches kids to listen to their superiors. Players listen to their captains and coaches, if they do not play by the rules, they face repercussions for their actions. The players are held accountable.

This season, Westhill's football team of extremely different backgrounds were forced to come together to form a scrappy unit on the field. Football taught all of us how to interact and work with people from all walks of life. Our team has sons of wealthy

and well educated parents and sons of parents who struggle. No matter what the demographics of a team are, all teams are required to play ten games.

It was our job to figure out how to make everyone work together and play together somehow. We cannot pick who is on the team and who comes out to play. We are forced to play with the people who choose to play just like how employees are forced to work with their colleagues. Football has given me the tools to work with anyone in any situation.

In a world with so much instant gratification, football is a true outlier. The team trained year-round for ten games. We trained all winter, spring, and summer, for just ten games. Football is all about the grind, and teaching people how to appreciate the grind and the work it takes to truly be successful at something.

It is difficult for some players to originally understand why they are sprinting 1,000 yards at six a.m. on a hot summer morning. However, players eventually learn that their hard work will pay off. Students can then take these lessons and this understanding of "the grind" and apply it into the classroom. Students can understand that they work so

hard in class for a long term goal in the end, but instead of playing under the lights, they are working for that A or that diploma. Once again the players learn that nothing is instantaneous.

A large part of these lessons come from the coaching staff. Speaking for the Westhill program, players learned some vital lessons this past year from our coaches.

One of the main lessons the team lived by was "no excuses." We had players walk miles to practice, players practice on empty stomachs, and players drive up to nine teammates to morning workouts. No matter what, we all had to be at practice on time and ready to go. If we were not on time, we were held accountable for our actions, and learned to be on time the next practice.

Football also teaches people how to deal with pain. Not just physical pain from the game, but the emotional stress that the players take away from the games. Our program has had its ups and downs throughout my time. Players have learned how to handle losses and more importantly, they have learned how to win.

Last year, the team lost to Greenwich High School on a last minute controversial penalty that wrecked the hearts of many of our players. I saw so

many of the teammates crying and showing their anger over the ending of the game. I also saw the same teammates learn to overcome that adversity, and grow from the game.

I even got to see the same teammates smiling and coming together after defeating Stamford High School last year on Thanksgiving. That season taught all of our players how to get back up and move on; I am confident that the next time one of my teammates or coaches faces a struggle in life, they will be better equipped to handle that struggle and move on.

As previously mentioned, it is clear that football is under scrutiny in our society today. The game itself has been deemed dangerous and must be changed. It is, of course, a well documented fact that the health of football players is at risk when they play the game. However, after completing my high school football experience, I cannot stress enough just how important football has been to me, the lessons I learned from the great game and the terrific program of which I was a part.

In my four years of football, I experienced one concussion. I made a full recovery and was cleared to play after going

through a full concussion protocol. That is the one injury I suffered in four years, and playing football was worth the pain of that injury.

The last lesson our seniors will learn is possibly the most important. There have been happy and tough times this last year, however our team was defeated on Thanksgiving in what most called an upset. Some players may never forgive themselves for the loss, and the team knows that it could have done a better job as a whole, taking the game more seriously and showing more discipline in the days leading up to the game. Most of us learned just how important it is always to respect your opponent as well as to always to be humble. When our players face any other task in life they now know never to underestimate that task at hand.

The game of football has taught the team many lessons. A large amount of credit goes to the coaching staff for instilling accountability and discipline upon us. It is my hope that the players take the lessons they have been taught and apply them to their life as they move on from their time with the program.

— Noah Klein ('18)



EAGLES AND VIKINGS CLASH Westhill's football team faced off against Fairfield Ludlowe. The players worked their hardest in this final game of the football season. Photos by **Sydney Lesser** / Photo Manager.

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El proceso de aplicación para universidad

Guilmar Valle
Editor de Special Report

Las primeras semanas al comienzo del duodécimo grado son estresantes y la causa no es los deportes, actividades extracurriculares o exámenes de AP. El estresor más común es el aplicar a la universidad. El estrés nace a raíz de la realidad que el resto de nuestra vida depende de las aplicaciones universitarias. Uno siente como si pudiera entrar a la universidad de sus sueños, y a la misma vez no fuera conseguir una buena carrera o triunfar en el futuro. Sin embargo, este no es siempre el caso.

Cuando un estudiante aplica a la universidad, debe presentar su mérito como candidato a través de una perspectiva holística cumpliendo los requisitos del promedio (GPA), los resultados de los

exámenes SAT y ACT. De igual importancia, existen dos tipos de medidas del GPA. La primera medida es regular y toma en cuenta las notas de cada clase. Es conocida en inglés como “unweighted GPA”. La segunda manera de medir el GPA, conocida como “weighted GPA” en inglés, es tomar en cuenta la dificultad de cada clase que tomó el estudiante y añadir puntos al GPA por cada clase de honor o de AP.

Es muy importante estar involucrado en la comunidad, ya que las universidades, como Brown University toman el servicio comunitario en cuenta cuando revisan la aplicación de un candidato.

La escuela también es un buen lugar para encontrar clubes de interés después de la escuela. Estas actividades luego resaltan en la aplicación de un estudiante

como pruebas de que tal estudiante tomó su pasión académica o personal fuera de los confines de un salón de clase.

Las universidades también ponen mucho énfasis en las cartas de recomendación. Estas cartas pueden ser escrita de cualquier individuo pero es preferible que el autor sea alguien que conozca al estudiante; por ejemplo un maestro o un jefe de trabajo. De tal manera la universidad podrá juzgar al estudiante de una forma más justa.

Después de reunir todos los requisitos de la aplicación, el aplicante debe decidir cuál es la mejor manera de aplicar. Hay tres maneras de aplicar, o mejor dicho tres planes: decisión básica, acción temprana y decisión temprana.

Bajo el plan de acción temprana, usted manda las aplicaciones antes de la fecha límite. Nor-

malmente, se manda su aplicación antes del primero de noviembre. Esto lo hacen los estudiantes que en realidad están interesados en una institución en particular pero que no quieren estar obligados a atender si son aceptados. Las universidades bajo este plan avisan a los estudiantes sobre sus decisiones en enero o febrero.

Bajo el plan decisión temprana, también se manda la aplicación antes del primero de Noviembre. En contraste a acción temprana, este plan incluye un contrato que obliga al estudiante a asistir a la universidad si es aceptado. Usualmente, los estudiantes que están seguros sobre una universidad específica aplican bajo este plan.

Bajo el plan de decisión básica, el aplicante tiene hasta el primero de enero para aplicar. Este es el método más común para

aplicar a la universidad. Las decisiones de admisión típicamente son enviadas al estudiante a finales de marzo y principios de abril. Tendrán hasta el primero de mayo para tomar una decisión de ir o no a esa institución.

Con tantas maneras de aplicar, ¿cómo saber cuál es la manera correcta de aplicar? Si uno no está tan seguro dónde quiere ir, o necesita un poco más tiempo para preparar sus aplicaciones, decisión básica puede ser su mejor decisión. Si ya sabes a cuáles universidades quiere ir, y quiere terminar con el estrés de las aplicaciones, acción temprana puede ser la opción principal. Si estás 100% seguro que quiere ir a una universidad, y solamente la que escogiste, Early Decision es por usted. La diversidad de opciones refleja la diversidad de los intereses de los aplicantes.

SAT[®] AP ACT[®]

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Aumentando el amor por Westhill con un lip dub

Maria Mirafuentes
Escritora Personal

Este año Westhill completo un lip dub para aumentar el amor por la escuela. Unas de las canciones elegidos fue Danza Kuduro por Don Omar, una canción muy popular. Siendo una escuela donde el inglés es el idioma más hablado sube la pregunta de ¿porque tenemos una canción en español en el lip dub?

La gran mayoría de la población de Westhill son hispanos o hablan español. Esto les da una oportunidad para sentirse bien-

venidos y muestra que Westhill está dispuesto hacer abierto para que todos se puedan sentir aparte de la escuela.

El segundo idioma más hablado en los Estados Unidos es el español con la población siendo más que 58 millón. Incluyendo una canción en español en el lip dub fue una decisión estupenda de la escuela.

Habian tres canciones en español que podían elegir los estudiantes para ser parte del lip dub. Las tres canciones fueron “Danza Kuduro”, “Despacito” por Luis Gondi y “Bailando” por Enrique

Iglesias. Danza Kuduro fue publicado en el 2010 y es unas de las canciones más populares en español en esta década. Siete años después la popularidad de la canción se mostró cuando fue elegida en lugar de las otras dos canciones. De hecho “Danza Kuduro” fue la primera canción elegidas para las partes cantadas sólo. En este caso Don Omar es el Puertorriqueño legendario músico. Tiene sus otros éxitos como “Taboo” y “Salió el sol”.

Nada de esto hubiera pasado si no fue por Señora Cohen y Señora Tintle. Fueron ellas quienes

tomaron la decisión de incluir el idioma español y la comunidad Hispana en el lip dub. “La razón de empezar el lip dub era para permitir que cada estudiante se disfrute mientras haciendo lo más inclusivo posible y eso incluye idioma.” dijo Señora Cohen.

“Hay muchos hispanos en westhill, y sería extraño si no más había canciones en inglés, con una canción español nos podemos identificarnos.” dijo Kevin Bravo (’20).

“Definitivamente expande la cultura.” dijo Noel Martínez (’18). Hay buena reacción cuando se in-

cluye una canción hispana. “Yo creo que es una idea inteligente tener una canción en español para expandir amor cultural y muestra que somos diversos” dijo AJ Licona (’19). Con eso dicho Westhill le importa hacer a otros sentirse que son parte de algo.

“No podemos hacer a todos feliz, pero esto es un primer paso bueno.” dijo Señora Cohen. Tal Vez el lip dub futuro se expandirá y ya nomás serían solamente el idioma español y Engles. Al fin del día es para que todos se sientan aparte y que no Vikingo sea dejado atrás.



MONTONES DE ESPÍRITU Estudiantes de Westhill celebraron su escuela con orgullo en un día inolvidable. Fotos cortesía de **SAGA**.

Si eres un buen escritor, editor, fotógrafo, o algo más, ¡debes unirte a ***El Westword!***

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SPECIAL REPORT:

Gun control around the world

Addison Magrath
Print Executive Editor

In recent months there have been many mass shootings across the United States, major mass shootings have occurred in Texas, California, and Nevada which have once again sparked the gun control debate. A controversial argument during these times is that gun control is not a viable means for putting mass shootings to an end. According to President Trump and many other Republicans, any slight gun control laws will lead to a “slippery slope.” This would in turn completely reform the 2nd Amendment and strip guns from all citizens.

It is theoretically possible to let citizens keep their 2nd Amendment rights and still have gun control. In April of 1996, Australia experienced its deadliest mass shooting in Port Arthur, leaving 35 dead and 23 wounded. It took Australia’s then-conservative-government just under four months to propose and pass stricter gun control legislation. According to Oxford University, the

government initiated a buy-back program and “reduced the stock of firearms by around one-fifth and nearly halved the number of gun-owning households.”

The Queensland Police have previously stated that one must apply for a Permit to Acquire (PTA) and wait up to 28 days for the process which includes a background check. Those who do not qualify for a PTA will be rejected and notified via email. Those who qualify receive a license and an allotted amount of time to purchase a weapon. Every weapon that is purchased is sold by someone who is licensed to sell and is registered on the owners Weapons License.

The process of acquiring a gun in Australia is clearly a long and rigorous one, but Japan takes gun control to the extreme. In Japan handguns have been banned completely. “Handguns are not for protection. It is a false sense of protection,” said Mr. White, social studies teacher. The only legal guns in Japan are shotguns and air rifles.

BBC News reported that in order to acquire one of these

legal fire arms, one must “attend an all-day class, take a written exam, and pass a shooting-range test with a mark of at least 95 percent.” In addition, potential gun-owner has to pass mental health and drug tests. Once the gun is purchased, the ammunition and the weapon must be locked away. Police must be notified as to exactly where this location is and will inspect the location as well as the condition of the gun once a year.

It appears these regulations are effective and citizens still have the right to own a gun if they are willing to go through the process. *The New York Times* compared gun deaths in each country to the United States and concluded that one is equally likely in getting killed by a gun in Japan as being killed by a lightning strike in the United States.

Japan has 0.1 deaths per million people, it is fair to say their laws have been effective, though not many people in the United States would want to give up as much as what would be required for gun control like in Japan or Australia has set in place for their citizens. “It is good to have some

gun legislation, such as background checks and mental illness testing, but regulating ammunition, magazines, and attachments is unnecessary Part of what makes America different is that we value our 2nd Amendment and how the right to bear arms is very important and necessary,” said Kevin Harrington (’19).

Neither Japan nor Australia have experienced a mass shooting event since laying down their legislation. In 2017 alone, 112 people have been killed and 531 people have been wounded due to mass shootings in the U.S. The difference in gun violence is obvious.

“The United States gun control has been proven to be less effective than Australia and Japan. They have significantly less shootings than we do, so clearly there is something wrong [with our] legislation. I believe it would be better if we had similar laws as them, but it becomes hard since we are guaranteed that right in the Constitution,” said Katherine Pacheco (’19).

There are not many coun-

tries with gun control laws as relaxed as the United States. Countries with higher gun violence rates such as El Salvador and Mexico, have strict gun control laws. However, some may say these laws are not as effectively enforced as they should be. In El Salvador, about 40 of every 100 thousand residents are killed by fire arms. According to El Salvador’s law, citizens are not guaranteed to own assault weapons. While in Mexico, laws are so strict that there is only one store where guns are sold legally, according to *Business Insider*. Most of the guns in Mexico are smuggled in from the United States.

This leads to conclusions that the effectiveness of gun control varies among countries and there is no perfect method to keeping all citizens safe. However, the United State’s lenient gun control could be a cause of the mounting number of mass shootings that take place in the United States more often than anywhere else.

Firearm Related Deaths Annually per one Million People



Acquiring a gun in Connecticut vs. in Texas

Analyzing the differences in gun laws across the states

Daniel Greco
Managing Editor

In light of the recent shootings in the U.S., the issue of gun control has been fiercely debated among the U.S. government. The most prominent topic in gun control is whether or not increased difficulty purchasing firearms is a direct violation of our constitutional rights. Though, the result of such limits is an increased presence of unstable citizens that are able to carry these deadly weapons.

As of 2004, the Federal Assault Weapons Ban—a subsection of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994—is expired and no longer in effect. The goal of this ban was to ensure that assault weapons, any firearm

earlier, 34 children and a teacher were shot in Stockton, California: five children were killed.

A 2004 study conducted by the National Research Council committee found that the ban “did not reveal any clear impacts on gun violence outcomes.” During the ten year period, prevalence of gun violence within the United States was near equal to that of the previous years. Despite the expiration of the ban, seven states (California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Maryland, New Jersey, and New York) continue to implement an equal ban on assault weapons.

To further understand the desire to limit the availability of assault weapons, it helps to contrast the process of acquiring such weapons in two states—one with a ban and one without. Two great examples of these states are Texas and Connecticut—both of which have had fairly recent mass

groups legally allowed to possess assault weapons without specific certifications are active law enforcement and military personnel; the firearms needing to be their line of duty. Those with a Certificate of Possession issued by the Special Licensing and Firearms Unit are also allowed to possess assault weapons listed on their certificate. According to ct.gov, the only way to purchase and possess a handgun in Connecticut is if “you have a valid Permit to carry Pistols or Revolvers, a valid Eligibility Certificate, if you are a licensed Firearms Dealer or if you are a Sworn Police Officer.” The process of acquiring a Pistol Permit or Eligibility Certificate is quite convoluted for those residing in Connecticut.

To be eligible for one or the other, a civilian must be at least 21 years of age, be clear of Protective or Restraining Orders, and clear of the following misdemeanors including: possession of narcotics or other controlled substances, negligent homicide, as-

the preceding 20 years, confined to a hospital for psychiatric disabilities, voluntarily admitted to a hospital for treatment and care of a psychiatric disability, subject to a firearms seizure, or an unlawful immigrant to the United States.

After a civilian has fulfilled these requirements, they must pay a 70 dollar fee for an application to the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection for a state permit. Once the application has been reviewed and accepted, the civilian may purchase and possess a handgun.

At gun shows, all sales are required to abide by state laws, and require the seller to obtain an authorization number from the Special Licensing and Firearms Unit. “[Connecticut’s firearm laws] are pretty strict as you can only carry handguns outside...” “we need to take more concern with the mental stability of the owner at this point in time,” said Rishabh Jain (’19).

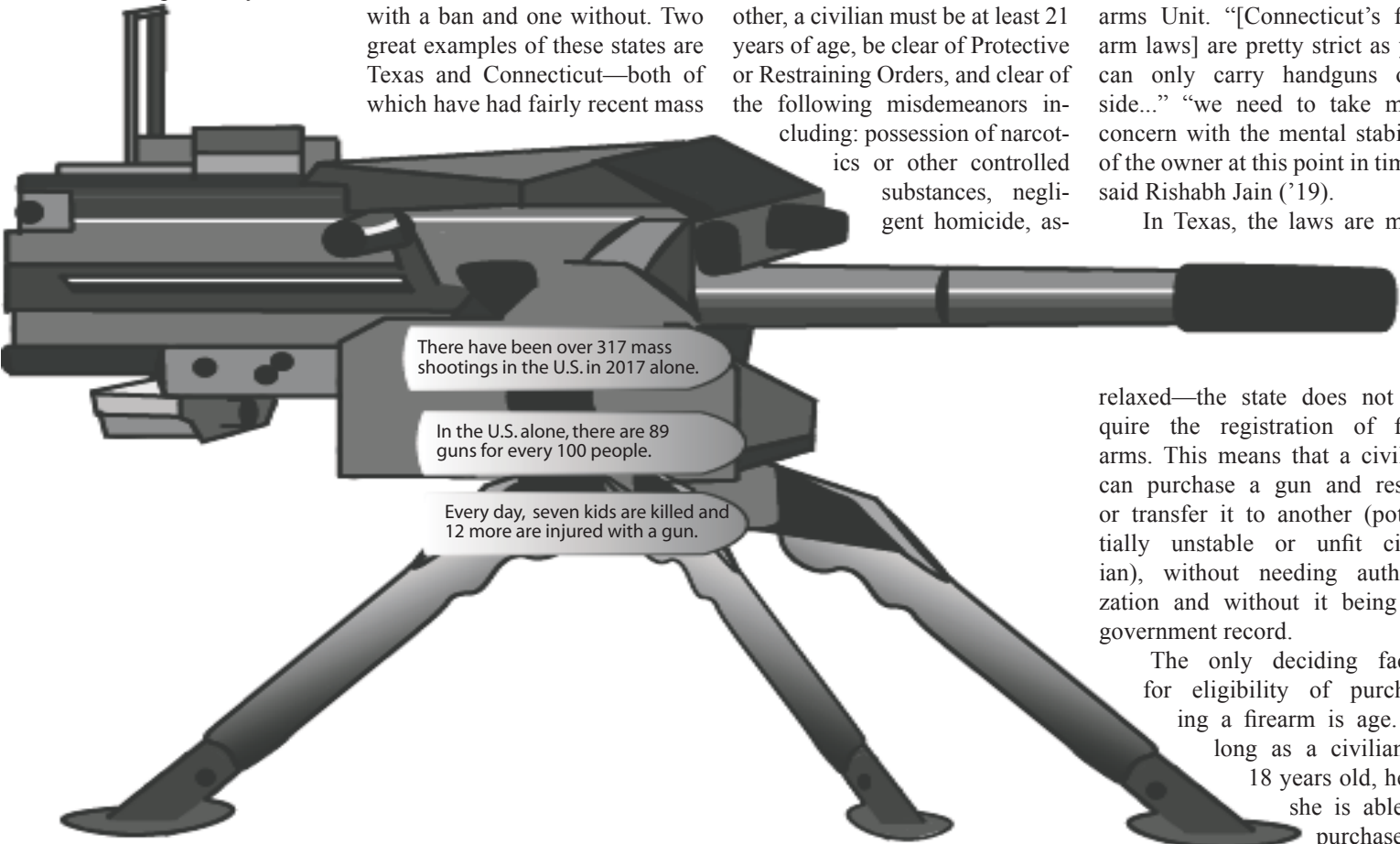
In Texas, the laws are more

the public should have access to these firearms, there should also be more regulations.”

The only area within the sparse gun laws in Texas where there are explicit requirements, are relating to the Concealed Handgun License (CHL). Individuals ineligible for a CHL include anyone who is convicted of a felony or Class A or B misdemeanor, facing pending criminal charges, has had at least two convictions for chemical or alcohol related dependency issues within ten years of each other, suffers from psychological conditions or impairments, subject to a Protective or Restraining order, or is in default on taxes, child support, or governmental fees. These are the only restrictions on firearm purchases in the state.

While both states face polar laws in terms of the acquisition and possession of firearms, the issue of ammunition control is a gray area.

Ammunition is typically limited by age and the only true restrictions are on armor-piercing



that is a semi-automatic rifle, pistol, or shotgun capable of accepting a detachable magazine could not be accessed by civilians in the United States.

The driving factor to this ban was the desire to diminish the amount of assault weapon related shootings and prevent citizens with unstable conditions from acquiring such firepower. Five years

shootings (the Sutherland Springs Church shooting that took place on November 5th, 2017 and the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting on December 14th, 2012 respectively).

Connecticut’s firearm prohibitions are relatively strict compared to other states. As of 2014, only a Connecticut civilian may purchase a handgun. The only

sault in the third degree, threatening, reckless endangerment in the first degree, unlawful restraint in the second degree, riot of the first degree, inciting to a riot, and stalking in the second degree.

In addition to these requirements, an eligible citizen must not have been convicted as a delinquent for a serious offense, discharged from custody within

relaxed—the state does not require the registration of firearms. This means that a civilian can purchase a gun and resell, or transfer it to another (potentially unstable or unfit civilian), without needing authorization and without it being on government record.

The only deciding factor for eligibility of purchasing a firearm is age. As long as a civilian is 18 years old, he or she is able to purchase a long arm.

At 21, an individual is eligible to purchase a handgun. Any other firearm is generally unavailable over the age of 18. Long arms are able to be carried openly in public as long as one abides to local prohibitions of businesses and towns.

“I think [the lack of proper laws in Texas] is a bit crazy,” said Kevin Zyskowski (’19). “While

calibers. Guns are physically unable to do any harm onto others without ammunition, yet, no true limitation to this product exists.

The average cost of an individual 5.56mm lead round in the United States is 21 cents; for just over 100 dollars a civilian can purchase 500 rounds of ammunition. State and Federal Governments are also considering the limitation of ammunition, in turn preventing potential mass shootings. This would allow firearm collectors to display their cache while decreasing gun-related violence within the United States.

“Guns are so ingrained into our culture that it will be nearly impossible to reverse the almost 250 years [of the existing laws],” said Computer Science teacher Mr. Sarkar. The issue of gun control is only becoming more relevant with every incident and these laws are likely to see more reform in the future.

Graphic by **Zachary Kitay** / Graphic Designer.

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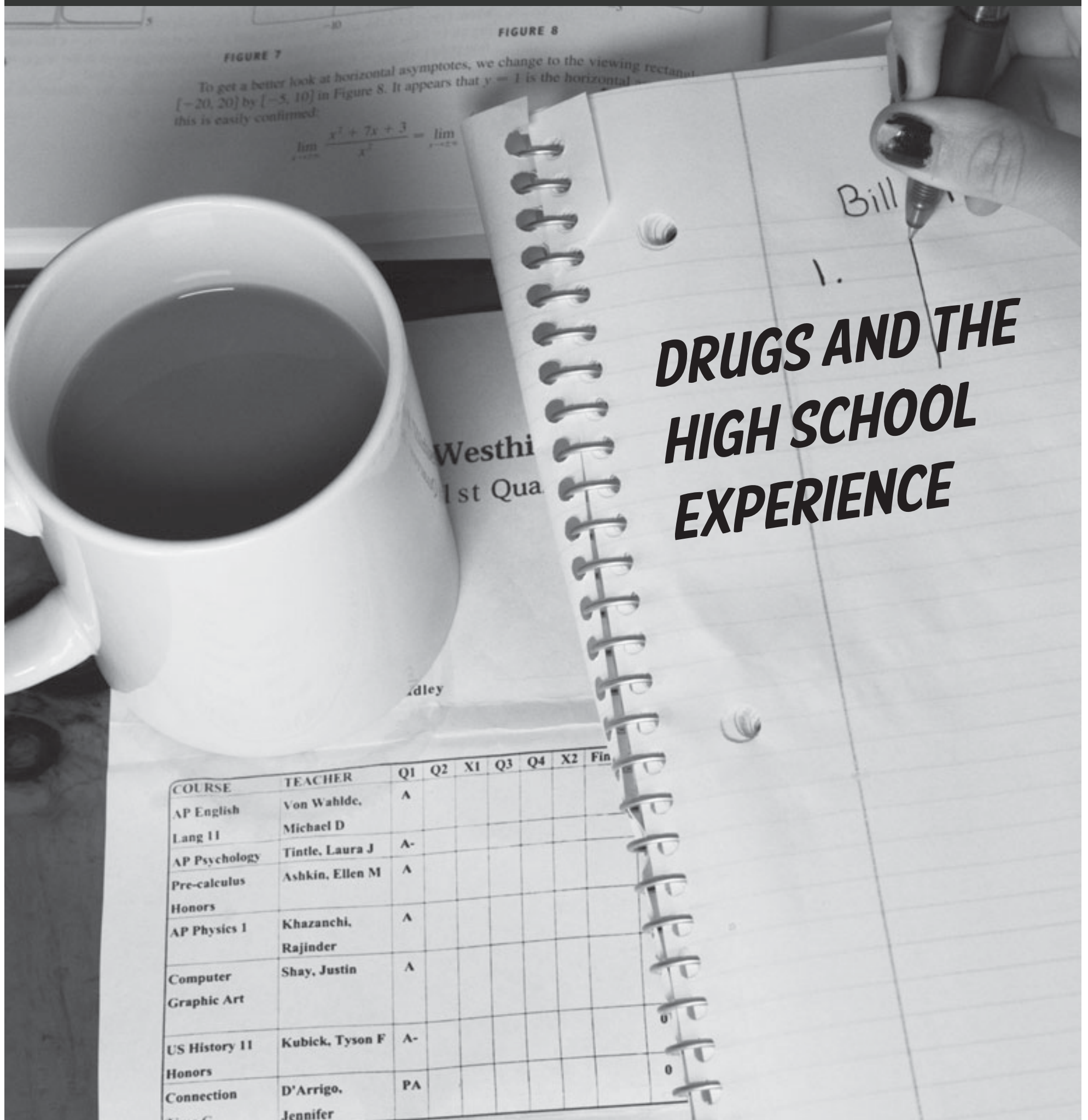
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The Westword Supplement



A LOOK AT THE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF DRUGS

ADVANTAGES

Jude Ponthieu
Limelight Editor

The use of drugs has been ridiculed and debated for decades. Most people argue about how detrimental drugs are to your body, both mentally and physically. From marijuana to heroin, the negative effects of drugs have always been outlined by teachers and parents. However, most people never go into detail to discuss the benefits that some of these drugs may have on one's body.

Though there is a long list of drugs that are used and abused in society, one of the most common day to day drugs that people abuse is caffeine. Some people cannot even function without the steaming morning dosage of caffeine in their cup. The most obvious effect that caffeine gives is a

boost of energy that some need to get them through the day.

However, those are not the only benefits of caffeine. Studies from John Hopkins University have shown that caffeine has served to increase memory as well as memory consolidation. It also has been shown to boost hair growth on balding men and women, as well as ward off diseases such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and Liver Fibrosis. "Caffeine is the only thing that keeps me awake and focused through my early morning classes," said Brittny Adebowale ('18).

In the National Football League (NFL), there have been other controversies regarding drugs and the effects they have on the body. Many players are calling for the NFL to reconsider including marijuana on its banned substance list. The use of medicinal

marijuana is becoming more prominent as an alternative to opiates due to how addicting opiates can be.

One former player from the Baltimore Ravens, Eugene Monroe, argued that cannabidiol oil, which contains a chemical called cannabidiol (CBD), has neuroprotective qualities warding against diseases and severe concussions.

"Some people gain a confidence boost or stress relief from smoking marijuana," said AJ Laccona ('19). Aside from athletics, medicinal marijuana has also been known to greatly reduce anxiety as well as stress. Medical marijuana is also known to help those with insomnia fall asleep.

Nicotine is another commonly used drug. Though people may not smoke cigarettes as much, JUULs (electronic cigarettes) are sweeping the streets. JUULs contain five

percent nicotine in each pod which is equivalent to one pack of cigarettes or two hundred puffs.

Aside from its addictive force, nicotine also has a number of benefits on the body. One of these benefits is being a powerful alertness enhancer, greatly contributing to one's focus and concentration. Studies show nicotine also helps increase memory and learning, its effects being similar to caffeine.

Nicotine can also help with one's healing process by repairing body tissue. When applied directly, nicotine stimulates growth of the tissue and increases blood flow to the wounded area. "The nicotine from juuling helps people focus on schoolwork and homework as well as helps with anxiety," said Jasmine Singler ('20).

A wide amount of party drugs can also have a surpris-

ingly positive effect on the body. Studies from the National Academy of Science have shown that mushrooms or "Magic Shrooms" slowed down activity centers in the brain where depression was active. The chemical inside of the mushroom, psilocybin, can also reduce compulsive headaches and relieve Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) in some people. Ecstasy itself contains anti-cancer properties for cancers such as Leukemia, Lymphoma and Myeloma. Even cocaine, when combined with other compounds, can treat some minor skin lacerations. Although not highly publicized, drugs can be beneficial.

The Westword is not by any means endorsing the use of controlled substances in any shape or form. This was written for informative purposes only.



Jennifer Carias
Staff Writer

There are many different types of drugs and a large amount of ways to take them. However, there are many ways drugs can be abused and negatively affect a person's life.

Addiction is something that many are fearful of and is a leading cause of health problems in drug users. The withdrawal process and returning back to a healthy state, proves to be extremely difficult. Addiction is one of the easiest habits to develop and the hardest to break.

People that become ad-

dicted to drugs have very limited options when it comes to becoming substance-free. One can either get help and begin to get better and move on or fall back into addiction. Many may die from the health issues they get before getting the chance to get clean. According to the National Institute of Health (NIH) "People who suffer from addiction often have one or more accompanying medical issues, which may include lung or cardiovascular disease, stroke, cancer, and mental disorders."

Those who are addicted to substances most likely never realize that they are risking

their own well-being. This is because addicts are too focused on the way drugs make them feel and want more drugs in their system.

Studies have been done by the National Institute on Drug Abuse to show the impact on our brains on different types of hardcore drugs, such as heroin and cocaine, however, many people still try them and become addicted. Drugs like marijuana are not normally damaging, but it can unknowingly lead to abuse of hardcore substances. No one has died from smoking excessive amounts of marijuana. Although, what

many people do not realize is that smoking marijuana from someone other than a licensed medicinal marijuana dealer can be very dangerous.

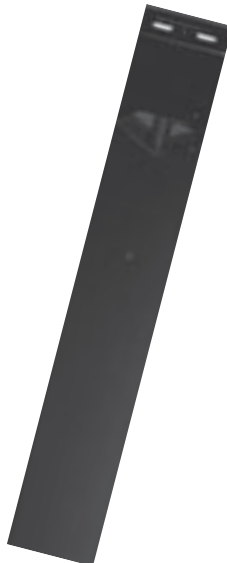
"You risk the fact that anything you take can be laced, and because you do not really know what is in it, it [can be] really bad. You are also burning a lot of your brain cells before [your brain] is fully developed," said Katelyn Guzman ('19). Laced marijuana is how a lot of teenagers get hooked on hardcore drugs.

Part of the reason that this occurs is because teenagers are not aware of the dangers or what they

could be inhaling. Laced drugs can also lead to the possibility of overdosing. Without the knowledge of what the drug is composed of, people often only find that it was laced after they have already ingested it.

Overall, addiction is horrible to go through, difficult to fight, and leads to death. Drugs can also seriously affect the people around the users including friends and family. When drug related deaths occur, it may leave loved ones wondering why they were not able to help their relatives stop. Death is one of the number one negative side effect of drugs.

Images courtesy of pixabay.com, wikipedia.org & [wikimedia commons.com](https://wikimedia.com).



DISADVANTAGES

SOCIAL DRUGS AND PEER PRESSURE

Marta Zach
Feature Editor

Peer pressure is defined by many as an influence to make a decision from one's age group or group of friends. While peer pressure may be prevalent in everyday life, it is often a negative influence that drives people—especially susceptible teenagers—to commit drug and alcohol related crimes.

Once these illegal substances get into the hands of teenagers it can often go awry. Naive teenagers can easily be influenced into trying, and the negative pressure is often pioneered by their peers. "I think that teens are definitely affected by peer pressure. People think it is cool to do drugs or drink [alcohol]. They feel obligated to do it because their friends do it," said Sara Gatz ('20).

According to NorthPoint Recovery, the use of illicit drugs has

decreased since its peak in 1995 by about 20 percent. In 1997, nearly 82 percent of high schoolers reported trying alcohol. That number decreased to less than 62 percent in 2016. Even with the amount of teenagers trying alcohol decreasing, peer pressure will always be present. According to a poll conducted in Westhill of 151 students, more than 90 percent of students admitted to using drugs.

The desire to fit in or engage in what friends are doing often prompts teens to try things they normally would not and pushes them to keep doing them, this can lead to addiction.

Nobody wants to feel left out or as if they do not fit in. "I mean... of course it has been a problem since any kid [can get] their hands on them. Seeing other people with something triggers the desire to be like them. Following the trends of the day. It is something most

people cannot totally avoid," said Victoria Morgan ('20).

Furthermore, drugs and alcohol may be found at large parties or group hangouts, and one can quickly become subject to peer pressure once they are amongst people their age. As long as friend groups and social cliques exist, it is likely peer pressure will as well.

Social media also has a large influence on children. One will see their friends, other teenagers, or even people they look up to such as celebrities, doing things that could easily influence them.

"I think rappers and other singers are greatly influencing our generation with weed and alcohol being a main focus in their music videos," said Shahe-la Kabir ('20). There are various sources from which teenagers might be influenced, and are usually major aspects of their lives. Social media, celebrities, and peers are all large influencers on

the lives of teenagers.

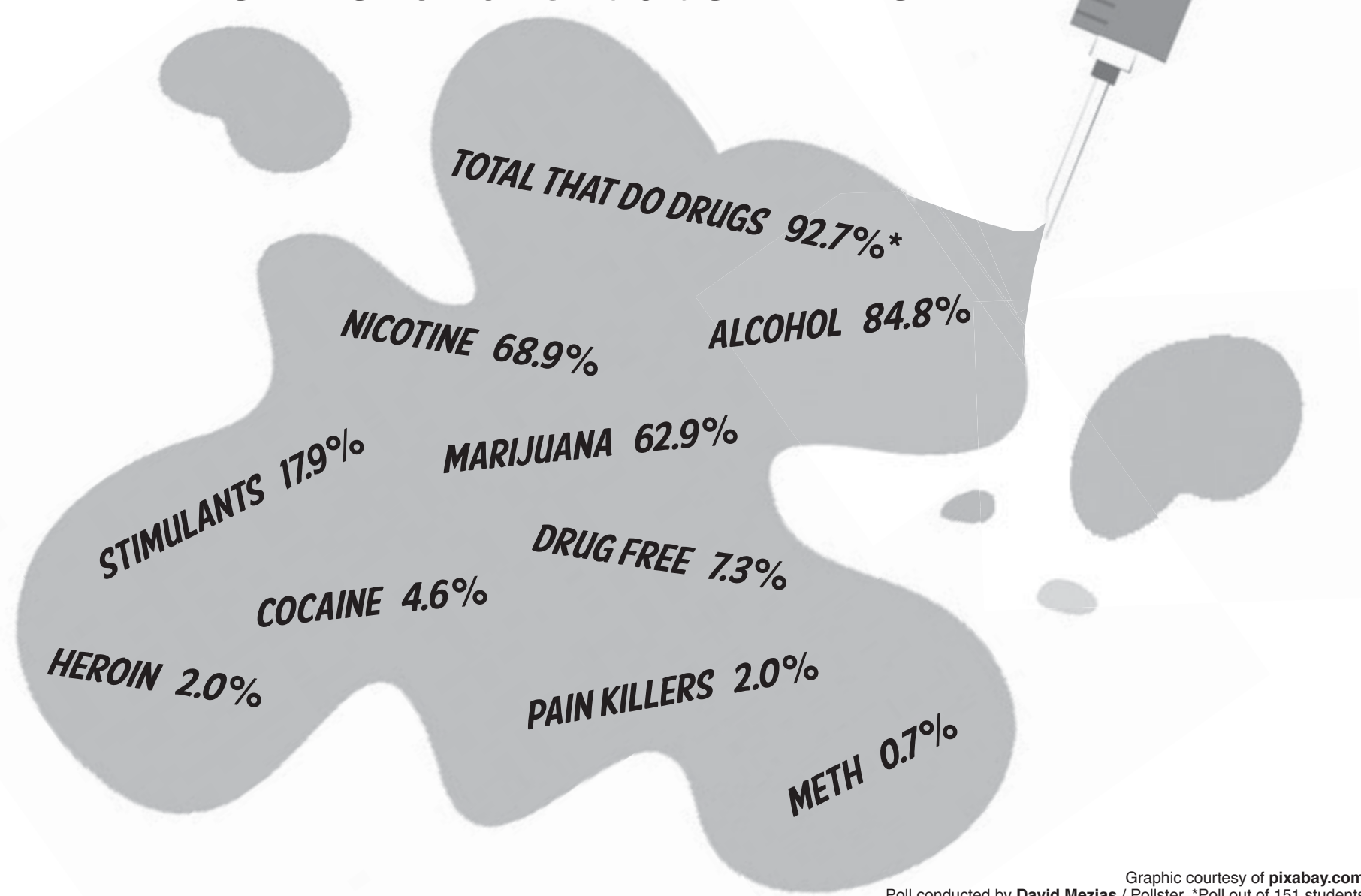
One cannot completely cut themselves off from negative social influence, but one can choose to not let sources such as celebrities, social media, or peer pressure sometimes impact poor decision-making. It is hard to say no when faced with temptation or nagging from friends.

"You can always say no. Your friends will not bully you because you do not want alcohol or anything like that. They might pressure you without intending to, but if you really express that you do not want to do it, they will understand and let it go," said Kayla Mendiola ('20). Peer pressure from friends is often trivial, and hard to resist.

Peer pressure can be something positive. Teenagers are often encouraged to engage in risky behaviors by their peers. Teenagers can also be positively influenced by friends. Peer pressure is a term often used to describe

negative encouragement that is often degrading or putting one in harm's way. However, peer pressure can just as well be the boost of confidence from friends to try out for the basketball team, attend a social event, or branch out past their comfort zone. Peer pressure can influence people in positive ways when it comes to branching out but it can also have negative effects when it comes to drugs and other risky behaviors.

A SNAPSHOT OF DRUG USE IN WESTHILL



Graphic courtesy of pixabay.com.
Poll conducted by **David Mezas** / Pollster. *Poll out of 151 students.

COCAINE

Cocaine is a stimulant drug that comes from the coca plant, native to South America. Cocaine increases the level of dopamine, the natural chemical that the brain releases during pleasure and movement, in the brain. The short term effects include being extremely happy and energized, mental alertness, sensitivity to sight, sound, and touch, irritability, and having extreme and unreasonable distrust in others. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, long term effects include a lost sense of smell, nosebleeds, runny nose, and problems swallowing. Genetically the long term effects include depression, slowed thinking, fatigue, increased appetite, and insomnia.

ALCOHOL

Alcohol is not always seen as a drug because it is used so commonly, but that does not change the way it affects the body. According to The National Institute of Health, when alcohol affects the brains it interferes with the brain’s communication pathways and it affects the way it works and looks. Effects include strokes, high blood pressure, irregular heartbeat, and stretches of the heart muscle. The effects from alcohol on the liver include fibrosis, cirrhosis, alcoholic hepatitis, and a fatty liver. Alcohol can increase the risk of mouth, esophagus, throat, liver, and breast cancer. It is the most commonly used drug in the U.S. and legal to those 21 and over.

HEROIN

Heroin is an opioid drug made from the resin of the poppy plant and is highly addictive. Heroin can be used by injecting, snorting or smoking. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, short term effects may be dry mouth, a “back and forth” of consciousness, clouded mental functioning, severe itching, warm flushing of the skin, nausea, vomiting, and loss of feeling in the arms and legs. Long term effects may be insomnia, collapsed veins for those who inject, stomach cramping, and damaged tissue inside the nose for those who snort it. Some people may have an infection in their heart lining and valves. More long term effects are liver and kidney disease, mental disorders, sexual dysfunction for men, irregular menstrual cycles for women, lung complications, and death by overdose.

LYSERGIC ACID DIETHYLAMIDE (LSD)

Lysergic Acid Diethylamide, commonly known as LSD or acid, is a hallucinogenic drug that is derived from a natural chemical found in fungi. Some short term effects from taking acid are visual hallucinations, amplification of sensations like sounds and smells, distorted sense of time, blending of senses such as “seeing” sounds or “hearing” colors, sensation of the mind leaving the body, impulsive behavior, quickly shifting emotions, and mystical or religious sensations. Some physical risks from taking LSD are increased blood pressure and heart rate, insomnia, elevated body temperature, dizziness, dry mouth, loss of appetite, tremors, and excessive sweating.

OXYCODONE

Oxycodone is an opioid pain medication. It is a narcotic and is used to treat moderate to severe pain and is often prescribed by doctors for pain relief. Side effects of oxycodone are bloating or swelling of the face, arms, hands, legs, or blood in the urine, chest pain, cough, decrease in urine volume, dry mouth, fainting, headache, and increased thirst. Some symptoms of overdose are discomfort, extreme drowsiness, no muscle tone or movement, severe sleepiness, slow or irregular heartbeat, loss of consciousness, and decreased awareness or responsiveness.

METHAMPHETAMINE

Methamphetamine is an illegal drug in the same class as street drugs. It acts as a stimulant and systematically impairs the body. Meth comes in the form of a crystalline white powder that does not have a smell, but can easily dissolve in water or alcohol. Meth can be snorted, smoked, or injected. Some short term effects are loss of appetite, increased heart rate, blood pressure, and body temperature, dilation of pupils, disturbed sleep patterns, hallucinations, irritability, panic, and nausea. Long term effects of taking meth are permanent damage to blood vessels of the heart and brain, strokes, high blood pressure leading to heart attacks, liver kidney, and lung damage.

NICOTINE

Nicotine is an alkaloid drug and comes from the highly addictive tobacco plant, found mostly in cigarettes and electronic cigarettes. Nicotine increases the user’s heart rate, heat stroke volume, and heart muscle oxygen consumption rate. These effects are known as the pharmacologic effects. Nicotine can also raise alertness, euphoria, and brings relaxation. People who inhale nicotine can be affected by a series of different side effects throughout the whole body. This includes increase of clotting in blood circulation, muscular pain, nausea, dry mouth, and type two diabetes.

MARIJUANA

Marijuana comes from the dried leaves, flowers, stems, and seeds, of the Cannabis Indica plant. Marijuana is used for smoking in hand rolled cigarettes and can be used to smoke inside of pipes and blunts. This drug can have short and long term effects on the brain. Effects include altered senses, mood changes, impaired body movement, altered sense of time, difficulty thinking, and impaired memory. Physical effects can be breathing problems, increased heart rate, and problems with child development during and after pregnancy. Symptoms of this drug on the body can include reddening of the eyes, sensation of heat or cold on the skin, and relaxation in the muscles.

STEROIDS

Steroids are synthetic variations of the male sex hormone, testosterone. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, some short term affects are extreme unreasonable paranoia, intense irritability, delusions like false beliefs or ideas, and impaired judgment. Long term effects from steroids can cause heart problems or failure, liver damage, enlarged heart, high blood pressure, and changes in blood cholesterol, all of which increase the risk of stroke and heart attack even in young people. Specifically in men, some effects may include shrinking testicles, decreased sperm count, baldness, development of breasts, and increase of risk for prostate cancer. Side effects in women include growth of facial hair or excess body hair, male pattern baldness, changes or stop in the menstrual cycle, enlarged clitoris, and deepened voice.

XANAX

Xanax, also known as alprazolam, has chemicals that affects the brain. It is often used to treat anxiety, comes as a rectangular pill, and is also prescribed for the treatment of panic disorders. Some side effects that come with taking Xanax are drowsiness, chest pain, low energy, depression, confusion, nervousness, fainting, dizziness, light headaches, insomnia, anxiety, fear, hypotension, and tremors.

MARIJUANA: LEGALIZATION VS. CRIMINALIZATION OVER TIME

Samantha Hamilton
Staff Writer

The way drugs have influenced the U.S. government and its citizens has drastically changed over the course of American history. The stigma against drugs has divided social classes and races for centuries, yet, not many understand how much prejudice can impact the classification of a drug.

In 1971, the War on Drugs began. The anti-drug movement was led by President Richard Nixon. His intentions were made clear to the U.S. that illegal drugs and addiction had become an epidemic, which then led to crime. Nixon dramatically increased the size of Federal Drug Control Agencies and implemented mandatory sentencing along with no-knock warrants. This meant if someone were to be caught in possession of drugs, jail time would be mandatory and law enforcement may enter their home without warning. During the War on Drugs, cocaine was classified as having no medical use, making it a target for drug

control agencies.

A particularly popular drug today is marijuana. The popularity of this drug has fluctuated significantly in the last 100 years. It was first popularized by immigrants from Mexico and the West Indies and was almost immediately demonized by caucasians with racist intent.

In 1930, the First Commissioner of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics said, “reefer makes darkies think they are as good as white men.” Then, in 1936 a movie titled *Reefer Madness* was released, demonizing the drug and feeding into negative stigmas. The following year the drug was illegalized. It was not heavily enforced until 1956, when the Narcotic Control Act made the minimum sentencing for possession two to ten years.

In 1971, during the War on Drugs, marijuana became a schedule one drug. A schedule one classification includes any drug that has a high chance of becoming addictive and has no medical use. This is a highly con-

troversial classification because there was no research proving that the drug was addictive or unusable for medical purposes.

Despite the new classification and sentencing, the drug became destigmatized in the general public around the late 1970s because of the war counter culture. It was used by both soldiers and hippies. By the time the counter culture generation grew up and started families of their own, 45 million Americans had tried the drug. However, now that they were parents themselves, they feared their children using marijuana would evolve into using harder drugs that shared the same classification.

Due to this general public opinion, the laws on sentencing were changed and repeat offenders could then face up to an entire lifetime in prison for two non-violent possession charges. In 2010, 52 percent of all drug arrests were for possession or distribution of marijuana. Between 2001 and 2010, 88 percent of marijuana related arrests were for possession.

It is clear that minorities have always been targeted by anti-drug enforcement. It is also clear that racism and prejudice can influence public opinion and even legislation.

Things are looking up for the marijuana industry. Medical use is currently legal in 26 states plus Washington D.C., and recreational use is legal in nine states plus Washington DC. The marijuana industry is projected to make 20.1 billion dollars by 2021. With this projection, along with job opportunities and other economic advantages, more states are considering the legalization of the drug.

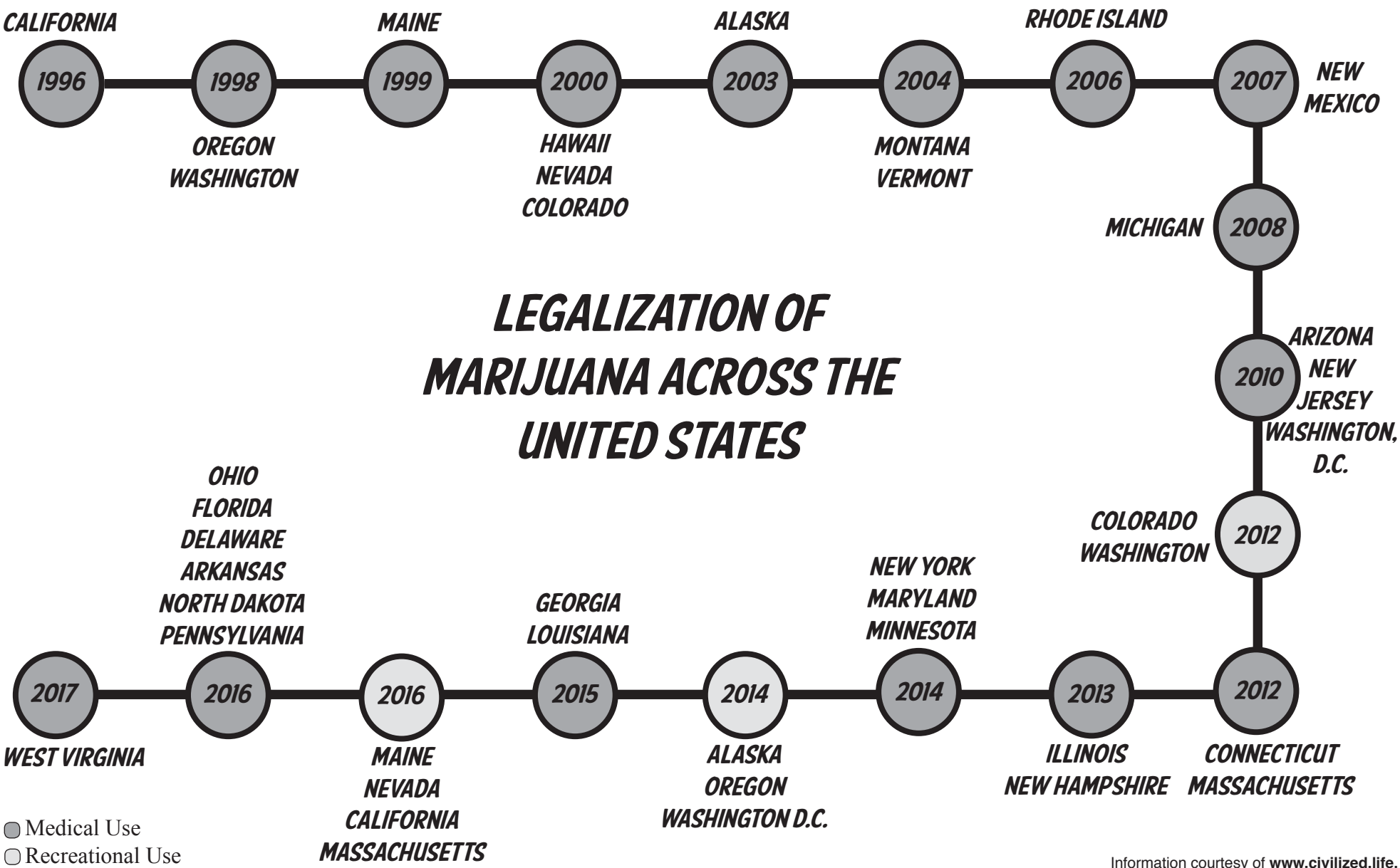
Connecticut is one of the states to legalize marijuana for medical use but not for recreational use. The students of Westhill have varied opinions on whether or not we should legalize marijuana for recreational use. “I believe that this grey area in politics should have been cleared up years ago. Drugs do in fact have consequences just like everything else, but they are responsible for fewer deaths than legal

drugs. If we are going to legalize or illegalize, we should not only be voting for what we actually believe in; but clarifying the effects of each drug truthfully. We live in a world where the media allows you to see what they want you to see, blurring out or glamorizing different things because it will ruin businesses that bring in tons of money,” said Mikayla Smith (’18).

“I personally think marijuana should be legal because alcohol is. Alcohol causes the same or even worse consequences and makes people even more reckless than marijuana in some cases,” said Fahmida Ahmed (’18).

The history of drug legalization and criminalization in the U.S. is full of economic and racial biases that influence the way drug use is interpreted by the general public (marketed by dealers and persecuted by law enforcement in today’s society).

Now, it is likely that people will be interested in the potential benefits of other criminalized drugs that were demonized so heavily during the War on Drugs.



Information courtesy of www.civilized.life.

HEAVILY RELIED ON SUBSTANCES IN SCHOOL

THE HYPE OF CAFFEINE

Lucy Hart
Staff Writer

We may not consider our morning cup of coffee an addictive drug, but caffeine, according to the National Center for Biotechnology Information, is “the most widely used psychoactive substance in the world.” The Mayo Clinic reported that too much caffeine can cause insomnia, nervousness, restlessness, irritability, upset stomach, and muscle tremors. Therefore, significant caffeine intake, or lack thereof, may have a serious impact on students.

One glance at a first or second block classroom at Westhill will reveal a majority of students and teachers with a coffee cup on their desks. Many people

make daily stops at Donut Delight, Starbucks, or Dunkin’ Donuts for their fix. For those balancing rigorous academic and extracurricular schedules, late nights and early mornings are nothing short of routine. Many rely on caffeine to keep them awake.

“I do not get that much sleep, so if I did not drink coffee I would not be able to focus because I would not be able to stay awake,” said Franki Spinelli Mastrone (’20). Mastrone also confirmed that she uses caffeine to supplement sleep.

The widespread use of caffeine, draws from the culture of abundant sleep deprivation in schools. Lack of sleep has the potential to affect students’ health, both mental and physical, as well

as their general well-being. As a result, students’ dependence on caffeine is detrimental to their health merely for its enabling effect on skipping sleep.

“[Caffeine] has a negative impact on everyone’s body,” said Ms. Herz, World Language Department Head. Herz added, “[It is] not wise for kids to be consuming large quantities of caffeine.” She advised, “instead of consuming caffeine, students need to get a decent amount of sleep because, from what I can see, most of the students at Westhill are walking around sleep deprived.” She believes it is important for students to get a good night’s sleep rather than load up on caffeine.

Some students, on the other hand, avoid caffeine

all together. Whether it be for health reasons or for a dislike of the taste of coffee, they tend to find that its effects are not necessary to stay awake in school.

“I tried drinking coffee,” said Isabella Adamo (’20), “but really it just makes me sick and gives me a headache. I feel that some people get the benefits of [caffeine] but I do not, so it does not really do anything for me.” Adamo said that when she does occasionally drink caffeine, she finds that “half of it is just a placebo.”

Although the average caffeine intake of Westhill students may range from daily to no

consumption, it is best to be aware of the harmful effects of this substance. Considering the consequences of sleep deprivation and significant caffeine consumption, it is safe to say that limiting caffeine intake may be beneficial in the long-run.

ADDERALL AND ITS IMPACT ON STUDENTS

Christian Rybalko
Staff Writer

In the United States, school is mainly about passing tests with the highest scores possible. As soon as students cram the information into their heads and take the test, they forget all about it. Some say they are more delighted about their scores than the information that they learned in the curriculums. This type of education system creates the pressure for teenagers to use substances like Adderall. Many students feel pressured about tests and sometimes they feel they have nothing else to turn to but drugs like Adderall to get their work done and studying, found by the research of *American Addiction Centers*.

Students will go as far as to take Adderall to study harder and often pull off all-nighters before tests. Adderall is a drug that is used by students, ranging from high school to college, to facilitate their level of focus in school

and on exams.

Adderall helps keep one focused on an extreme level. The drug’s actual purpose is for people with Attention Hyperactivity Deficit Disorder (ADHD). According to *Self Magazine*, Adderall does not make one more intelligent, it may give one the confidence and focus that may be needed for school.

As reported by the National Survey on Drug Use, about 6.4 percent of college students between the ages of 18 and 22 have used Adderall in a recreational way. A correlation has been found between participation in binge drinking and Adderall abuse, with 89.5 percent of students who reported abusing Adderall also attempted to binge drink alcohol, according to *Addiction Hope*. It is possible that students who use Adderall recreationally do not study regularly before a test. Instead, they wait a day before the test and then start cramming.

If school was not mainly focused on doing well on exams and in classes, students would have less of a reason to feel pressured and would not feel obligated to take prescription drugs like Adderall and other performance enhancement drugs of the sort. Schools make our future dependent on tests by increasing how much they impact our grades; often causing students to lose hours

of sleep and frying their brains with Adderall and other drugs similar to it.

Adderall is not a healthy drug. According to *Business Insider*, it has a large amount of negative side effects such as dizziness, weakness, blurred vision, feeling restless, fever, stomach pains, and vomiting. The long term effects of Adderall include anxiety, panic at-

tacks, inability to concentrate, depression, and heart disease.

Although Adderall may help someone for a short period of time to complete tests or projects, long term usage of the substance can seriously harm one’s health permanently. It often causes people to spend years in rehabilitation and recovery facilities from the damage long term drugs inflict.



Graphic by **Zachary Kitay** / Graphic Designer.

Student Name: Bill Bradley

COURSE	TEACHER	Q1	Q2	X1	Q3	Q4	X2	Fin.Gr	7	0
AP English	Von Wahlde,	A	A-	C-	D-	F	F	F	7	0
Lang 11	Michael D								10	0
AP Psychology	Tintle, Laura J		B+	C+	D	F	F	F	12	0
Pre										0
	Rajinder									
Computer	Shay, Justin	A	B+	C-	D+	F	F	F	12	0
Graphic Art										
US History 11	Kubick, Tyson F	A-	B-	C+	D+	F	F	F	8	0
Honors										
Connections	D'Arrigo,	PA	PA		PA		PA	PA	5	1

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FEATURE

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25

SROs and what they do

Caitlin Covello
Staff Writer

While you may not see a School Resource Officer (SRO) in action the same way you see a security guard, they are very important to the safety of our school. SROs are sworn officers, which grants them the ability to make arrests and makes them responsible for knowing what is going on within our school. Their overall goal is to make our school a safer place.

SROs have training that no one else at the school is required to have, and therefore can help guide administration and students through dangerous situations. School is supposed to be a safe place where students can learn without the worries of what is going on outside of their

classrooms. Police that are present in the school can help reduce many threats, even as simple as trespassing.

SROs are not school disciplinarians, and are therefore not responsible for making sure school rules are followed. Their job focuses on enforcing laws throughout the school and making sure students and faculty are safe so that they can carry on learning without distraction. They also keep an eye on students who are on parole, conduct occasional mediation, and speak to law classes.

Having officers at school helps students understand what police expect and give them a better idea of what an officer does. Not only do they help keep us safe, but they also serve as role models for staff and students alike.

So who are our SROs?

We have two SROs at Westhill, Anna Edwards, who has worked here for nine years, and Felix Martinez, who has worked here for three, are commonly referred to as Anna and Felix. Their main job is to be a liaison between the police department and the Board of Education. They also work closely with students, helping with anything from keeping students on probation on track to being someone to talk to about a problem if students do not feel comfortable going to guidance.

Having students build positive relationships with officers during their time in high school can benefit them throughout their whole lives.

“We have to have some continuity. You will have the same officers in the building from September to June

so kids have some sort of relationship with us,” said Officer Edwards.

“If arrests have to be made we will make those; if we have to give people summons we can do that here. We work closely with probation, we do mediation, we help counselors if you are having hard times with students, truancy, we can do home visits, we also go to law classes, and talk to students who are interested in our profession,” said Officer Edwards and Martinez.

Despite being police officers, Edwards and Martinez feel their job does not have one simple description. Anna and Felix strive to be role models to the student and make an effort to show their faces around the school as often as possible. They want students to feel comfortable stopping them in the hallways to ask ques-

tions if needed. “I always say hi to [Anna] in the hallway. I feel comfortable around her,” said Demetrius Little (’18).

In September of this year, Westhill was faced with multiple threats. During this time, Edwards and Martinez worked closely with the Board of Education and the Stamford Police to make sure Westhill had the security it needed and that the school was safe enough that students’ school days would not be interrupted.

At Westhill, our SROs are can be found in their office, located in the back of the media center. Anna and Felix have an open door policy so if students need anything, from mediation, information, or even if you have a question about a parking ticket, feel free to stop by or leave a note under their door.

"I LOVE MY JOB, IT IS ALWAYS SOMETHING DIFFERENT AND ALWAYS SOMETHING NEW."
-OFFICER MARTINEZ

"WORKING IN THE SCHOOL HAS GIVEN ME A DIFFERENT PERSEPCTIVE ON WORKING WITH KIDS AND I REALLY ENJOY BEING A PART OF THE WESTHILL COMMUNITY."
-OFFICER EDWARDS

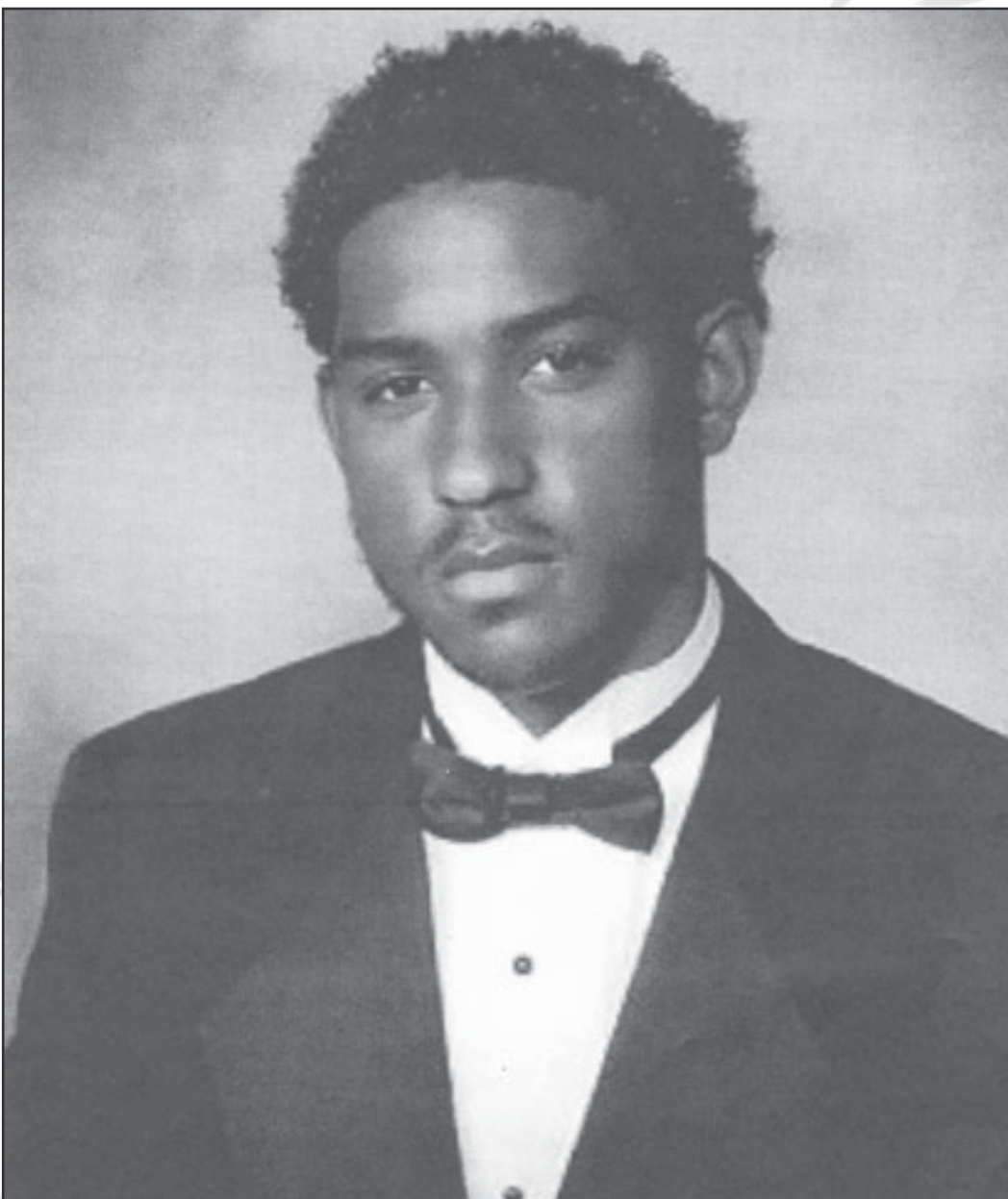


Photos by **Jack Williamson** / Staff Writer.

In Loving Memory ...

Donte Smith 1998 - 2017

Donte Smith was beloved by his family, friends, teachers, and his fellow students. During his two years at Westhill, he made a prolific impact. He will be greatly missed.



Donte's wake will be held on Saturday, December 9th at 10 am at Union Baptist Church. The funeral service is being held at 12 pm following the wake.

"Donte Smith was the kind of student that a teacher dreams of: thoughtful, insightful, intelligent and determined to be a better man in this world. We all cherished having him as a student, and the results were obvious. He was attending Pennsylvania State University. They knew potential when they saw it. He has indeed made us all proud to be educators. Our hearts go out to his family, and as he is Westhill family we need to celebrate this young man's life in the Westword with our colleagues and his peers."

—Ms. Walden, English teacher

"... I had him as a student twice, in two different courses. Donte was a nice person, I really enjoyed him- he had a good sense of humor, worked hard, and I wrote him a recommendation when he was leaving here as a senior to apply to college. I'm sorry that it happened."

—Mr. White, Social Studies teacher

"Donte overcame any obstacle he faced with grace and happiness—he is a role model to us all. I was blessed to have him as a counselee."

—Mr. Milas, Guidance counselor

"He was a student in my creative writing class, one of our best. I helped him write his letter to Penn State, and I join everyone in mourning this tragedy."

—Mr. Pinsince, English teacher

"I did not have him in class, he was a good student though and the English department always talked about him. I just saw him everyday in the hallway and I coached him. I coached him in a tournament last year where we played all the Peruvian, Columbian, and Guatemalan teams. I had a couple of Jamaicans and a bunch of American kids and we won the tournament with him. He was a very good player, and even people who did not have him in class knew he was a gentlemen. He was smart. His grades were good. He was nice to everybody. He was even nice when he played soccer. People love him. This is one of the most tragic things that has happened here. He went to Penn State, for a kid from Westhill to get accepted to Penn State and then come back here for a break, I mean he made it. He made it. He was where everybody wants to be."

—Mr. Lukas, English teacher



Don't Enroll In The Wrong Driving School

Don't Be Fooled by PART-TIME SCHOOLS Operating in Stamford.

Since 2005, the High Ridge Driving School has been the driving school of choice for Stamford-area teens and their parents because of our commitment to **always put the student FIRST!** In fact, as a result of our student-centric philosophy, we have taught more Stamford teens to drive than all of the other driving schools... *combined*.

The fact is, **we are not a driver education factory.** From day one, we have strived to offer the best possible driver education experience for each student. When it comes to driver education, just like shoes, one size does not fit all. And there is only one way we can offer this level of

attention – by being local business-people who are actively engaged with our instructors, students, parents and the community. We don't own numerous driving schools around the state or operate part-time, **our focus is here on the driving students of Stamford and the surrounding communities, all day – every day.**

The purpose of this ad is to provide you with a fair and accurate comparison of your driving school options in Stamford, so you can make an educated decision. In the end, you will have to decide which driving school option is best for you and your family.

THE HIGH RIDGE DRIVING SCHOOL ADVANTAGE

	Other Driving School Options	High Ridge Driving School	<div><div>FREE TEST DRIVE!</div><div>Any student accompanied by a parent can sit in on one of our weekday classes absolutely FREE so you can get a feel for our school, our curriculum, and our teaching methods.</div></div> <div>INTERESTED IN ONLY THE 8-HOUR DRUG & ALCOHOL CLASS?</div> <div>We offer 16 & 17 year old students the chance to take just this class every weekend. (EXCEPT MAJOR HOLIDAYS)</div> <div>Always separate classes for teens and adults.</div>
Flexible Schedule	No, they schedule sessions that begin and end. So, if you miss a class, you might need to go to another town, or wait quite awhile to finish your training.	Our classes NEVER end. We teach in the classroom 52-weeks a year. In the summer we offer up to 3 classes a day!	
Driving Hours	We know of students from other driving schools that have needed to go to other towns to finish their driving hours. Some schools do not even offer in-car sessions on a regular basis!	We drive 7-days a week, all year long. You're assigned an instructor who's dedicated to providing you with the best driver education experience possible. Plus, we pick-up and drop off ANYWHERE locally.	
Off-site Testing at the School	Possibly.	Always available in Stamford multiple times a month since 2005 - And always will be!	
Customer Service	Questions, phone calls, and DMV paperwork usually handled by a corporate office or a branch office in another town, generally only by phone. Some schools do not generate DMV CS-1 certificates in Stamford. VERY limited office hours in Stamford, if at all.	We're almost ALWAYS open – in person or by phone. All phone calls, certificates, and paperwork handled in Stamford. No phone queues or customer service reps, we deliver REAL customer care with our dedicated Stamford staff. We invite parents into our facility and offer training and support to ensure the time spent driving with your teen is productive.	
The Oldest Driving School in Stamford	No.	Yes, High Ridge Driving School has been locally owned and operated since 2005!	

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Don't Bully the Breed: The ban on pit bulls

Column by Kelly Fox



Each month, Kelly Fox will bring to light an issue concerning animal abuse. This month, Kelly focuses on the bans that put Pit bulls at risk of restriction or worse; euthanization.

Individuals all around the world are having their innocent best friend ripped away from their arms to be killed. Their dog did nothing wrong, but is simply being punished because they possess the traits of a pit bull. This is occurring constantly and in a large range of places such as England, Miami, Montreal, and more.

If the dog is lucky and is not euthanized, he or she will have to wear a muzzle, or be shipped to an animal shelter far away from their owner. Sometimes, their owner may have to pay up to 10,000 dollars in fees to keep their best friend content and healthy.

A “Pit bull” is not even a

legitimate breed. It is merely a term society uses to describe bull terriers, American staffordshire terriers, American pit bull terriers, staffordshire bull terriers, and certain mixed-breed dogs. Since Pit bull is not an actual breed, the breed-specific ban puts any dog at risk with a wrinkly face, a thick coat, and other features society deems is Pit bull-like.

Certain governments believe that the euthanization of all pit bulls will put an end to dog attacks, which is unreasonable and absurd. Statistically, this idea is false. There were 767 dog bites in 2014, nine years after the horrendous breed-specific ban. Before this ban there were only around 500 of these hostile acts. That study shows that attempting to take pit bulls away from certain areas did not lessen the

amount of dog attacks.

Any dog can bite or act out regardless of their breed. There is records of every type of dog attacking, from beagles to golden retrievers. There are signs of aggression before a dog attack, and if an owner sees this they should get their dog trained immediately. These signs include the dog growling, baring their front teeth, having perked up ears, making excessive eye contact, having their tail perked up without wagging, and having their chest or legs thrown out.

The majority of dogs that act aggressively do so because the dogs are afraid. This usually occurs because the dogs formerly were mistreated by poor owners. However, dogs typically are not born with this aggression and are made this way by terrible and abusive owners. Even if a dog is ag-

gressive, training is enormously effective and has made a tremendous amount of animals friendly towards all.

An immense amount of myths are causing people to fear pit bulls such as the idea that they have “locked jaws” that make them permanently bite down on something without any release. This idea is false, there is no evidence of these dogs having a locking mechanism.

In 2005, *National Geographic* conducted a study between rottweilers, German shepherds and American pit bull terriers to evaluate on which breed of dog had the strongest jaw. It was proven that out of the three, the American pit bull terriers had the weakest jaw. Another myth is that dogs with cropped ears have been used in fighting. This statement is untrue be-

cause in reality cropped ears are commonly used for show dogs. If the dog’s ears are cropped poorly, this a sign of an uneducated dog owner, not an aggressive dog.

Also, some people believe that pit bulls have a vicious temperament. However, the American Temperament Test Society evaluated on their temperate tests that pit bull breeds have a passing rate of 82 percent or more. This is larger than the general dog population, which is normally a 77 percent passing rate.

Pit bulls can make incredible best friends and family pets, and it is unjust for them to be held back by a false stereotype. The pit bull ban is a horrible decision and every type of dog should be able to live freely without being engulfed by the ignorance of many uneducated people.

72 Hours: Without music

Column by Valerie Neyra & Jennifer Carias



For three days each month Jen and Val will be challenging themselves to try something new and possibly fun. These challenges will consist of things they have never tried doing before and they will be documenting the outcome. This month's challenge: No music for 72 hours.

Day 1

Val: The first day of the 72-hour challenge consisted of me trying not to listen to my music. It was actually really hard to not listen to music, it came to a point where I had to delete my Spotify app and had my mom take away my earphones. I usually listen to music on my way to school, so when that was taken away from me it made me realize how boring doing regular day to day tasks really were. Later that day, Jen and I went to party city to get supplies for

our club. We were in the car with no music and it was really weird. When we talk we usually have music as background noise, it was like something was missing.

Jen: I tend to rarely listen to music, but as a new driver one of the greatest parts of getting a car is finally getting to drive around listening to my music at high volume. It’s the best feeling because you’re alone and you can sing as loud as you want. On the first day of the challenge the drive to school was really quiet as expected I found myself starting to hum. When I picked up Val and went to party city later that day the car somehow got even quieter. I’m sure we’ve all grown accustomed to listening to music in the car and not being able to do that was weird.

Day 2

Val: The next day was not

any better. It was Saturday, and I usually listen to music while I clean my room, so I ended up just putting on reruns of *Greys Anatomy* for background noise. I also ran some errands with my mom and in the stores we went to, they obviously played music which let me listen to at least something. I think that doing this challenge has made me become more aware of how much music is really in my life. We have become so accustomed to music, that wherever we go, it is there.

Jen: On Saturday I was about to start doing homework when I opened my laptop to play music. I am a huge procrastinator and it gets hard for me to focus sometimes so I put on music as background noise so that I do not get too distracted. I really missed it. Unfortunately, I had to work on Saturday and my boss always has the

radio on and I obviously could not tell her to turn it off so I did listen to some music, but it was not even music I liked.

Day 3

Val: The Last day of the 72 hours without music was by far the most difficult. By this point in the challenge I missed listening to my playlists, I guess they sort of acted as “theme songs” to my life. The music I listen to reflects my mood, it was a way to express my feelings. So when I did not have it, it was a weird feeling. As cliché as it may sound, it was like losing a part of me. I could not imagine my life without music, and frankly, I do not want to.

Jen: On the last day I had to drive around running errands for my father. I do not really like to drive, it is kind of annoying because I’m so used to not having to pay attention to everything on the road, so the

only time I actually like it is when listening to my playlist. My friends also do not really like my taste in music and I am never the one to have the aux cord so driving is the only time I would be able to hear it on a car radio. All that time without music was extremely boring and by the end of it I really missed music and was so glad that I could start listening to it again on Monday.

To sum up, 72 hours without music turned out to be harder than expected. Music is almost everywhere and you never truly realize how it’s such a big part of our lives. The point is, there is no escaping music. It can be our way of expressing ourselves and it makes things fun. Without it, things would just be dull and boring. So play your music loud and proud because trust us, it’s better than sitting in silence.

The pressure put on child actors

Phoebe Lukaswitz
Staff Writer

As new TV shows and movies come out, new young actors sometimes feel pressure from not only the fame, but also from working on set. One popular show and example of this is *Stranger Things* on Netflix, and the cast of young successful actors that people seem to love. Although the show is fun for viewers to watch, it is stressful behind the scenes for some of these child actors.

Sadie Sink, who is fifteen, revealed in an episode of *Beyond Stranger Things*, that the writers added a kissing scene that was not a part of the original script. Sink then called out the writers, Matt Duffer and Ross Duffer, and said, “it is not my fault. You guys- it was not written in the script.” Sink then revealed that this situation caused stress for her, “and so the whole day I was stressed out. I was like oh my God, am I gonna have to—” Duffer even claimed that she “reacted so strongly,” that she was “so freaked out” and that Sink was at fault.

This is not the only incident where a child actor felt pressured during filming for a show. In a recent documentary called, *Demi Lovato: Simply Complicated*, Demi Lovato, formerly a child actor for Disney is now twenty five, revealed the pressures while working on TV shows, movies, and music as a kid. “Looking back, I think that it was a lot for anyone, let alone, a kid. I started feeling pressure to look a certain way, to sing music that I felt people would like, rather than sing music that I would like” said Lovato. Even her manager, Phil McIntyre, claimed that there was “an immense amount of pressure” placed on Lovato. These pressures of keeping up success and fame led Lovato to using drugs.

Former child actors are also talking about their pasts with these conditions. Another actor, Miley Cyrus, now twenty four, also spoke out about her past of being a child actor. In an interview with *Harpers Bazaar*, Cyrus revealed the past of her being on a well known Disney show called *Hannah Montana*. She said that people were shocked by her phase when her al-

bum *Bangerz* came out. She said, “people were so shocked by some of the things that I did, it should be more shocking that when I was 11 or 12, I was put in full hair and makeup, a wig, and told what to wear by a group of mostly older men.”

Cyrus even claimed that she didn’t realize the pressure and the affects it put on her until recently. Nancy Carlsson-Paige, a child development expert who wrote *Taking Back Childhood: A Proven Roadmap for Raising Confident, Creative, Compassionate Kids*. She wrote, “the younger a kid is when he or she gets into this business, the more the likelihood it will be damaging because their needs are not met.”

The basic needs of childhood have nothing to do with working or the entertainment industry. A young child does not even understand what the entertainment industry is.” It is not always clear what goes on behind the scenes for child actors because all society sees is the final cut, not the actual working conditions of these kids.



UNDER PRESSURE Actresses Demi Lovato, Miley Cyrus, and Sadie Sink. Images courtesy of commons.wikimedia.com.

Sexual misconduct in Hollywood

Rachel Deutsch
Special Report Editor



HOLLYWOOD HORRORS

Kevin Spacey (Top), Harvey Weinstein (Bottom)
Images courtesy of commons.wikimedia.com

A revolution of sexual norms has shook Hollywood, California, since Rose McGowan called out Harvey Weinstein, Miramax film producer and executive, for abuse. On October 15, a close friend of McGowan, Alyssa Milano, asked her twitter followers to spread the hashtag *#MeToo* to expose the widespread range of sexual abuse and harassment. More than 80 victims of Weinstein came forward, including Angelina Jolie, Cara Delevingne, Gwyneth Paltrow, and Heather Graham, as well as women across the world who were empowered to share their own stories of abuse. Since Weinstein’s misconduct came to light, several other abusers have come out of the woodwork.

Kevin Spacey, Louis C.K., as well as *Gossip Girl*’s Ed Westwick have all been ex-

posed for their acts of sexual abuse and misconduct. Other actors including Dustin Hoffman and Ben Affleck have been accused of sexual harassment. There is a fine line between sexual harassment and assault: harassment is verbal or mild physical unwanted sexual advances, while assault includes unconsented force and sexual violation.

Actresses dating back to Judy Garland, Shirley Temple, and Marilyn Monroe have faced victimization from the abuse of dominant directors, producers and powerful superiors in the entertainment industry. “This activity has been a problem for so many years in Hollywood that it is unfortunate that it’s coming out now. It’s still good that this [misconduct] was exposed because it’s still an issue, but sexual assault should have been a conversation years ago.” said Mariah Fritz (’18).

Seeing the victims of household names including

Angelina Jolie, Cara Delevingne and Rachel McAdams, calls on individuals to see the widespread abuse and pay attention to the global wrongdoings; even misconduct within their own communities. “It is a really big step since Hollywood is a whole example for society. It is bringing to light all the terrible things that happen behind the scenes and how it can happen to famous and ‘normal’ people as well.” said Kyra Jance (’18).

The entertainment industry sets our societal expectations and social norms. Our commercialized cultures values and nearly worships these people, making it all the more difficult to come to terms with the truth behind their unethical actions. “Monkey see monkey do. In world of less fortune, people see with a smile and a couple bucks you get away with just about anything. We definitely look at what men do but its like women are just as guilty for liv-

ing in a rape culture. We choose to ignore it because these are people that are living the fast life and do not experience the same consequences, the same spotlight. It is strange because their lives are better observed, but when they do something wrong it brushed off, it is ignored, it is glamorized.” said Makayla Smith (’18).

What does this mean for our leading men in Hollywood? Besides public condemnation, some famed abusers are facing consequences ranging from job loss to class-action suits. Bringing these cases of sexual misconduct to light exposes a long-led tradition of casting directors, superiors and people of fame abusing their power.

The attention brought on the assault of household names have captured the public’s attention and provoked outrage. Has sexual misconduct finally become a cause for uproar, rather than something to hide?



Images courtesy of @lilpump and @lancomusic.

Nicholas Zarrilli
Managing Editor

One of the most exhilarating experiences a teen can get is going out to a concert and listening to music live. Sure, one could always download or stream music themselves but the experience of going to see music performed live surrounded by other people is a whole other feeling.

With so many upcoming performances across Connecticut and New York with varying price ranges, it is tough to know where to look. Hopefully this guide will come in handy to concert fans and newcomers to the world of stage music alike.

To kick things off, let us take

a look at some upcoming Hip Hop concerts. Busta Rhymes will be holding a concert about an hour drive away in New Haven, CT at Toad’s Place. The performance is on December 14 and tickets cost 35 dollars. Jacob Sartorius will be performing at The Play-Station Theater on Broadway in New York City on January 19. It is about an hour away, give or take depending on your method of getting into the city, and tickets cost anywhere from 44 dollars to 92 dollars. Lil Pump has an upcoming concert on December 11th at the Oakdale Theatre in Wallingford, CT. Tickets cost 25 dollars for general admissions. Lil Uzi Vert’s next nearby concert is in New York City at Terminal 5. Tickets are

more expensive than other artists at 104 dollars for general admission, but the concert is slightly closer to Stamford with just a 40 minute drive. The wait until December 17 is the only thing separating you and the performance.

Next, let us look at some country music concerts that are right around the corner. Breakout hit LANCO, best known for their song “Greatest Love Story,” will have a performance on January 17th in New York, New York at the Gramercy Theatre. Tickets will not set you back too much as they are only 16 dollars. Cole Swindell’s cross-country tour will be making its way to the Mohegan Sun Arena on February 17 with tickets starting at

89 dollars. Swindell has been in the charts recently for his song “Flatliner.” Little Big Town, recently known for their song “Better Man” will also be playing at Mohegan Sun less than a week later on February 23 with tickets starting at 129 dollars. While it may take you two hours to get there, Chris Young’s “Losing Sleep” Tour hits the Foxwoods Casino on February 3, with tickets starting at 35 dollars.

Finally, there are also some Pop and Rock concerts coming up soon. Shakira will be playing Madison Square Garden on January 17. Since she is such a big name, tickets are starting at 180 dollars. U.K. New Wave Rock band Squeeze will be

playing the College Street Music Hall in New Haven, CT. Tickets start at 40 dollars.

Alternative Rock bands Blacksage, Trigger Shy, Space Grace, and Dumb Wolves will all be performing at the Knitting Factory in Brooklyn, NY. The show is on December 10 and tickets are 10 to 12 dollars. Southside Johnny & The Asbury Jukes and The Weight are playing at The Paramount in Huntington, NY. The concert is about an hour away and tickets cost 35 dollars.

If any of these acts caught your fancy, why not try heading to a concert. Who knows? You may find a new favorite band or get hooked on the concert going experience.

This month in hip-hop

Column by Hudson Price



This month in hip hop, we received news of a Migos-Travis Scott album, heard of a N.E.R.D. and Rihanna collaboration, and some of hip-hop’s biggest artists received Grammy nominations. Many people feel that deserving artists were snubbed Grammy nominations. For example, A Tribe Called Quest may have been snubbed based on the fact that it was the groups last album and that one of their members passed away.

Another interesting point to address: rapper Meek Mill violated parole, and was sentenced to two to four years in a state prison. He attempted to post bail and was denied. Many other rappers have expressed their outrage with the end result of his case and chose to

use this opportunity to target the justice system and the many issues that surround it.

Next, some new songs and albums released this month that should not be ignored, *Project Baby 2: All Grown Up* by Kodak Black which boasts a whopping 27 track list, *No Shame* by returning artist Hopsin, and lastly, *Syre* by the son of the prince of Bel-Air, Jaden Smith.

For the throwback song of the month we are taking it back to 1992. Just months after the Los Angeles riots, Ice Cube’s “It Was A Good Day” shows off Cube’s solo lyrical skills after releasing “Straight Outta Compton” just a few years earlier with N.W.A. The song makes many references to

pop culture and the NBA such as “F****d around and got a triple-double,” “Lakers beat the Super-sonics” and much more. When taking a deeper look into the song’s meaning and lyrics, we find that Cube is not just discussing a “perfect” day, he is trying to emphasize that the little things in life are important as well as the conditions in Compton. As the songs cuts out, we hear the rapper say; “wait a minute Pooh.. what the f**k I’m thinkin about,” in reference to the violence and chaos going on around him and outside of his life.

It has been a great month for hip-hop overall, with much to be excited about in the near future as well.



BLOWING UP Kodak Black, an up and coming hip-hop artist.

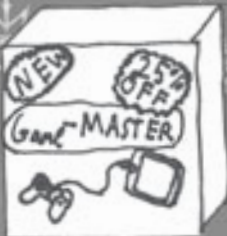
HOLIDAY SHOPPING SURVIVAL GUIDE

Family gatherings, sharing of food, and the overall loving feel of the holidays morph into destroyed aisles, alarms blaring, and people fighting over what little items they can find scattered around the stores. I am describing the one and only holiday season. It is notoriously been the time of year where people come together and give gifts to their loved ones or fight for the hottest items on sale. It is a dangerous time to be unprepared, here are seven tips to get you through this holiday shopping season.



1. Know the store. Do some reconnaissance on the store you plan on shopping at. This way, you know exactly where your items will be.

3. Be in a group. The more hands you have, the better the chance you have of grabbing what you want.



5. Don't go for the hot item. The biggest items of the year are going to have the biggest groups around it and will be the hardest to get. Try and buy your smaller items in the store and buy the big ticket items online.



7. The getaway car. The car you have must be reliable to get you out of the shopping war zone.



2. Have a list. Always have a list ready with what you need. This list will keep you on track and will get you in and out of there ASAP!



4. Dress for the occasion. Lose the high heels and wear running shoes. Be ready to move and make sure you are wearing stretchy clothing.



6. Bagging your items. Bring your own bags. They are less likely to tear and spill all of your expensive presents. Spilled goods are free to the people that find them on the ground.

Photo courtesy of [pixabay.com](#)
Briefs by [Jack Williamson](#) // Staff Writer
Illustrations by [Nicholas Zarrilli](#) // Managing Editor



The Hungry Vikings

Column by Jackie Fahey, Jack Williamson & Kevin Costello

Service : ★★★★★
Taste : ★★★★★
Price: ★★★★★

The time had come for the Hungry Vikings to embark on their second voyage of the season. Where they would travel to satisfy their roaring appetites remained a mystery, and the Vikings had grown impatient and famished. They searched the land from Greenwich to Norwalk before finally landing upon what could only be described as Hungry Viking heaven: Chick-Fil-A. The trio jumped out of their vessel and rushed inside to feast.

As he complained without rest for five minutes about the wait, Viking number one was shocked to see that he had almost reached the front of the queue. When he heard the sweet words of, "I will help whoever is next," he approached the counter carefully, knowing that his decision of what to order was no easy one. After a pensive pause

and much beard stroking, the big Norseman settled upon a Chick-Fil-A classic: The Deluxe Sandwich. As a veteran of fast food chains, Viking number one knew that he had to compliment his order with both buffalo and Chick-Fil-A sauce. He completed his request with a Sprite and waited for his much anticipated meal.

When he received his food, Viking number one ripped open the bag and dug into his sandwich with bestial aggression. He layered the Chick-Fil-A sauce smoothly over the crispy, seasoned chicken and savored every bite as if it were his last. The well-balanced trio of chicken, lettuce, and tomato was certainly up to the Viking's standard. He reached into his bag of fries and stared in amazement at the waffle shaped potatoes. He alternated between sauces to en-

sure the highest level of tastiness. Viking number one's appetite was surely satisfied.

As someone who had never enjoyed the miracle of Chick-Fil-A, Viking number two consulted with a young lady in front of her regarding what would fill her empty stomach with the most amazing flavor possible. After being advised to order the Spicy Deluxe Sandwich, she did just that. She was happy with the upbeat attitude of the employee who helped her, and her ordering experience was pleasant to say the least. She also decided to add some flavor to her meal with the famous Chick-Fil-A sauce. She quenched her thirst with a cup of water and headed to a table.

The Shieldmaiden received the food in a timely manner and gazed upon the beautiful sight of the glowing orange buffalo chicken. She de-

cided to utilize the dipping method rather than spread the sauce over the sandwich. The spicy chicken mixed with the sweet compliment of Chick-Fil-A sauce made a delicious combo that was even tasty enough for such a hungry Viking like herself. She cherished every crunch of the sandwich's lettuce and cleared her plate in minutes.

Viking number three was immediately surprised by the politeness and patience of the busy employees. He knew what he wanted as soon as he was called up to order and confidently asked for the 12 count Chick-Fil-A nuggets with a side of Chick-Fil-A and Buffalo sauce. He then asked for a cookies and cream milkshake to sweeten his taste buds but opted out when asked if he wanted whipped cream and a cherry for the sake of simplicity.

Viking number three's eyes lit

up when he saw his tray coming down the aisle. His hands reached straight for his favorite part of the meal: the waffle fries. The Norseman dipped each and every one of his tender and crispy nuggets into his assortment of sauces and enjoyed every bite more than the last. He slurped his tasty milkshake and even dipped a few fries in it for maximum flavor which his fellow Vikings wrongfully scolded him for. Viking number three and his ever-growing appetite were undoubtedly satisfied.

Overall, the Chick-Fil-A experience was a pleasant voyage for the Hungry Vikings and the feast lived up to the hype going around town. Their respective meals met the Hungry Viking standard which is no easy task. The polite employees paired with the speedy service made for a worth-while journey.

The fear of being tickled by feathers is known as pteronophobia. The person who invented the frisbee was cremated and turned into a frisbee when he died.

SLAY OF THE MONTH: MARCOS PINTO-LEITE

“My name is Marcos Pinto-Leite, I am 18 and a senior at Westhill. I do not consider myself to have anything close to a credible opinion on fashion, but I do have a general sense of what I think looks and feels right on me.

“I hate shopping. I hate the trying-on, looking for sizes, and the awful, awful music they blare through the speakers. I realize this limits my options in terms of fashions, but frankly, in the Amazon Age, I cannot be bothered to drive the ten minutes to the mall to get a pair of skinny jeans. Fortunately, I am the same size as both of my two brothers, so our closets are basically interchangeable. Though this results in a lot of my favorite shirts getting mystery stains and rips, it has allowed me to have enough clothes to establish a clear process for picking out what I think looks cool.

“I start with the shoes. Black converse are my go-to. ‘Ol reliable. I wear them until the laces are frayed and the rubber is ripped. It adds character.

“My pants range in style from moderately skinny to dangerously tight. As of late, I have opted more for the former, for comfort’s sake. I am a fan of khakis, but am famously picky about color and fit. I am pictured above wearing my favorite pair -light, tight, and permanently stained from a little bit of insulation caulk. I am also a fan of jeans, but am similarly particular in my preferences.



“As for what is on top, I am far more adventurous. I am a strong supporter of the T-shirt/flannel look, and have accrued a nice collection of plaid shirts as a result, like the one pictured. I also love a good sweater and will unapologetically wear one multiple times in a week. In the winter, I bounce between two staple jackets. First is my brown, fake-leather jacket - warm, snug, and made from the finest of polyester. Second is my blue overcoat, which I am told makes me look kind of like a Soviet military officer.

“And the hat. Oh, the hat! Disheveled and worn, stained from years of adventure, chewed on by at least three separate dogs, this tan hat is the centerpiece of most of my favorite outfits. It simultaneously shades me from the sun and saves me from the hassle of having to deal with my incredibly high-maintenance hair.

“I do not think I am fashionable in the conventional sense of the word. I do not keep up with trends, or restock my closet every season. I laugh at the bizarre kind of hyper-consumerism that is so regularly glorified by the fashion industry. I do, however, understand the satisfaction that accompanies the curation of an individual style. It gives me joy to have a specific way of dressing; it injects some fun into an otherwise mundane daily task. In other words, though I am definitely not a fashion expert, I find my individual clothing choices to be a brilliant outlet for expression and creativity.”

Background courtesy of pxhere.com.

To Do Next Month: December

*December 1st-10th
Festival of Trees at the
Wadsworth Atheneum*

*A festival of beautiful trees
and wreaths that are on
display and for sale! So head
on over and buy a tree or
wreath to donate to a local
charity.*

*December 8th
Festival of Lights*

*Walk through a winter won-
derland from dusk until 9:50
PM when over 6,000 lumi-
naries light the walkway of
Olde Mistick Village and the
surrounding area.*

*December 21st
Winter Solstice*

*It is the beginning of winter
and the shortest day of the
year. While the northern
hemisphere is starting the cold
winter, the southern hemisphere
is beginning the warm sum-*

*December 24th
Eggnog Day*

*Take this opportunity to drink
that one rich and creamy
beverage that only appears
around the holidays and in-
terestingly enough it does not
contain eggs.*

*December 31st
New Years Eve*

*Celebrate the last day of
2017 with your friends and
family. Watch the ball drop
on TV or take the train to
New York City to watch it
in person.*

Photos courtesy of creativecommons.org.

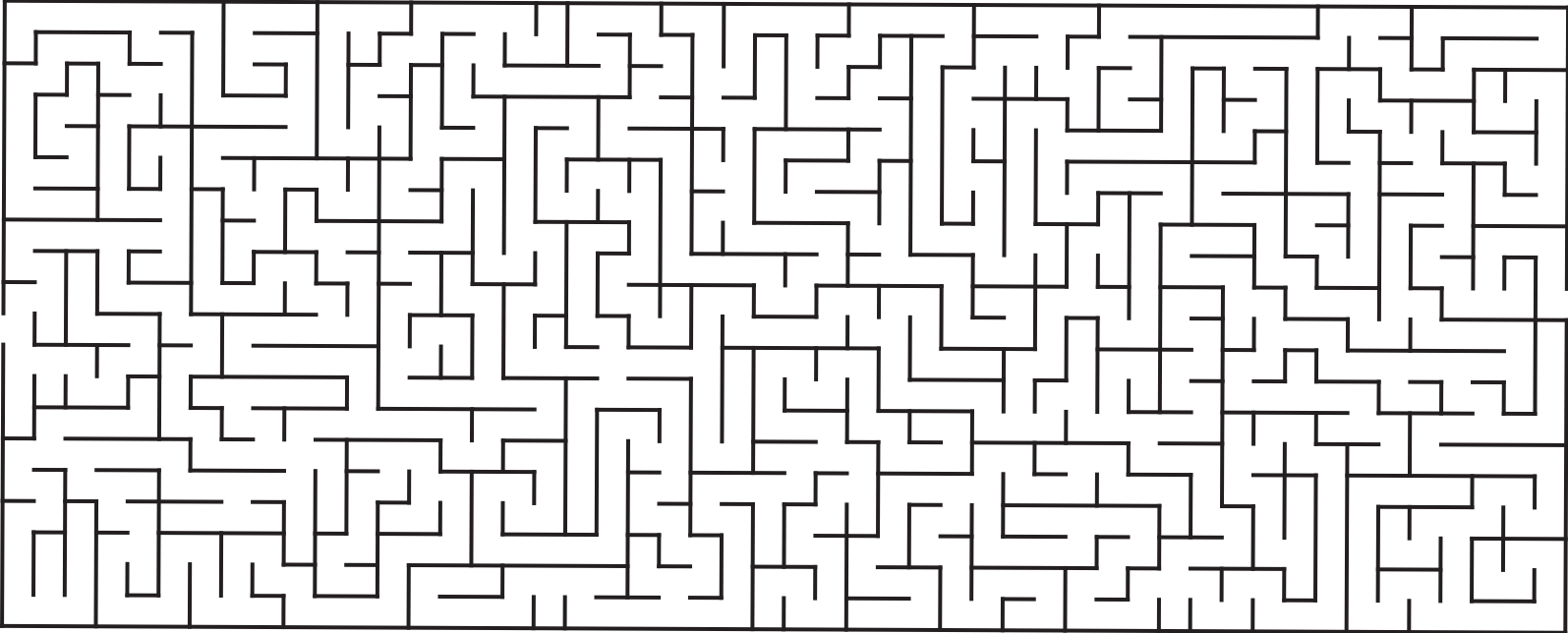
The fear of fun is known as cherophobia. A group of unicorns is called a Blessing. The heart of a shrimp is in its head. The fear of beds is known as clinophobia.

HOLIDAY WORD SEARCH

F	O	G	H	S	C	W	U	M	E	K	D	I	C	W
I	M	K	I	I	S	R	B	T	W	X	X	O	H	Y
R	R	W	G	N	O	S	A	Y	S	P	R	J	E	S
E	X	D	S	A	G	L	R	T	Q	N	X	E	S	S
P	T	B	U	S	O	E	N	U	A	T	E	K	T	W
L	N	U	N	C	B	E	R	M	F	R	Y	L	N	M
A	S	O	O	L	S	E	E	B	T	L	K	M	U	P
C	W	H	U	E	L	N	H	E	R	P	H	S	T	W
E	C	Z	R	V	T	Y	N	R	J	E	K	E	S	R
M	A	P	E	S	Q	I	P	Y	Y	A	A	F	G	E
K	Y	S	K	S	P	Y	J	M	X	M	N	D	S	E
S	E	N	A	C	Y	D	N	A	C	R	A	T	S	W
M	I	T	T	E	N	S	I	C	I	C	L	E	S	W
L	Y	C	D	Z	N	Z	S	C	A	N	D	L	E	U
V	A	B	Z	W	G	N	B	O	Y	K	R	Z	W	E

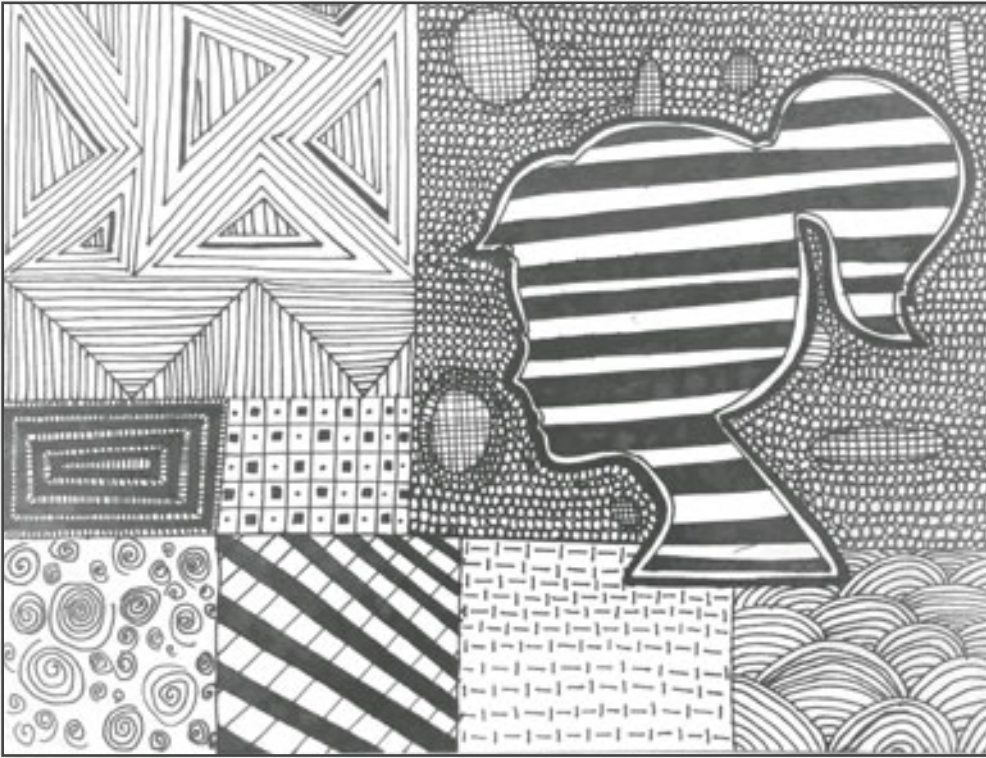
- Words:
- CANDLE
 - CANDYCANES
 - CHESTNUTS
 - CHOCOLATE
 - ELVES
 - FIREPLACE
 - GINGERBREAD
 - ICICLES
 - MITTENS
 - ORNAMENTS
 - PINETREE
 - PRESENTS
 - SNOW
 - STAR
 - SONG

HELP THE SNOW MAN GET TO HIS HAT



You will produce enough saliva to fill two swimming pools during your lifetime. A kangaroo can't hop if you lift its tail off the ground.

Express



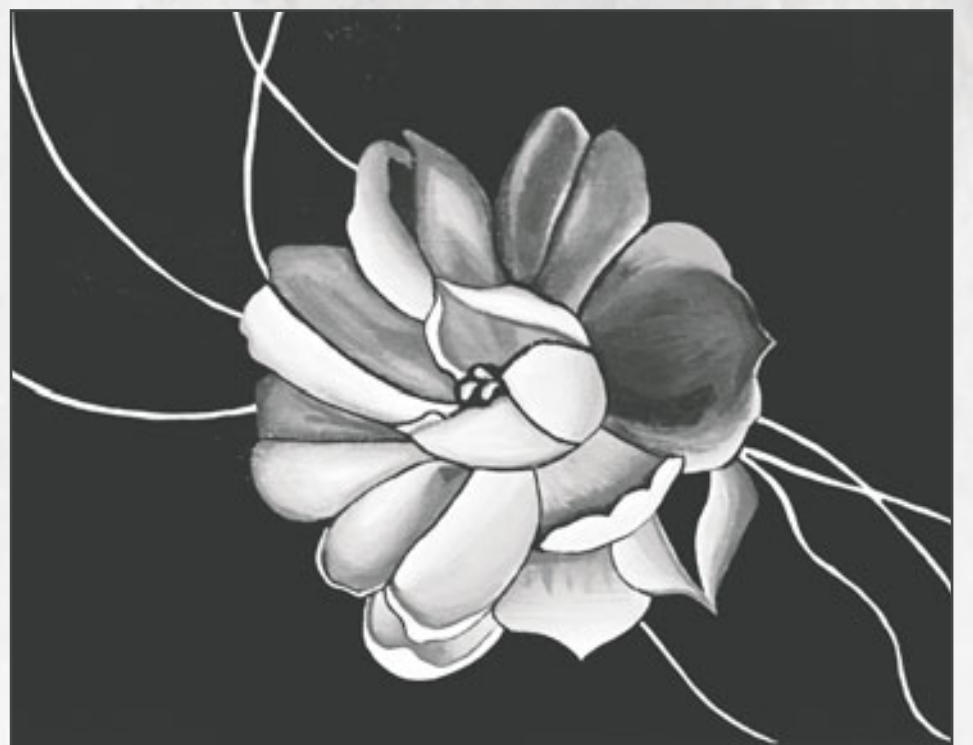
Gisela Sandoval '21



Brandon Cux '20



Giselle Estevez '20



Julia Fredrick '18

Artist of The Month

Djesnie Glaude



The Westword(TW): When did you first start becoming interested in art?
Djesnie Glaude(DG): I first started becoming interested in art in middle school, ever since I was little I have been drawing.

TW: How would you describe your artistic style?
DG: I would describe my style as form fitting, I like to draw the form and shape of the person I am drawing, it goes all over the place sometimes but the one constant is the form fitting that I do.

TW: What is your favorite medium?
DG: Right now I like using watercolor, or drawing freehand. I am not too good at painting yet, but I like using oil pastels and alcohol based markers.

TW: What is your favorite thing to portray through your art?
DG: I enjoy portraying the facial expressions of the people I draw. I usually draw people based on what I am feeling to put my emotions out there and feel relieved.

TW: How has art influenced your life?
DG: I was dealing with some stuff at home, but drawing allowed me to take my mind off of what was happening at home. It was a release.

TW: Who or what has inspired you to create art?
DG: I do not really have one person who inspired me to create art, I look at other peoples art and view how they go through the artistic process. I would not say I look up to anyone though.

TW: Is there a message you want to convey?
DG: I have not seen a lot of black peoples work, I wanted to get other cultures out there. Cultures other people do not know about other than the white culture we see so much.

TW: Do you see an artistic career in your future?
DG: Yes, not as an artist but as a fashion designer. I do not like wearing the same thing as other people, I would rather make my own clothes and have someone wear my clothes. I want to help people feel comfortable in their own skin.

TW: How do people typically describe your art?
DG: People usually say my work is unique. Usually I always put something in my art that no one is expecting. The last project I did was about emphasis. Most people do emphasis on flowers and other objects but I decided to do it on people just sitting down. Everyone had legs except for one person who had a fish tail.

TW: Do you have advice for students interested in art?
DG: Think outside the box, always try new things. Do not play it safe, experiment on something new and something different each time

TW: Do you have a favorite art piece?
DG: My favorite piece is an African American girl with her mouth covered with yellow scarf and she has curly hair. It says something in a way, it depicts slavery and the voice that African Americans did not have.



SPORTS

Bye Bye Powder Puff, Hello Amazon Bowl

Maura Johnston
Staff Writer

The week of homecoming at Westhill is always a hit. For years, the week would begin with a Powder Puff game on Friday, to kickoff festivities. In the past, Powder Puff referred to a tag-football game that female students exclusively participate in, while their male peers act as cheerleaders and performers during half time.

Because teams are determined by grade level, this event allows grades to work together as a whole. Leadership skills, competitive sides and excitement are showcased by everyone.

In the past, this game has been referred to as Powder Puff. Last year, in a issue of the *Westword*, an article brought the name Powder Puff to attention, referring to the name as “sexist.” This comment was taken seriously and into consideration by the faculty, who typically is in charge of the tournament. This resulted in a name change this year. “I changed

the name because *The Westword* called it sexist in a prior article” said Ms. Tobin, who helps coordinate the Amazon Bowl game.

When an e-mail was sent out to students, informing them about the week of homecoming, many were surprised when they saw the term Amazon Bowl used. Word got around at Westhill, and many were curious on why the name was changed, and if it was an appropriate decision. “Last year, there was an uproar that the term ‘Powder Puff’ was sexist. So, [Ms. Tobin] changed the name to Amazon Bowl. Now there is an uproar because it was changed” said science teacher, Mrs. Grant.

The students at Westhill have contrasting thoughts on this name change. “When I first heard about the name change, I was confused because I did not know the meaning behind the old term, Powder Puff or existing term Amazon Bowl. Personally, I did not take the original name as sexist and I, along with a majority

of students have continued to call it Powder Puff, not as a rebellion but as a norm,” said Nikki Newcomer (‘19). Other students are also confused by the reasoning behind the name change. “If students and faculty can get easily offended at the term, Powder Puff, I do not see why they can’t just as easily get offended at the term, Amazon Bowl.

“To be offended by something that directly attacks your identity is completely understandable. But, it goes too far when people get offended about small things and demand change,” said Jordon Jang (‘19).

The name change, although surprising to some, was appreciated by other students. “I agree with the name change, it is reinforcing gender equality in our patriarchal society. It is demeaning women on their role in sports, in comparison to men,” said Kathryn Kopec (‘19). No matter the name, the event was looked forward to by many. We all showed our Westhill spirit, and had fun on the field!



NEW AND IMPROVED The Powder Puff name was changed to ‘Amazon bowl’ due to the fact of the name viewed as “sexist”.
Photos contributed by **Mr. Rinaldi** / Contributor.

Football team looks to build off of successful season

Josh Eimbinder
Online Executive Editor



CATCHING THE WINS The 2017 season for the Westhill Vikings football team has been one enjoyed by both the players and the fans.
Photo by **Sydney Lesser** / Photo Manager.

Entering the 2017 Westhill football season, the Westhill Varsity Football Team had high hopes for success. The team was hoping for a winning season, despite a difficult looking schedule. They would face the powerhouses of Greenwich and New Canaan, as well as tough rivalry games against Trinity and Stamford. This did not phase any players, and they were going to fight till the bitter end.

The Vikings ended the season at a six and four mark, exceeding expectations set by others, but not by themselves. There were tough losses along the way, but also fulfilling wins which brought the team closer together. “Internally, we fell short,” said Kerns Louis(‘18). “From the jump we knew we were going to shock people.”

In week one against Fairfield Ludlowe. Westhill crushed the falcons 50 to 27 on a beautiful Saturday afternoon. Quarterback AJ Laccona threw four beautiful touchdown passes, including three to receiver Noldylens Metayer(‘18). On the de-

fensive side, the Vikings had three interceptions and picks from Jakai Young and Jemeson Charlestin.

Week two brought another challenge for the team, but nonetheless they prevailed. They defeated Norwalk in a nail-biter by a score of 26 to 21. They then continued their winning streak the following week against Danbury, when they defeated the Hatters 34 to 10.

Entering the third quarter they were down ten to seven, but touchdown catches by Saquan Kelly and Wyklend Turenne turned the offense around. Entering their game against New Canaan, Westhill was riding high after three straight wins. The team, however, was defeated by the Rams 49 to seven. At halftime, they were down by 21 and were making mistakes left and right. The following week, The Hill returned to victory with a huge victory against Capital/Achievement 45 to 27.

Unfortunately for the Vikings, another streak could not be started. The following week, they were crushed by Greenwich 60 to 15. This did not bring them down. They instead bounced back and went on to win their next two games, including one against

Trinity by a score of 30 to 17, and one against Trumbull 29 to 21. “The best win of the season was against Trumbull because we were the first senior class in years to win on our senior day,” said All-FCIAC first team defensive back Noldylens Metayer. The game featured 13 sacks from the Westhill defense and was the first time Westhill had ever beaten Trumbull officially, the Vikings’ first win over Trumbull five years ago was forfeited due to player complications.

The final two games of the season did not go the way the Vikings wanted them to go. They fell to Wilton 57 to six on a bitter Friday evening, and lost to Stamford 25 to 14 on Thanksgiving.

“It was just a big rivalry game and there is just a lot of emotion that goes into that game,” said Kerns Louis. “It just sucks we lost,” he continued. Despite ending the season on a two game losing streak, there were a lot of positives to build off of. “The team chemistry was the best the program had in years because we, as players, actually cared for one another,” said Noldylens Metayer.

Fallen Heroes

Noah Klein
Editor-in-Chief

Every athlete's worst fear is a season or career-ending injury. As many athletes reflect on their seasons and look back at their time on the field, court, or pool, two Westhill athletes look back at the unfortunate event of a season ending injury. Varsity Soccer player Lily Gubernick ('19) as well as Varsity Football player Jude Ponthieu ('18) ended their seasons early due to tears in their anterior cruciate ligaments (ACL). ACL injuries are becoming

possible, while others describe the pain as nothing. A tear can occur from both a non contact situation as well as a situation where the player endures contact, either to the knee, or anywhere on the athlete's body.

"I was playing outside defense and another girl and I were sprinting towards the ball, I got there first but she came around and made contact with the outside of my knee," Gubernick said, describing the situation that caused her injury.

"I heard a snap and it was the worst pain I had ever felt in my life," said Gubernick. Gubernick's expe-

not hear anything it just felt as if my knee moved out of place. The pain was really non existent."

Westhill's Head Athletic Trainer, Jenna Rouso, made a point to describe how complicated it can be to diagnose an ACL tear immediately. "I perform certain tests on the knee to make sure that there is not a fracture or a displaced kneecap. In that case I would not want to move the athlete," said Rouso. "All ACL injuries can present differently, some people get up and walk off the field, and some cannot muster up the strength to stand up." As ACL injuries are prevalent in sports, it is important that everyone continues to be educated on treatment as well as prevention.

As these injuries increase, many people have started wondering why. According to a recent study conducted by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) the incidence rate rose 2.5 percent annually for females and 2.2 percent annually for males over 20 years per 100,000 people. The rise is also of occurring at younger ages.

The rate of (ACL) tears among children and teens has been increasing about 2.3 percent per year for the past two decades, according to the study. Some blame the upward trend on increased intensity in youth sports, others blame the early starting age of youth sports.

Ponthieu described that his physical therapist believes his injury occurred due to over usage of his ACL. "My PT said [my injury] is probably because of long practices, and just overall being too active too much."

Gubernick however, feels that the injury had nothing to do with youth sports but instead was a likely event due to her participation in the sport. "If you play any sport something can always happen to you it's just a matter of what it will be and when it will happen," said Gubernick.

Unfortunately for the athletes, their seasons were cut short and they were unable to participate in the remainder of their season. Gubernick's injury came in her first scrimmage of the year, and Ponthieu's injury occurred in his second game. It can be very difficult at times for athletes

to sit back and watch their season play out from the sidelines. The two athletes described this aspect of their injury as one of the worst. "It was extremely hard watching games go by and not being able to contribute, it was especially hard not being able to finish my final year of football," said Ponthieu.

"Watching from the sidelines was the worst part because I cannot do anything, I just had to watch and hope that people did what they had to do. It was a bad feeling." Both athletes did attend several games and practices to attempt to stay as

throughout the duration of the process in order to strengthen their muscles and allow the knee to work properly in the future. "Since I tore my ACL the surgeries and rehab have changed drastically, it was originally an ACL tear would end your career, however, now it only takes six to eight months after a re construction for an athlete to return to play."

Although the ACL epidemic has claimed two of our Vikings, both athletes plan on making a return to the field in the near future. Both Ponthieu and Gubernick have been motivated by their eminent return to the field of



one of the most prevalent injuries in sports. According to the American Orthopedic Society for Sports Medicine, about 150,000 ACL injuries occur in the United States every year.

An ACL tear is a very complex and difficult injury to describe. Some describe it as the worst pain

rience is one that made it clear that she had tore her ACL. Ponthieu's injury however, occurred in a very different situation, and had a different amount of pain. "I was running down the field and went to go break down and make a tackle, at that point I felt my leg give out and I fell to the ground" said Ponthieu. "I did



close to the team as possible.

In terms of rehab, Rouso—who tore her ACL in 2009—did claim that the process of recovering from an ACL injury has improved drastically. Typically, athletes will receive surgery relatively soon after their injury to repair the ACL. An athlete will usually participate in Physical Therapy

play. "I know if I do my work at physical therapy I can probably come back earlier and get play Lacrosse" said Ponthieu. Gubernick finds motivation in a similar way as she says "I want to be able to play soccer my senior year." Viking fans should look forward to seeing our injured athletes making their return in the coming months.

Photos contributed by **Lily Gubernick** and **Larry Blucher**.
Photos by **Noah Klein** / Editor-in-Chief.

Kelly tackling his goals



FOCUSED Saquan Kelly set goals to keep himself working hard throughout the season, where he lived up to his word of rushing 1,000 yards.
Photo contributed by **Saquan Kelly**

Allie Colorado
Staff Writer

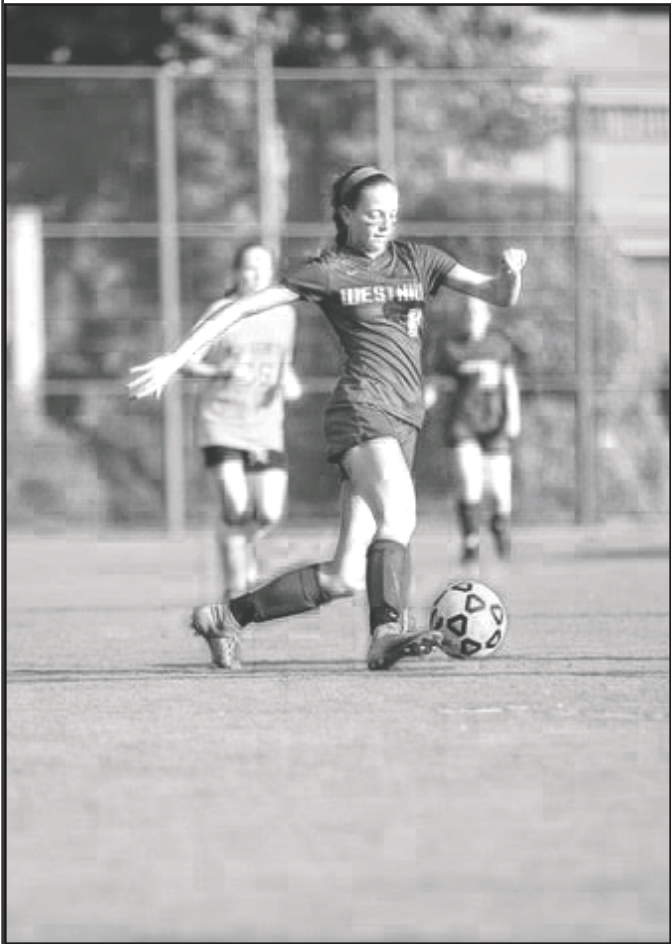
Students know that the ability to balance sports and education is difficult to achieve, but the task comes easily to Saquan Kelly. The dedication and will to excel in a sport has pushed him farther than he could ever imagine. His commitment has earned him this month's spot as male athlete of the month. The Westword conducted an interview with Kelly to gain an insight on his life as a student athlete.

The Westword (TW): How long have you been playing football? What got you into playing?
Saquan Kelly (SK): [I have been playing] since the sixth grade. I had a friend who used to play for Cloonan and seeing their practices made me want to play.
TW: What position do you play?
SK: Running back.
TW: Have you always wanted to be a running back or was it something you were pushed into?
SK: I was a linebacker when I first started playing football in middle school, but then my eighth grade coach put me in the back field at the running back position and ever

since then I have stayed with it.
TW: If you could, would you prefer any other position?
SK: No. I love where I am at.
TW: What was your personal goal for this year? What were your team's goals?
SK: My main personal goal this year was to hit 1,000 yards, which I did. The team's goal was to win the city championship.
TW: What is your favorite quote to motivate yourself?
SK: "Danger is very real but fear is a choice."
TW: What achievements are you most proud of?
SK: [My proudest achievements are] being a starter every year I played, being captain two years in my career, and not losing to Stamford High yet.
TW: What have you learned from your experience as captain?
SK: I have learned to not be hypocritical, especially when you tell someone they can not do something you can not do yourself.
TW: Do you see yourself playing football in the future?
SK: Yes, in college.
TW: What colleges do you think you would want to play

football for? Why?
SK: Dean College, Southern Connecticut, Western New England, or Springfield. Those have some great football teams but I have chosen them more because of the majors I am looking for.
TW: How do you think college football is going to differ from high school football?
SK: Practices will be way different in college than now with more competition and a higher level of intensity due to the fact that everyone wants a "starting role." Football games will feel different as well because of the larger crowds and loud fan sections.
TW: How has football made an impact on your life?
SK: Honestly, it helped me keep my grades up because I knew if I wanted to play the sport then I had to maintain the grades.
TW: Have you had any fears or issues? If so, how did you manage to overcome them?
SK: At first I had a fear of being injured, but then I kept reminding myself that I have padding on for a reason and just like I might be worried of being hurt, my opponent has the same thought.

Samantha Page strikes victory



INFLUENCED Samantha Page has loved soccer since she was five years old and has never looked back.
Photo contributed **Samantha Page**

Maura Johnston
Staff Writer

Playing one sport at Westhill is a major time commitment. With daily practices on top of school work and other extra curriculars it is very time consuming. Junior Samantha Page plays Girl's soccer and is captain of varsity gymnastics. These sports, along her already busy life, have taught her a variety of valuable life lessons. The Westword sat down with Page to discuss the multiple sports she plays and how they play an important role in her life.

The Westword (TW): How long have you been playing soccer and, how long have you been doing gymnastics?
Samantha Page (SP): I have been playing soccer since I was five and I started gymnastics when I was seven.
TW: Do you practice either of these sports outside of school? If so, how do you do so?
SP: I play soccer for a premier soccer team called Beachside Soccer Club of Connecticut

throughout the whole year. I recently left my gymnastics team but I used to go to Arena until the end of sophomore year.
TW: What position do you play in soccer?
SP: I play center midfield or left or right back defense.
TW: What are your gymnastics routines? Which are your favorites?
SP: I compete on every event in gymnastics, but floor and bars are my favorite.
TW: What individual goals do you have for either of these sports?
SP: My goal for soccer is to play in college and be captain my senior year for high school. My goal for gymnastics is to stay fit and be a good captain this year.
TW: What are your proudest athletic achievements?
SP: Definitely getting an FCIAC honorable mention.
TW: What are your favorite parts about these sports?
SP: I enjoy being a part of a team and getting to meet new people while still being able to stay active by playing sports I love.
TW: What is your favorite

Westhill athletic's memory?
SP: My favorite memory would have to be my first soccer game of my sophomore year when we beat Wilton seven to one after losing to them the year before in states and in the regular season.
TW: Are there any professional athletes that you admire or look up to? Why?
SP: There are not any athletes in particular I look up to, but watching college teams and professional teams play always inspires me to become better and work harder.
TW: Will you continue either soccer or gymnastics in the future?
SP: I hope to continue playing soccer in college if I get the opportunity to. I will not continue gymnastics any further than high school, but I have coached kids and hope to continue doing that.
TW: What life lessons have these sports taught you?
SP: Playing these sports have taught me discipline, how to become a leader, that hard work pays off, how to interact with different people, and just overall how to be a well rounded person.



*Fine & Dandy Show
with
Josh and Andy*

Listen on audioBoom or thewestwordonline.com

DECEMBER SPORTS CALENDAR

Week 1 (4-12)

DATE: 7
EVENT: Varsity Boys Basketball
OPPONENT: Crosby
LOCATION: Away
TIME: 4:30 PM

DATE: 9
EVENT: Boys Ice Hockey
OPPONENT: Trinity Catholic
LOCATION: Home Terry Conners
TIME: 5:10 PM

DATE: 12
EVENT: Girls Varsity Basketball
OPPONENT: Ridgefield
LOCATION: Home
TIME: 5:30 PM

Week 2 (13-18)

DATE: 13
EVENT: Wrestling
OPPONENT: Norwalk
LOCATION: Away
TIME: 7:15 PM

DATE: 18
EVENT: Boys Ice Hockey
OPPONENT: Scarsdale
LOCATION: Home Terry Conners
TIME: 7:50 PM

DATE: 18
EVENT: Varsity Boys Basketball
OPPONENT: Weston
LOCATION: Away
TIME: 7:00 PM

Week 3 (19-28)

DATE: 20
EVENT: Girls Ice Hockey
OPPONENT: Darien
LOCATION: Home Terry Conners
TIME: 5:40 PM

DATE: 22
EVENT: Wrestling
OPPONENT: Brien McMahon
LOCATION: Away
TIME: 10:00 AM

DATE: 28
EVENT: JV Boys Basketball
OPPONENT: Wilton
LOCATION: Home
TIME: 5:15 PM

Viking Sports

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Stamford, Connecticut



Highlighting the football season p. 36

Athletes of the Month *p.38* / The importance of high school football *p.11*



Saquan Kelly



Samantha Page