

The Westword

Student voice of the Westhill community
"The test of good journalism is the measure of its public service."

Girls Volleyball Dominates the Fall Season

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Note from the editors
November 2023

Dear Readers,

Thank you for your continued interest in the Westword. We are honored to be the prominent voice of the Westhill community. We are thrilled to share this edition with you.

After the hurdles of the previous year, we are very excited to be releasing our first print issue in the first part of this school year. We are immensely grateful to our advisors Mr. Wooley and Mr. von Wahlde, the entire management team, and our staff members for making this publication possible. We aim to bring the paper back into full swing this year with a new and improved staff. We also hope to continue building our presence online through our Instagram (@thewestword) and the paper's website.

News highlights the positives and negatives of the previous month of October, the Westhill Class of '73 opening a time capsule that they buried

when they graduated 50 years ago, and the free youth basketball clinic that the UConn men's basketball team hosted at the Boys and Girls club.

Special Report covers student opinion on the current climate crisis and explains the history and impacts of the climate conflict today to discuss actionable change for the future.

Feature focuses on how staff and students spend their time at Westhill after school hours, highlights art teacher Mr. Martin, English teacher Mrs. Walden, and the column of Voracious Vikings, showcasing some outstanding athletes from the fall season.

Viewpoint covers student opinion over national student loan forgiveness, Westhill's new open campus policy for upperclassmen, and Taylor Swift's impact on the economy.

Supplement is all about Westhill's educators. Readers will uncover different teacher playlists, teacher duos, teacher fashion, and teaching expectations ver-

sus reality.

La Noticias destaca los eventos del Mes de la Herencia Hispana de Westhill, como la Noche Latina y un panel de discusión. Además, Las Noticias presenta una breve historia y receta de tamales.

Limelight features one of Westhill's student artists and a local Stamford eatery in the Voracious Vikings column.

Sports highlights the Girls Volleyball team and discusses whether they'll be the future fall sports powerhouse of Westhill and showcases some outstanding athletes from the fall season.

Sincerely,
Arleny Flores & Mahathi Uppuluri
Editor-in-Chief & Associate Editor-in-Chief

What's inside**2 News** Class of '75 Reunion and Time Capsule Unearthing**5 Feature** The One and Only Kenny Martin**8 Viewpoint** Westhill's New Open Campus Policy**10 Supplement** Teacher Duos**17 Las Noticias** Noche Latina**18 Limelight** Artist of the Issue: Caitie Came**22 Sports** Westhill Athletes of the Issue**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 Westword staff, along with the Communications and Journalism classes. Letters to the Editor, advertising requests, comments, criticism, or suggestions are always welcome. The views expressed in Viewpoint do not necessarily represent the opinions of The Westword.

Announcements

The Westword has no announcements.

If you have an announcement or an advertisement you would like published in the next issue, please DM on Instagram at @thewestword

Front cover contributed by **Eugene Caibal**.
Back cover photos by **Eugene Caibal** (top),
Janelly Paiz (bottom left), &
Larry Barrett (bottom right) /
Editor-in-Chief & Contributors.

Class of '73 Opens
Time Capsule after 50 Years**Arleny Flores**

Editor-in Chief

They say "home is where the heart is." On October 28, Westhill graduates of the Class of '73 proved this to be true. Reuniting on the same grounds as they graduated from more than 50 years ago, they unearthed a time capsule planted in commemoration of their graduating class.

The reunion began with alumni exchanging enthusiastic greetings and taking an abundance of pictures with one another at the front of the school. The alumni bore smiles on their faces as they took turns looking through their graduating yearbook, reminiscing about the memories they created at the school.

"I'm very excited. I'm happy to be back 50 years later, still living. I'm really appreciative to be here at the school. Going here it was so big, now it's so small," Valinda Overbeycolin ('73) said.

Numerous greetings later, the class of '73 made their way into the courtyard where they enjoyed a light breakfast and continued conversing with their peers.

"It's a time for reflection about what this school meant to us. We had amazing teachers, it was a fun time. It

was very different from what my children experienced, because it was very experimental, it was new. Everything we proposed had never been done before," said Jill Wallen Bernstein ('73).

In the courtyard, the alumni prepared to open a time capsule they had left in the walls of the school 50 years prior. The time capsule, made out of metal, proved to be a challenge to open, requiring multiple alumni and Principal Rinaldi's assistance to finally get it open.

"How many members of the class of '73 does it take to open a time capsule," said an alumna in the audience surrounding the capsule, causing laughter from the audience to arise.

The time capsule featured items such as the district budget, the program of studies, monthly department reports written by the school's first principal, an attendance absentee list for the 19th day of school, a science safety manual, the Black Student Government Bill of Rights and Responsibilities, newspapers, and more. Particularly, the budget sparked the interest of Superintendent Dr. Lucero, who was a special guest at the event.

"I was so excited to see that the time capsule

held a copy of the budget for 1971. It was 25 million dollars total and our budget today is over 300 million dollars, which is so interesting! To run our buses today, it costs 125,000 dollars a day, and their total budget was three hundred ninety for the entire school year," Superintendent Dr. Lucero said.

In addition to Dr. Lucero, class of '73 football coach and history teacher Carmine Limone was in attendance, as well as former Lieutenant Governor of Connecticut Mike Fedele.

Following the unveiling of the time capsule's contents, the class entered the auditorium, which was fittingly decorated with purple and gold balloons, paired with a purple background light to match the school's signature colors.

The alumni shared speeches, thanked the class members who helped organize the reunion, and took a class photo together at the end. Upon exiting the auditorium, the class of '73 went on one last tour around the school, guided by Principal Rinaldi. The strong connections and an undeniable spirit of Westhill High School were still palpable, even 50 years later.

GOOD MONTH BAD MONTH

By Liam Barry ('25), Staff Writer

Good Month For...

Upperclassmen who can drive In the past month at Westhill, students with cars have been given the freedom of open campus during their lunch and free periods. Open Campus allows those with cars to get lunch from off campus. This will allow for seniors and juniors to eat off campus where ever they want, as well as create more memorable experiences at the Hill.



Girls Volleyball Westhill's girls volleyball team has had an amazing season, going 17-7 and finished 4th in the FCIAC. In the month of October the Vikings went on a 10 game win streak with 8 3-0 sweeps. Junior Defne Ceken ('25) made All FCIAC second team, while Senior Finleigh Benkwitt ('24) made All FCIAC First Team. In regards to her team's run, Benkwitt said that "Each girl played their best all season," and that "our team worked very hard this year."

**Taylor Swift Fans**

Taylor Swift returned to the stage for her world tour, and she is currently dating Kansas City Chiefs Tight end Travis Kelce. She has also to released a remastered version of her album "1989", so her fanbase is happier than ever. If you've been waiting for more of Taylor Swift, then you've been getting more than what you've asked for in the last month, and there's much more to come.

Bad Month For...

Field Hockey Westhill's field hockey team faced a tough season marked by many losses. Through these disappointing defeats, the team has shown resilience and pride. Despite winning just one game, they have continued to work very hard. The team concluded the season with a 1-13-2 record.

**The Baltimore Orioles**

Despite putting up the best record in the American League during the regular season, the Baltimore Orioles did not manage to win a single playoff game. They lost 3 games in a row to the Rangers, eliminating them from the playoffs. The Orioles star catcher, Adley Rutschman, recorded just one hit on 13 at-bats during the series, which led the offense flat, just scoring a single run in the last game of the season.

**The Weather**

Every Friday and Saturday this month have been rainy, leading to dark and gloomy weekends. Not just in Connecticut, but down in Charleston, South Carolina, they've had rain 16 weekends in a row and most weeks since then. With rain in the forecast for this weekend, we could only hope for nice weather soon.

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BLEEDING BLUE FOR GOOD: UConn Men's Basketball hosts clinic at the Boys and Girls Club of Stamford

Rim Ratibi
Print Executive Editor

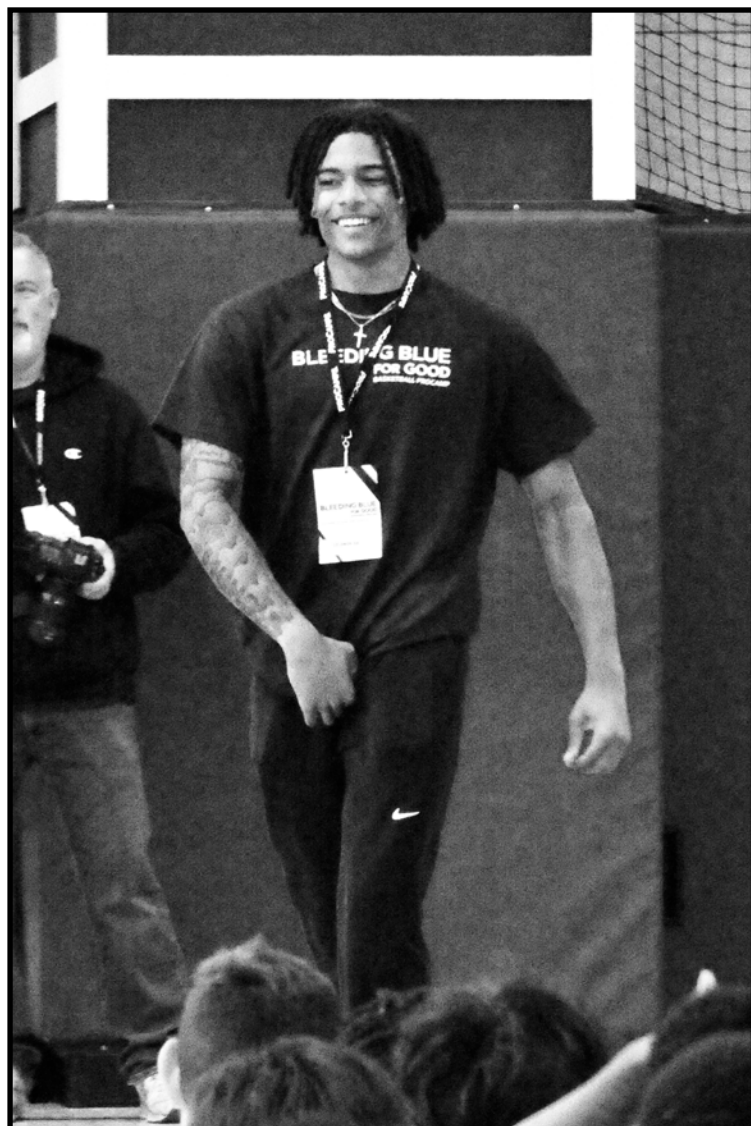
On October 8th, the UConn Men's Basketball team hosted a free clinic at the Boys and Girls Club of Stamford to teach youth in grades K-8 basketball skills and share the path to becoming a successful collegiate athlete.

The team recently brought home the 2023 NCAA Championship trophy, marking the fifth time in history that the Huskies have won. Winning all of their tournament games by over 10 points, Connecticut's all-stars have continued to solidify their dominant position in college basketball.

During the clinic, the players guided the children on their team through various drills covering dribbling, shooting, and passing techniques. They also got the opportunity to coach small games between the teams and run through simulated plays from their actual games. On a more personal level, the Huskies connected with the children by opening up about what drew them to basketball and the steps they took to reach the level that they are at today.

The UConn Huskies are at the top when it comes to basketball in Connecticut. The interactions that these children had with the team will have great benefits on their progression within the sport as they grow up.

"We like to give these kids the best opportunities with the best people we can get them. We want the team to have some great engagement with the community, so they're the perfect people to do it," Harrison Kitchen, ProCamps Event Coordinator said.



SOLOMON BALL smiles after finishing a dunk in front of kids at the Boys and Girls Club of Stamford. Photo by Eugene Caibal.

This clinic was made possible with the coordination efforts of Bleeding Blue for Good, UConn's Name Image and Likeness collective. Name Image and Likeness (NIL) was implemented after a 2021 Supreme Court ruling stating that all NCAA athletes can earn revenue off of their Name, Image, and Likeness through sources such as brand deals, product placement,



STEPHON CASTLE looks on as a young boy attempts a lay up under heavy defense. Photo by Eugene Caibal.



DONOVAN CLINGAN leans over to hear a young boy in a crowded gymnasium. Photo by Eugene Caibal.

merchandise, media exposure, and more. Bleeding Blue's goal is to establish sponsored partnerships between UConn players and charitable organizations and use the NIL policy to give back to the community.

"The hope has always been that when they go pro, they know the importance of coming back to their communities or investing in the communities that they are in during their careers, and realizing that they have an opportunity that no one else has to

truly give back and to use their platforms for good," Jerred Thomas, Executive Director of the Stamford Boys and Girls Club said.

The clinic not only benefited the children who were inspired by seeing the national champions, but also the players themselves.

"I feel good. It's a sense of joy, a sense of being on the right path, showing them the right thing. It's not even about me, it's about them—making sure they're okay, making sure they're happy, making sure they get something good from this camp," Hassan Diarra (#10) said.

"I did a lot of stuff in the Boys and Girls Club, but I've never had the opportunity to meet someone who's collegiate. So for me, being able to have an impression on these kids is really important, and something I wish I had back when I was younger," Donovan Clingan (#32) said.

This opportunity has provided the players with a chance to foster a sense of community among the youth of Connecticut, becoming role models for the pro athletes of the future.

SPECIAL REPORT

The Urgent Reality: Why the Climate Crisis Demands Our Attention

Sawyer Price
Staff Writer

For the past few years, the issue of climate change and global warming have taken over the news. Climate change is the long-term shift in temperatures and weather patterns.

Many people are unsure of climate change's effect on the Earth in

Dr. Charles David Keeling conducted research that connected rising carbon dioxide levels to fossil fuel use. Almost thirty years later, scientists discovered a hole in the ozone layer just above Antarctica. The ozone layer is a layer of

mediately change their style, wearing whatever they feel fits the climate. The main difference that climate change makes to this is the timing of these occurrences. Students seem to hold onto summer a little longer each year. Climate change has

the school environment. "As a football player, practice can be way hotter than we thought it would be and it makes it a lot harder to perform in practice," said Konstantinos Servos ('24).

Even after hours, students can feel the im-

The time left to fight against the irreversible effects of climate change is less than 6 years. This countdown is displayed all across the world, from New York to Seoul. Although some students may not be aware of it, climate change is



the years to come.

The first signs of climate change started in 1938 with the detection of rising temperatures around the globe. Scientist Guy Callender started collecting data from 147 different weather stations which showed an increase in temperature by 0.3 degrees Celsius. He was the first to discover the link between carbon dioxide levels and temperature changes.

Twenty years later, British scientist

oxygen that absorbs some of the ultraviolet radiation that reaches the Earth from the sun. Objects like aerosol sprays and appliances contain a compound called Chlorofluorocarbon (CFC). CFCs are very harmful to the stratosphere, and these effects are worsening. On the 23rd of June, 1988, climate change was labeled an international issue.

It is easy to feel when the weather gets colder or warmer around Westhill. Students im-

also increased temperatures during the winter time. Weather changes and global warming in our daily lives look like students wearing T-shirts and shorts towards the end of the year despite the relatively colder weather in the mornings.

We asked students all around the school whether or not they believed that climate change is a problem at Westhill. Out of 37 people surveyed, 20 students said they believed it harmed

pact of the rising temperatures. Vishal Nayak ('24), believes that climate awareness is rising, saying that "more people are getting more vocal about it and taking initiatives to post things on social media to combat climate change."

Most students, like Jesse Kalt ('24), simply said "no" with little to no reasoning, raising concerns about the effectiveness of climate change education.

altering people's lives for the worse. The climate crisis needs immediate attention before it is too late to slow down the damage to our environment, economy, and social atmosphere. Our choices today shape the future of our planet and the generations to come.

Rim Ratibi ('24) contributed to this article.

Kenny Martin: World Record Holder

Zach Goldberg
Staff Writer

The last name Martin is fairly common: Dean and George R.R., for instance. But there is only one Martin who is a world-record-holding, four-time consecutive bluefish spearing champion, an avid boxer/crocheter, and one of the Hill's most versatile and iconic art teachers. There may be millions of Martins, but there is, and always will be, only one Kenneth "Kenny" Martin.

Students in the halls often clock him by the sound of his well-traveled (both literally and figuratively) voice: He was born in Darien and moved to Stamford at 17, but his family is from Brooklyn. His accent: an amalgamation of all three.

Martin studied at Syracuse and Wesleyan University, and, though hired by Westhill in 2021, he spent 10 years prior as an art teacher at Roxbury Middle School. He's been at it, in his words, "a baker's dozen of years."

He is the art teacher, dabbling in jewelry, metalsmithing, sculpture, and even some of the trades such as woodworking and auto tech. His love of art and teaching comes from his Brooklyn-bound family lineage: he comes from a long line of artists, engineers, and teachers. Being an art teacher, to him, was just his destiny. "It's who I am," Martin said.

On top of teaching, he also spends his after-school hours as an advisor to various clubs

such as the Crochet and Trees and Seeds club. Martin also uses his skills as a student of Connecticut Boxing Hall of Famer, Orlando Montalvo, to advise the Boxing and Self-Defense Club to teach kids how to "not kill it."

Martin notes he was only ever referred to as "Rocky" by Montalvo. "I don't even think he knew my real name."

He gave that name to the love of his life, Kelly Martin, an assistant principal at Rowayton Elementary in Norwalk. They met on a "Common Core Curriculum cruise" as Martin calls it: a harbor tour hosted on a ferry for educators. They talked about Pluto and space, and through the clouds of their ramblings, he could see that he was



KENNY MARTIN owns the record for spearing Bluefish.

Photo by Zach Goldberg

falling in love.

A day later, even after spending 18 hours together with her, he still wanted more time. And so they married, later having two kids, Arlo and Desmond. According to Martin, Desmond likes to eat pizza, and Arlo started a gang at his pre-school. He calls them both sweet and sensitive, noting their love of laughter and giggles.

Alongside being a family man, he holds a love of spearfishing. He holds the IUSA world record for the largest bluefish speared in the United States (16.8 pounds), a trophy he displays proudly in his room. He is also a four-time consecutive Rhode Island Blue Water champion.

If you couldn't tell by now, it's hard to fit all the facets and stories of Mr. Martin into one article. Like how he claims he is the spirit reincarnate of his great-grandfather—a statement which he insisted

was put into this article.

Or how he presented a science-fair-esque project in front of a judge on the tragic gust of wind that blew away his parking ticket, which not only won him the case, but "drew me out a parking ticket, and into having a signature sandwich named after me."

But Mr. Martin is more than just his parking ticket sandwich, his jump roping excellence, or his bluefish spearing prowess. His students, both former and current, as well as his art department colleagues, enjoy his love of teaching, his spontaneity, and his genuine, caring nature. Devin Mitchell, a Choral and Music teacher at Westhill, even remembers how Martin once let the music department use his banjo.

Teachers and students may come and go from these hallowed halls, but for Westhill, there will, and always will be, only one Kenneth "Kenny" Martin.



KENNY MARTIN won the Pole Spearing championship for four consecutive years.

Photo by Zach Goldberg



KENNY MARTIN teaches jewelry and is an accomplished metalsmith. Photo by Zach Goldberg

Amparo Fabre: Westhill '05 Graduate to Assistant Principal

Eugene Caibal
News Editor

With 9 years of experience teaching biology and physical science at Westhill, Amparo Fabre thought she needed a change. "I just felt ready. I felt like I needed a challenge."

But if you went back to 2005 and told the newly-Westhill-graduate that she would become one of her school's youngest assistant principals, she would've called you crazy.

Fabre always had a

knack for leadership roles. She started her career in the Adult & Continuing Education program in 2013, where she became a head teacher. She also became a head teacher for the summer school program in 2020. Needless to say, leadership came naturally to her.

"I enjoy trying to figure out solutions to problems, working with teachers, and working with students," Fabre said. She wanted to bring her passion and leadership to the table, and

so, based on the positive feedback she received from her work as a head teacher, she decided to apply for the position of assistant principal.

"This gives me an opportunity to bring my ideas and my initiatives, something I'm not really able to do in the classroom."

She began her role on July 1 of this year, and almost immediately, sprang into action. Her work introduced bilingual and sheltered classes for students in summer school: a first for the program.

"We have a very large EL (English Learner) population and many of the students weren't doing well, so instead of putting them in classes where they didn't understand the language, we were able to advocate for these students and get them bilingual and sheltered classes. That was never done before."

In another first for the program, Fabre, alongside Mindy Midy, a counselor at Westhill and head teacher for Adult Education, developed social services for students in summer school. This included the hiring of

two onboard crisis workers as well as a restorative justice facilitator to provide social and emotional support to summer school students.

"Any type of incident or behavior, anything that needed to be addressed, we were able to do that in summer school. We've never had those supports before."

Fabre has also been hard at work making sure that her new position doesn't affect her family life, finding a balance between helping the community and taking care of her two daughters, three-year-old Valentina, and two-year-old Sofia. "I definitely try to dedicate as much time to them as possible," Fabre said.

The new position has allowed her to spend more time with her family. "I did adult education. I would work there until 9:30, sometimes 10 o'clock at night," Fabre said. But now, she gets home much earlier, usually around 6 o'clock, allowing her to spend more precious time with her family: family dinners, bringing her daughters to the park, and putting them to bed.

She was taught by many long-time staff who now look up to her as assistant principal, including Christine Wheeler, chair of the English department, Kim Kumar, chair of the Career & Technical Education department, and Alvin Frager, head of Security. Fabre notes she enjoyed her time at Westhill. She even graduated alongside Phil Thompson ('05), another graduate-turned-teacher.

"They have always shown that they care about their students and have provided me with continuous support and encouragement," she said in a follow-up email. Amparo Fabre's inspiring journey from a Westhill graduate to an assistant principal reflects her dedication to education and commitment to teaching students. She hopes to live up to her past educators' legacies and pave the way for future generations of teachers and administrators to come.

Zachary Goldberg ('25), Gabriel Jiménez ('24), and Marvi Prabekar ('26) contributed to this article.



AMPARO FABRE stands alongside fellow administrator Principal Rinaldi. Photo by Admin.

Westhill After Hours: What The Hill Does After School

Aya Homsy
Staff Writer

When the last bell rings, students hurry out of their classrooms eager to leave, teachers lock their doors, and everyone hurries to the lobby. The empty halls which were once lively go quiet. But what happens in these hours?

One might assume that a teacher's day ends with the bell ringing, but for Ms. Leveille, a Biology and Physical Science teacher, this isn't the case. She sits at her desk planning assignments and grading student work. Occasionally she stays after school to assist students that may need the extra push. "I'm willing to do

it, if students are willing to make the time out of their day to be a better student, specifically in science. Then, I'm willing to put in the extra time with them," said Ms. Leveille.

Mr. Martin, an art teacher at Westhill who teaches Jewelry and Metalsmithing, as well as Sculpture, shares a similar experience. On Tuesdays, he helps advise the "Fish and Seas" club, a club whose core mission is to grow a hundred trees and rear a hundred fish by senior year. "This is a noble pursuit to repopulate the native Connecticut river trout; we're clubs

with convictions," said Mr. Martin.

Aside from the Fish and Seas club, Mr. Martin also advises the crochet club, which convenes every Thursday. Mr. Martin himself is trying to pick up the hobby. "Our club is currently working on selling prices and custom items for the staff and students of Westhill. It's not official yet, but the money will be used to help the crochet club," said Camila Lopez, a member of the crochet club ('26).

Future Medical Professionals meet Tuesday afternoons. FMP is essentially (continued on p. 7)



KENNY MARTIN poses with his sapling for the Fish and Seas Club. Photo by Aya Homsy

Westhill After Hours: What The Hill Does After School

(continued from p.6)

about educating the youth on the topic of health care. Anyone interested in the field can get more insight here. The club offers health information and does a lot of hands-on activities. “I’ve always wanted to be in the healthcare field since I was younger. I felt like this would be a good opportunity to learn more, and get an idea of what I want to do in the future,” said historian Clara Albert (‘25).

Previously, FMP ran

a book drive for new or gently used books to donate to kids at K. T. Murphy Elementary School.

The girls volleyball team has performed above and beyond all expectations in the 2023-2024 academic school year. How did they grow to be so outstanding? The girls volleyball team practices four days a week from 4:30 to 6:00. Their practice requires extensive mental and physical preparation. The players described the afternoon hours as “calming yet competitive.”

“It’s a very serene type of moment,” said Elsie Hodson (26’), a member of the varsity team. Their warm up consists of dynamic stretching and getting prepared for practice.

However, as the night deepens, it’s not only students and teachers that remain but also the underappreciated individuals who help to keep the school running. Mr. Perdue, a security guard with 31 years of service at the school, expresses how much he values his role

at the school. “Well I’m helping secure the kids, that’s my big role,” said Mr. Perdue.

Mr. Williams, a custodian, plays a crucial role in ensuring the classrooms are ready for the next day. He works diligently during after hours to maintain a safe and healthy learning environment for students. Mr. Williams mentioned the simplicities of his goals, “Just to look out for you guys and make sure you guys are able to learn,” he said. Mr. Williams also values the quiet

etude of the after school hours, highlighting the importance of having time to himself, just as students do.

As the sun sets over Westhill High School, the after hours reveal stories of dedication, passion, and quiet heroism. Students, teachers, and unseen staff contribute their time and effort to make the school a thriving community long after the last bell has chimed.

Marvi Pabrekar (‘26) contributed to this article.

Empowering Education Beyond Borders: Ms. Walden on Fulbright Scholarship to Scotland

Marvi Pabrekar
Staff Writer

The Fulbright scholarship is a highly coveted honor that students and educators apply for in order to conduct research and professional activities abroad.

The Westword had the privilege of speaking with Ms. Walden, an English Language Arts teacher, who recently completed the Fulbright grant. Ms. Walden discussed her experiences teaching in Scotland and the scholarship’s effect during our conversation.

Q: Can you tell us about the scholarship you received and the criteria for selection?

“I put together a proposal outlining what I wanted to research. I filled out an application and answered a series of essay questions. Good writing is important for receiving a Fulbright. You have to be able to analyze and think critically. You also have to explain who you are, what you want to do with your research project, and how you will present the outcomes back to the U.S. Department of Education. It’s a very competitive program; only 15 out of every 100 applications are

reviewed for final selection. They’re only looking at the best of the best.”

Q: What inspired you to apply for this scholarship to teach in Europe?

“Well, I’m one of these individuals who likes to push myself. I’m always striving to be better. The Fulbright is considered the Rolls-Royce of professional development for teachers, so I’m always striving to be the best.”

Q: How did teaching in Europe impact your teaching style and methods?

“Scotland has a very different system. They have a very flexible teaching curriculum, so teachers there develop their own curriculum based upon this flexible curriculum. What I discovered was that marginalization takes different forms. So, in developing my curriculum in Scotland for marginalized students, I came to realize that all the students I was teaching were marginalized, including the indigenous Scottish children as well. So that shaped my teaching. In other words, marginalization isn’t visible. Marginalization is based on a series of conditions, and once you understand those conditions, then you can

begin to teach effectively. One of the things that I have done, not only in Scotland but now that I’m back here, is I’m centering my teaching more on students as opposed to what I want to teach.”

Q: How long were you there?

“I was there for 6 months, from the very first day of January to the very end of June in the school system. After that, I spent two months putting my findings together in Europe. I didn’t come back until September.”

Q: What were the most significant challenges you faced during your time as a teacher in Europe, and how did you address them?

“The experience of feeling marginalized, in other words, the isolation. You know, I think there were maybe three Americans there and only one other African American in all of Scotland. The immigrant population there is from all over the globe, but very few of them are American.”

Q: How has winning this scholarship and teaching in Europe influenced your personal and professional growth as an educator?



RUTH-TERRY WALDEN was awarded the Fulbright Scholarship to study in Scotland for her work as an English Language teacher at Westhill. Photo by Larry Barrett

“Being able to see global teaching as opposed to just discussing it with American teachers has informed and shaped the way I teach. In other words, it broadened my curriculum, broadened my reading. I see the world differently now and I think that’s the most important thing. That I don’t just see the world as an American, I’m now looking at the world through other individuals’ eyes, and it’s a

different world.”

Highlighting the significant influences of cross-cultural learning alongside cultural immersion, Ms. Walden’s experience from the Fulbright scholarship is a prime example of how education can change a person for the better.

Gabriel Jiménez (‘24) contributed to this article.

Forgive and Forget: Westhill Weighs In On Student Loans

Chidube Kalu
News Editor

Student Loans are a cloud hanging over many students looking to attend college in America. With the debt left by college, many disadvantaged individuals and bright high school students have felt as if they cannot afford to go to college.

Students such as Annette Fernandez (‘24) are often scared away from higher education because of it. “It sucks. When people get into that debt, they’re stuck in that

debt forever,” she said. Many people have also been stuck with this massive burden. In a survey of 1,000 student loan borrowers conducted by the website “Life and My Finances”, about 50 percent of respondents felt as if they could not currently pay off their debts.

“When the majority of Americans finish with their college process, they are starting their lives in debt,” Social Studies Teacher David McFillin said. “I think that

it’s a huge issue this country is trying to deal with at this point in time.” The solution: student loan forgiveness. In this system, loans and debt from the government are forgiven, freeing the borrower of this burden. Many Liberal politicians, including incumbent Democratic President Joe Biden, have pushed hard for the proposal. In August 2022, President Biden attempted to cancel about \$10,000 of student loan debt for each qualifying low to middle-class borrower, but a largely conservative Supreme Court blocked this attempt.

Loan forgiveness would remedy larger issues in our society. Firstly, it would increase spending across the country. As a result of student loan debt, many people have heavily limited their spending to save money to pay their debts.

Second, the burden of student loan debt also affects the decision of whether to purchase a home. In a survey, 75 percent of students said that their student loan debt impacted their ability to buy a home. House ownership rates reflect this: 42 percent of Millennials had a home by the age of 30, an 8 percent decrease from their Baby Boomer parents.

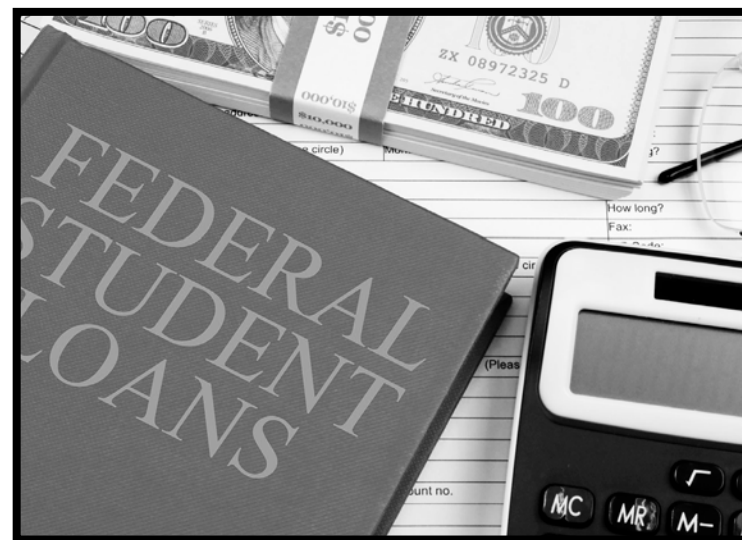
Student loan forgiveness would remove the economic strain of purchasing a home for generations of Americans, allowing people to buy better loans at better rates, with credit scores free of the shackles of student loans.

Furthermore, debt cancellation may have links to reducing inequality and poverty in America. Low-income students are often at a disadvantage when seeking higher education since they do not have

access to the resources that students from wealthier families do. College tuition is a massive burden on low-income households, so many choose not to send their children to college at all.

If we can remove the worry of student debt from families and children of low-income households through debt cancellation, we will have more college-educated citizens in the workforce, and more first-generation college students that can change the course of their family’s lives.

There needs to be targeted relief toward people who need it the most, particularly low and middle-income students. If done correctly, student loan forgiveness can help to improve our society and make it more equitable and innovative for future generations to come.



STUDENT LOANS Image licensed under Creative Commons

Westhill Open Campus? Yes Please!

Matthew Montanez
Staff Writer

Stamford Public Schools’ new Open Campus Policy has been a hot topic this year. More than half of the student body is not even allowed to partake in the policy, as it is only available for upperclassmen. Even then, some upperclassmen do not drive, limiting the already small amount of Vikings who can participate in the system.

The SPS website characterizes Open Campus as “a privilege” granted by the administrators that “allows students to leave school grounds” during lunch hours. They also say that the goal of Open Campus is to “give students the opportunity to

develop personal responsibility for their time” by giving them the freedom to choose where to dine and how to spend their money.

Personally, I like the idea of Open Campus since I can drive and only have two classes a day. I’m one of the students who can take full advantage of this opportunity. The policy allows students who do not want to eat school lunch to go out during their free period and eat somewhere else. There has been a fair share of changes to Westhill since my freshman year, and this is by far the best one that has been made.

Not everyone at Westhill thinks like me, however. Assistant Principal Robert Ayala disapproves of the new Open Campus policy, citing the distance of most retail and dining locations from campus as an issue. “I personally do not like it for Westhill,” he said, “we are too far away from anything.”

“I do not think it is safe to have here because students have to rush to places to eat and rush back and I think that raises the chance of them being in an accident. I personally think that no school should have it.”

Assistant Principal Ayala’s concerns are valid.



STUDENTS AT WESTHILL transition between buildings during the lunch waves. Photo by Rim Ratibi.

According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, newly licensed 16-year-old high schoolers are 1.5 times more likely to be involved in a car crash than their 18 to 19-year-old counterparts.

However, this shouldn’t bar even the

safest drivers at the Hill from being able to choose where to dine during lunch. Open Campus is a good policy that should be kept in place for future upperclassmen to enjoy.

Eugene Caibal (‘25) contributed to this article.

It's a Taylor Swift Economy

Lawrence Barrett
Staff Writer

Yes, the Taylor Swift Economy is a thing. Swift is not only a talented singer-songwriter but she is also known as a highly influential businesswoman. She not only has had a massive impact on the music industry, she has also created a successful brand around her music and persona. Her recent tour and movie have significantly boosted the US economy.

In terms of economic contribution, her music and tours generate substantial revenue, not only for herself but also for the venues, promoters, and various industries that are involved with the production and promotion of her music. Additionally, her brand partnerships and endorsements have positively impacted the economy by creating jobs and driving consumer spending. While fans prepare to attend an Eras Tour show, they often replay her entire discography and prepare an outfit that represents an era, encouraging consumer spending.

"I listen to her

music almost daily, buy merch pretty often, or buy something that reminds me of an era or lyric. I spent money on an outfit and accessories for the show, food, and merch at the venue, and saw the movie," Sophia Dizon ('25) said.

The tour attracts fans from all over. Fans often travel to different cities to attend her tours. Some fans go as far as to travel internationally just to see a show.

"I traveled to Argentina to go see Taylor and it was worth it," Evelyn Gaspar Perez ('25) said.

This leads to an increase in tourist spending that benefits hotels, airline, and local businesses surrounding the venues. The tour has created job opportunities for a wide range of people. Jobs include concert staff, stage crew, security, and local vendors. All these jobs can boost the economy by generating income and supporting local businesses.

Lastly, the tour



TAYLOR SWIFT Photo by Eva Rinaldi/Creative Commons

merchandise sales impact the economy by generating revenue for the manufacturers and the parties involved in the distribution of merchandise being purchased by fans.

The Eras Tour is now playing in theaters. Like her live shows, it has also had an impact on the economy. The movie has grossed \$124 million worldwide as of writing. The movie has generated anticipation and excitement among fans who

weren't able to go to the live concert, and those who want to be able to relive the experience of the concert again. Thousands of fans have purchased tickets to watch the concert movie in theaters, resulting in a massive increase in box office sales. The movie release has also driven snack and merchandise sales in theaters, as fans want to collect the items related to the tour.

"I watched the Eras Tour movie and felt

the need to purchase a tin, cup, and tote bag that they were selling at the movie theater," Kimberly Hernandez Martinez ('25) said.

This boost in ticket, food, and merchandise sales generated revenue and support for the entertainment industry. The success of the Eras Tour has catapulted Swift's net worth to \$1 billion. Although the Eras Tour played a large role, her billionaire status can be credited to various factors, including the successes of her music career, business ventures, and investments.

The movie, along with her concerts and merchandise sales, contributes to her overall earnings, but it's just one piece of the puzzle. Taylor Swift's hard work, talent, and strategic decisions have played a significant role in her financial success.

Becoming a billionaire is a significant achievement, showcasing Taylor Swift's impact and influence in the music industry, economy, and beyond.

Arleny Flores ('24) and Eugene Caibal ('25) contributed to this article.



TAYLOR SWIFT EMBRACES her back up singers at her MetLife concert on May 26. Photo by Arleny Flores

Mrs. Popescu: Teacher Couture

Jade Rueda
Staff Writer

With Westhill faculty, there is more than what meets the eye! Teachers don't just share their knowledge with their students but express their personalities and what makes them who they are. Mrs. Popescu, a French teacher, exemplifies that by revealing her inner fashionista.

Popescu's chic and classic style has always been something that stands out about her. Whether it's the brightly colored clothes she admires or the classy brands she adores, she believes that fashion is not just about money but about feeling comfortable in one's own style.

Her passion for fashion began with her roots. Growing up in Romania, she found her sense of fashion in the people and culture around her. Her mother expressed the unique, abstract style she loves now.

"I was inspired by my mother who used to dress up very nicely every single day with clothes and accessories to coordinate every outfit, I grew to like that style and it grew to be my personality which I really like," said Popescu.

Popescu began by making doll clothes, but then moved on to designing her own clothes as she grew older. Her fashion journey then took a big jump when she designed her own wedding dresses. As an 18-year-old coming to America,



MRS. POPESCU poses for a portrait. Photo by Jade Rueda.

she didn't have time to explore her fashion interest professionally since she was focused on teaching. However, she said if she had not taken the profession of teaching, she would have taken an interest in the fashion business.

"To be sincere, I think I would do a good job if I wanted to have a business in fashion," said Popescu.

Even though Popescu didn't pursue a career in fashion, she is seen as a role model for some of her students.

For example, she has helped them pick prom dresses or provided some fashion tips. She promotes the idea that everyone should feel comfortable with their own personal style. Students also have taken note of her ability to come up with new outfits every day.

"She never wore the same outfit," said Josh Villard ('25).

Popescu's style is rooted in her Romanian culture. She has truly been inspired by her mother and has continued to engage her love for fashion. Popescu's story from creating dolls' clothes to designing wedding dresses has shown the creativity and uniqueness of her fashion sensibilities.

This is only one example of how the faculty at Westhill support students in finding their true selves and celebrating their individuality. In this case it's one fashionable step at a time. The Westhill halls reveal that teachers are much more than just educators.

Teacher Expectations Versus Reality

Johnathan Gonzalez
Staff Writer

Being a teacher today is still a challenge, even though most of the effects of the pandemic have dissipated. From having to teach students remotely during the COVID pandemic to returning to understaffed schools, the lives of teachers all over America have been difficult.

There are a lot of misconceptions about what teaching is like. These misunderstandings are shared by both teachers and students. What is expected of teachers in this current age, and what are the realities of their careers?

According to the Wall Street Journal, more than 300,000 public school teachers and staff all over America have left the field of teaching between February 2020 to May 2022.

A poll conducted by the National Education Association in 2022 found that 55% of teachers wanted

to leave the field sooner than expected, citing poor compensation and poor school safety as their primary motivations.

Students should value their teachers not just as educators, but as mentors who can guide students on the right path. Students also tend to see teachers as somebody they can talk to during school hours about issues they're dealing with in their everyday lives, whether they are related to academics or outside of school.

"I feel really happy there are adults that care about our education. Some people have problems but don't have a trusted adult. Teachers are like therapists that help [you] succeed in school," said Kelly Galicia ('27).

Students have varying opinions regarding

their teachers depending on how well they feel like they can connect to them on a personal level. Some students have negative perceptions of past teachers, which is why they may go into a new classroom doubting their teachers' abilities.

"My opinion on teachers is that they're decent, but some of them need to be more specific on what they say and teach and not just assign packets of unclear work," says Nyari Lopez ('27) said.

Most students like Lopez expect that teachers are rude, inefficient at their jobs, and that they don't even have lives outside of school. However, this does not mean that others don't hold their teachers in a positive light.

Teachers understand the expectations that students have of them as role models, and most of them put in the effort to make education accessible and engaging so students can understand them.

"It's exciting because when [students] say 'Oh wow!', you know that you got through and it's gonna stay with them," said Anna-Marie Giblen, Science.

There are many standards that teachers strive to live up to. It is important to expect a certain quality from our teachers, but also to keep in mind the challenging realities that their job entails.

Rim Ratibi ('24) contributed to this article.



SR. DIAZ guides his Spanish class through an activity. Photo by Mr. Wooley.

Teacher Duos

Jonathan Salgado
Staff Writer

Here at Westhill, there are some last names that show up twice in the staff directory. There have been many to come and go from Westhill, but the Thompsons, Kurtzs, and Kumars are some that come immediately to mind.

Many think being married and working in the same field (let alone being in the same building) don't mix. Despite this stigma, we see some teachers at Westhill doing just that and thriving.

"It's nice coming to work together, having the same schedule," said Phil Thompson, a physical education teacher at Westhill. His wife, Brittany Thompson teaches Spanish here as well.

Married teachers can spend more time with one another due to their workplace schedule, strengthening their relationships.

Aside from the personal time they share, these couples also have more time to form healthy bonds and relationships with their children. When asked, Mr. Thompson confirmed they have more time not only for each other but for their children and building a healthy family bond.

"On days where maybe school is canceled we can go out and be together because of this same schedule," Mr. Thompson said. "It works out very well."



THE THOMPSON FAMILY take a wholesome photo on a day out. Photo provided by Mr. and Mrs. Thompson.

For the Kumars, working in the same field has both benefits and drawbacks, though the experience has been mostly positive.

"We've been working together for many years. There is a plus and minus to everything. It's fun to be together but we can't get school off our plate. It's nice being in the same profession because we can learn from each other, but also we always have school on our minds. It is however nice to have breaks together and to be off together," said Ms. Kumar, Business. Her husband, Dr. Kumar teaches science and business classes.



THE KUMARS pose for a lovely portrait. Photos provided by Dr. and Mrs. Kumar.

For others, it's a bit more complicated. Karen Kurtz works in the 100s as a finance teacher for the Academy of Finance, while William Kurtz in physical education. Despite their buildings being a short walk away, back-to-back classes mean they can go a whole day without running into each other.

"I don't see her during the day at all," Mr. Kurtz said. "We just see each other on the drive into work."

Overall, it is shown that workplace relationships and family in the school with one another have more benefits than they do downsides, proving previous assumptions about coworkers dating not working out wrong.



THE KURTZ COUPLE stand side by side in Mrs Kurtz's classroom. Photo provided by Mr. and Mrs. Kurtz.

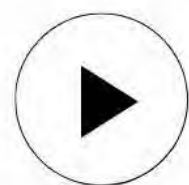
Overall, it is shown that workplace relationships and having family members in the school can be extremely beneficial towards creating a positive environment within and outside the family. These three couples, along with all of the other teachers fighting side by side in Stamford Public Schools, have proven that previous notions about workplace relationships are false.

Rim Ratibi ('24) contributed to this article.

Teachers' Playlists



15:05



- 14:55



Dr. Migiano: Science

1. Lucky - Jason Mraz, Colbie Caillat
2. Highway to Hell - AC/DC
3. Back in Black - AC/DC
4. Yellow Submarine - The Beatles

Ms. Zachary: Art

1. Low - SZA
2. Paint The Town Red - Doja Cat
3. Going to California - Led Zeppelin
4. Young and Beautiful - Lana Del Rey



Mr. McFillin: Social Studies

1. Right Above It - Lil Wayne, Drake
2. Kiss Me More - SZA, Doja Cat
3. Cruel Summer - Taylor Swift
4. Wagon Wheel - Darius Rucker

Mr. Orzo: Social Studies

1. Last Night - Morgan Wallen
2. Tek It - Cafune
3. Slide - Calvin Harris, Frank Ocean, Migos
4. 505 - Arctic Monkeys



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THE WESTWORD

scavenger hunt!

The Westword is hosting a digital scavenger hunt! The winner will receive a 'The Westword' shirt. Send pictures via instagram (@thewestword) or e-mail us at thewestword@gmail.com!

ALL IMAGES MUST BE YOUR OWN.

Find:

1. An orange leaf on the ground.

A squirrel. 2.

3. A pumpkin.

Something Thanksgiving/Fall themed at Westhill. 4.

5. 8 acorns.

Hispanic Roundtable: Los Alumnos Hablan Sobre Los Retos y La Cultura

Marvi Pabrekar
Editora de Feature

El 27 de Octubre del 2023, Westhill High School celebró una experiencia latino/hispanoamericana. El propósito de este evento fue honrar y celebrar la herencia hispana, destacando la cultura, las profesiones, los avances y la resiliencia hispana, todo desde los puntos de vista de graduados anteriores de Westhill High School y Stamford High School.

Durante el programa, los invitados especiales hablaron sobre sus identidades culturales, los principales obstáculos que enfrentaron como estudiantes latinos en su camino hacia el éxito y sus experiencias como ex estudiantes de WHS/SHS. También ofrecieron consejos a los estudiantes latinos entrantes del WHS. Las conversaciones con los oradores invitados estuvieron a cargo de los estudiantes de Westhill, Azael Rojas ('26) y Daniela Moreno ('24).

La subdirectora de Westhill High School, la Sra. Fabre, fue esencial en la organización y realización de la exitosa Mesa Redonda Hispana.



ALUMNOS HISPANOS DE SPS están parada por un foto. izquierda a derecha: Yasmin Tirado (SHS '95), Dulce Pineda ('21), Walter Palma ('06), Amparo Fabre ('05), Sofia Guerrero ('07), Jhonathan Rendón (SHS '06), Rafael Castillo ('16), Jhonny Arteaga ('04). Foto por Michael Rinaldi.

"Este año, el tema de la Herencia Hispana se centró en 'Prosperidad, poder y progreso en Estados Unidos'. Quería que mis exalumnos compartieran sus voces y experiencias que proporcionarían motivación e inspirarían a los estudiantes actuales de WHS a convertirse en miembros productivos y contribuyentes de la sociedad," dijo la Sra. Fabre.

Los distinguidos oradores invitados compartieron relatos íntimos de sus luchas y los desafíos que enfrentaron en sus respectivos caminos hacia el éxito durante la

Mesa Redonda Hispana.

"Creo que como latina pasé por mucho al principio debido a la barrera del idioma. Pero ahora, después de abrir mi negocio, siento que después de todo lo que pasé, es más fácil entender y apoyar a mis clientes," dijo Sofia Guerrero (WHS '07).

La importancia de las experiencias personales en el logro profesional fue resaltada por el testimonio de Sofia Guerrero sobre el papel que jugaron sus dificultades en la formación de su conocimiento y su empatía por sus clientes.

De manera similar, la apreciación de Walter Palma por la dirección mostrada por el programa JROTC subraya el valor de la educación. "El programa JROTC aquí en Westhill fue una guía en las decisiones que tomé después de la secundaria. Al ver cosas diferentes y abrir mi perspectiva, el programa JROTC en realidad también me ayudó a mejorar en todas mis otras clases," dijo Walter Palma (WHS '06).

Las historias de los oradores invitados fomentaron una comprensión más profunda de

las diversas experiencias de la comunidad hispana, generando empatía y fomentando un sentido de unidad entre la audiencia.

"Yo, siendo latino de primera generación, tengo mucha presión por ir a la universidad. Pero nuestros ponentes nos han demostrado que puedes tener éxito en cualquier cosa que quieras hacer. Han pasado por lo que nosotros hemos pasado y han llegado a donde están gracias a su arduo trabajo y dedicación, y estoy muy conmovido y motivado para aprender mucho y crecer," dijo Azeel Rojas Calvillo (24).

La discusión en la Mesa Redonda Hispana captó la celebración, la perseverancia y la apreciación de las diferencias culturales. Reforzó la noción de que todos, independientemente de su procedencia, tienen lo necesario para crear un futuro próspero y significativo con fuerza y determinación.

Gabriel Jiménez (24) contribuyó en este artículo. Translated by Dania Pinto ('24)

Los Tamales: Su Historia y Receta

Alexa Martinez
Redactora

¿Has pensado en cómo los tamales han llegado a las casas mexicanas y a través de muchas culturas?

Se dice que es un alimento para grandes fiestas y también preparadas para agradecer la fertilidad de la tierra en cualquier evento social y como ofrenda de día de muertos.

El tamal es un alimento mexicano hecho con maíz, rellenos de diversos ingredientes cocidos. Puede ser de maíz, plátano, o carrizo. Los antiguos usaban una olla llamada comitl en la que se ponían a hervir maíz, agua, y sal.

Los tamales son un plato que con frecuencia se cocinan en familia (es decir entre varias personas), y que tiene cierta complejidad de preparación. Para esta receta vas a necesitar harina de maíz nixtamalizado.

INGREDIENTES:

- Dos pechugas de pollo desgrasadas
- Una cebolla grande blanca
- Cuatro tomates verdes
- Dos chiles verdes (opcional)
- Una rama de cilantro
- Un diente de ajo
- Sal al gusto
- Dos y un quinto libras de maíz

PREPARACIÓN:

1. Ponga a hervir pechuga de pollo.
2. Coloque una cebolla grande en la olla.
3. En otra olla cocine los tomates verdes, los chiles verdes y ajo.
4. Remoja las hojas de tamal en agua caliente.

PARA LA MASA:

1. Ponga en un recipiente las dos y quinta libras de harina del maíz nixtamalizada
2. Mezcla una taza de manteca de cerdo
3. Dos cucharitas de polvo de hornear
4. Sal al gusto
5. Y por último ponga la mezcla en las hojas de tamal



TAMALE Foto por Alexa Martinez

Westhill celebra la Noche Latina

Mayelin Disla
Redactor

La cultura es muchas cosas: Talentos en exhibición, comida servida en la mesa, baile llenando los pasillos y música llenando los oídos. Noche Latina, una noche que puso la cultura latina en exhibición aquí en la escuela secundaria Westhill, fue una velada enérgica de celebración.

Para celebrar el Mes de la Herencia Hispana en la Escuela Secundaria Westhill, Juan Pazmino y Amparo Fabre, subdirectores de Westhill, organizaron la Noche Latina de este año, una experiencia educativa hecha para unir a la comunidad hispana. "Hace unos diez años, el Sr. Sanso, un consejero escolar en Westhill, comenzó el evento como una forma de conectarse con las familias hispanas, al tiempo que celebraba la diversidad de las personas", dijo el subdirector Pazmino. El evento proporcionó una plataforma para aprender y expresar diversas tradiciones de los países hispanos.

Había muchos alimentos deliciosos



FAMILIAS DE WESTHILL CENAN EN EL LOBBY durante la Noche Latina. Foto por Nicole Baclayon.

preparados por maestros, estudiantes y padres para compartir con la comunidad. Un ambiente ruidoso y emocionado vagaba por la zona mientras los estudiantes y los padres esperaban para ver cómo sería la noche. Una larga fila de asistentes ansiosos esperaban para ser atendi-

dos mientras otros conversaban con la gente allí. Lo que era cerca de 30 personas se convirtió lentamente en lo que se sentía como un centenar cuando la gente comenzó a llenar el área. "Hasta ahora me encanta, no pensé que viniera mucha gente", dijo Katie Velasquez ('25) esa noche.

Una compañía estudiantil de bailarines y músicos realizó un espectáculo espectacular. Muchos vieron las actuaciones, animando en voz alta, y cantando junto a las canciones españolas con las que muchos asistentes crecieron. Era una gran manera para que la gente captara otras culturas.

La representación es una de las cosas más importantes cuando se trata de ser extranjero: Le dice a la gente que son vistos y que no son los extraños. Les permite saber que hay personas como ellos que están orgullosos de su cultura en todo el mundo. "Me siento como una familia que se reúne", dijo Ethan Cundiff ('26). Antes de que co-



UNA ESTUDIANTE hace cola en las escaleras del sótano por la comida cultural. Foto por Eugene Caibal.

menzara el espectáculo, el director Michael Rinaldi y la señora Fabre agradecieron a los que vinieron en español. Michael Rinaldi está casado con Jenn Rinaldi, quien es oriundo de Puerto Rico, aunque sus habilidades en español no lo frotaron. Con la ayuda de la Sra. Fabre, el Sr. Rinaldi pudo terminar su discurso a pesar de sus

errores e incluso hizo reír un poco a la multitud. Noche Latina en Westhill High School es más que un evento: Es una celebración de la diversidad cultural. Esa noche, la comunidad escolar abrazó, apreció y celebró la cultura latinoamericana.

Eugene Caibal ('25) contribuyó a este artículo.



UNA BAILADORA con la bandera de Honduras durante su actuación en la Noche Latina. Foto por Janelly Paiz.

Caitie Came: Artist of the Issue

Eugene Caibal
News Editor

The balancing act between the desire for perfection and the limits of one's craft can either destroy a piece or make it extraordinary. Caitie Came's ('24) desire for perfection, luckily, landed her the latter. She placed first in a contest for one of her student paintings, a feat which she says is due to her desire for perfection.

"My perfectionism is portrayed in my art style for sure, but that's only if you know just how long it takes me," Came said.

"That's why I won first place for my portrait piece—because I put in so many small details."

For her accomplishments, The Editorial Board chose Senior Caitie Came as our Artist of the Issue, a recognition done every issue to promote student artists at Westhill who relish in their craft. Came's love for art is clear in not just her award-winning pieces, but her everyday works as well. We believe that she is one of the premier artists at Westhill, but there are surely

more to come. Rim Ratibi ('24) interviewed Caitie Came on her life with art and how the Hill has affected it.

The Westword (WW): What inspired you to pursue art?

Caitie Came (CC): I've always been interested in art since a

me all the help that I needed Mrs. Konrad by far has had the greatest impact on me, because she helped me create a piece that I won an award for. Whenever I wanted to stop because I was frustrated, she made me flip it over and see it from a new perspective. She gave

first place for my portrait piece—because I put in so many small details. I'm very dedicated to my artwork. Each piece is a reflection of my true self, catching intricate details about me.

(WW): Do you have a favorite artist or genre?

(WW): What's your favorite style/medium?

(CC): My preferred medium used to be pencil, but I found gouache growing on me ever since Ms. Konrad introduced it to me. I enjoy experimenting with gouache, exploring various techniques, and appreciating its opaque pigments.

Caitie Came represents the best of Westhill and what it has to offer. Her passion for the craft is clear, and she has so much more to deliver. Came is just getting started, and we wish her the best of luck in her artistic endeavors.



young age. It's a hobby that I can't shake off. Art has allowed me to express myself, and I find it very peaceful.

(WW): How has Westhill shaped your view on art?

(CC): Mrs. Konrad [head of the Art Department] has developed my interest in art by opening me

to new art styles and genres. I completely owe my relationship with art to the people who kept pushing me to continue pursuing it. I've had so many creative teachers and mentors who saw something inside of me that I didn't see in myself, and they created spaces where I could paint freely and gave

me words of affirmation and didn't let me get in my own way, and for that reason, my art has progressed into something much better.

(CC): French impressionism for sure.

Purvasai Thoka ('26) contributed to this article.

(WW): What's your favorite work that you've produced?

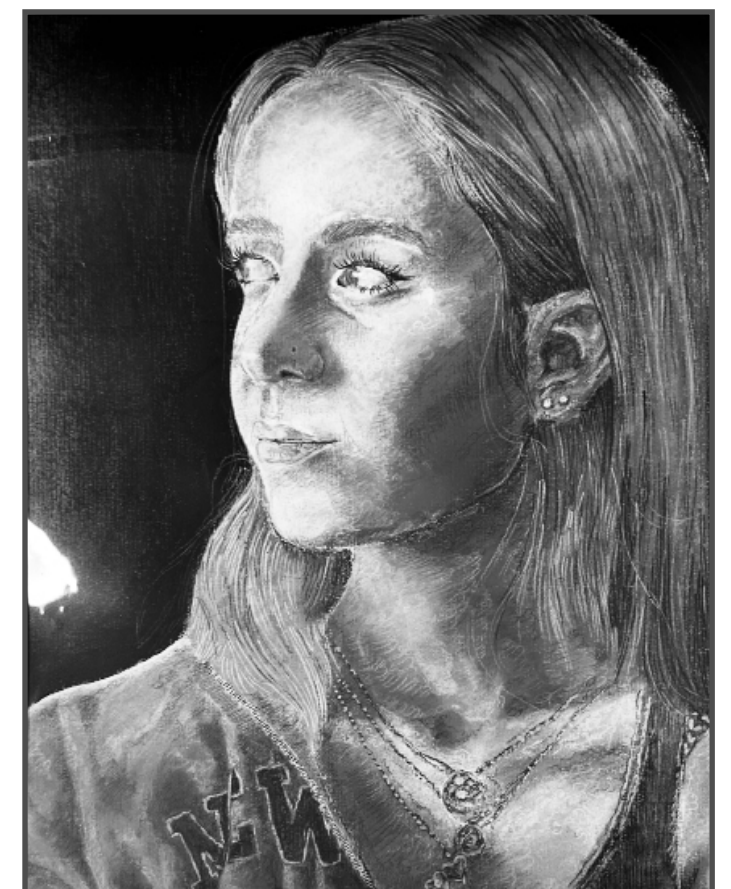
(CC): My favorite piece that I've produced is my self-portrait. I didn't realize that I could be so proud of a piece until after I won first place for it in drawing. The self-portrait has grown my interest in self-expression and deepened my interest in art.

(WW): How do you think your personality reflects in your art style?

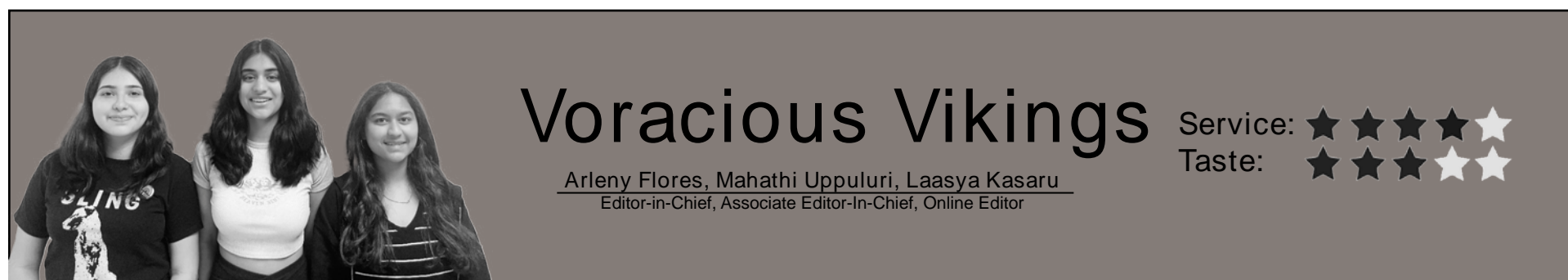
(CC): My perfectionism is portrayed in my art style, but that's only if you know how long it takes me. That's why I won



Images from @caitie27_c



"SELF PORTRAIT" by Caitie Came.



Voracious Vikings

Arleny Flores, Mahathi Uppuluri, Laasya Kasaru
Editor-in-Chief, Associate Editor-In-Chief, Online Editor

Service: ★★★★★
Taste: ★★★★★

The Voracious Vikings has been a longstanding column of the Westword for many years. The traditional format showcased a few Westword members highlighting different local eateries, presenting their experiences through a fun Nordic Viking storyline. This year, we want to rebrand the column by adopting a modern language and storyline to be representative of all Westhill Vikings.

The culinary hosts of this column are named for their personalities, and from this point forward will be referred to as the Overly Talkative Viking, the Self Absorbed Viking, and the Silly Viking.

Exploring downtown Stamford, three Vikings (along with a little vassal viking) were suddenly entranced by an enticing smell. They followed the aroma to a subtle, quiet restaurant.

Located in the heart of downtown Stamford, Kyushu is a cozy restaurant that offers a variety of Japanese dishes including ramen soups, fried rice, baos, poke bowls, sushi, and dumplings. As soon as the Vikings stepped in, they were greeted by a friendly hostess and were seated.

The restaurant's atmosphere appeared homey with dim lights, mel-low music, and hardwood decor. It also offered a range of seating arrangements from high tables to low tables for couples and groups.

The prices were reasonable for the sizable portions. Kyushu offers a lunch special service that runs from 11:05 to 3:00 p.m., which consists of a special drink, appetizer, and entree for \$18.50. The staff at Kyushu were



DINING ATMOSPHERE at Kyushu Ramen and Sushi. Photo by Laasya Kasaru.

very attentive to customer needs and were quite flexible to accommodate more specific orders, as the staff allowed the Silly Viking to order a diet coke to fulfill a vassal Viking's lunch special order.

The Overly Talkative Viking ordered a shrimp tempura poke bowl, pork belly bao, and iced tea for her lunch special. The poke bowl and pork belly bao dishes were vibrant and beautifully presented, though they lacked seasoning.

The Overly Talkative viking enjoyed the

meal but would've enjoyed it more if the shrimp and rice were more salty and the mango slices were sweeter. The Overly Talkative Viking usually enjoys pickles, but she would not stop talking about how their acidity overshadowed the rest of the plate. She also expressed that the saltiness of the kelp created an undesirable contrast to the other food in her meal.

The Silly Viking ordered kimchi shrimp fried rice and a diet Coke for \$17.18. The rice consisted of kimchi, egg, and a hefty amount of shrimp, topped



KIMCHI FRIED RICE: VEGETABLE AND SHRIMP at Kyushu Ramen and Sushi Image by Laasya Kasaru
with scallions, which the Viking was eager to eat. With its alluring presentation, the Viking scooped up a bite of the rice and the flavors of the kimchi and egg.

With the insufficient saltiness, she added a bit of soy sauce to satisfy the savory craving. The shrimp was better.

Although the dish satisfied her hunger, she anticipated a stronger flavor of kimchi and more seasoning in her shrimp.

The Self Absorbed Viking ordered a kimchi vegetable fried rice. The fried rice was packed with tart kimchi, fried eggs, scallions, bean sprouts, and lima beans. The Self Absorbed Viking was in vegetable paradise. She loved how the textures of the rice, vegetables, and egg combined, and the



SHRIMP AND CHICKEN POKE BOWL WITH SPICY MAYO at Kyushu Ramen and Sushi. Photo by Laasya Kasaru

SPORTS



Westhill students look up at the stands during Girls Volleyball's Pink Out game against the Norwalk Bears in support of Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Photo by Eugene Caibal

Volleyball Dominates the Fall Season with Outstanding Victories

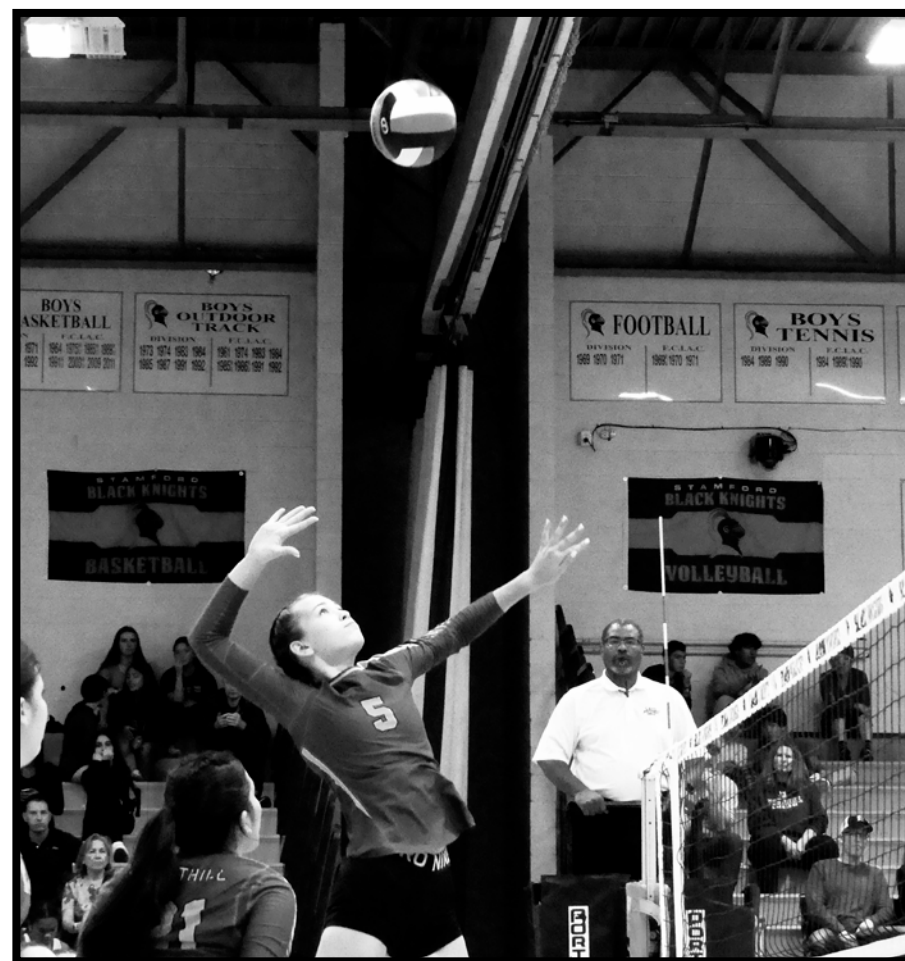
Could Girls Varsity Volleyball be the Fall Season's new powerhouse?

Eugene Caibal
News Editor

Hot off the heels of a 17-7 season, it's no wonder many Vikings are starting to take notice of the potential that volleyball has for Westhill athletics. The Vikings finished 4th in the FCIAC, held an 11-game win streak (with eight 3-0 sweeps) for much of October, and made it to the semifinals of the FCIAC for the first time in four years.

They could not, however, pull off the elusive FCIAC or State tournament run, knocked out by Warde in the second round of the state tournament and by a so-far-undefeated Darien in the semifinals of the FCIAC.

Despite this, the losses do nothing to diminish the accomplishments of this year's team, says Finleigh Benkwitt ('24) when asked about their run this season. "As a captain, our team worked



#5 FINLEIGH BENKWITT prepares to spike against SHS in the City Championship. Photo by Eugene Caibal

very hard this year," Benkwitt said. "Each girl played their best all season and it paid off when we made it to states."

Riley Sullivan ('24) said that, as a senior, she was glad to be a part of the team. "Making states

this year felt like our hard work paid off," she said.

Girls Varsity Volleyball's run this season was nothing short of a success. Their season was filled with amazing highlights, tight games, and many 3-0 sweeps.

Most importantly, our Vikings beat the Black Knights of Stamford High in a 3-0 sweep, a feat that the team has accomplished 4 years in a row.

The growing success of our volleyball program is nothing to be ignored: this may be the start of something big for Westhill athletics, a shakeup that may very well change the dominant sport of the fall season.

It is high time that we give volleyball

our attention, something new to lift the spirits of the Westhill crowd. That means more sponsorships, bigger crowds (not just home games), and more seriousness for the sport of volleyball.

The '23 season has seen inklings towards this trend. The City Championship against the Black Knights held an impressively loud and proud away crowd that the Vikings had not seen in years, giving the girls an edge to sweep the Knights 3-0 that fateful night.

We can see this on a national level, too: the University of Nebraska Huskers hosted a volleyball game with 92,000 spectators at their Memorial Stadium. This was a world record for women's sports and a turning point in the sport of volleyball.

Westhill athletics can have their watershed moment for volleyball, so long as they give our girls a shot. One hopes to see a trickle-down effect for our boys in the spring season, who finished their 22-23 season similarly to the girls this year at 17-6.

Tanner Jansen ('24) contributed to this article.

Andrade, Cooper, & Larsen Duo: Westhill Athletes of the Issue

Aarin Basu
Sports Editor

As the autumn air descends upon us, it brings with it the promise of exciting sporting events and the dedication of athletes who have spent countless hours honing their skills.

The fall season is always a spectacular time for sports enthusiasts, and in 2023, we were treated to a remarkable display of talent by athletes who have made this season truly exceptional.

Erick Andrade ('24), a powerhouse on the football field, has been a force to be reckoned with during the fall of 2023.

Erick's physical prowess, agility, and incredible speed have made him a game-changer on the gridiron. He is known for his never-give-up attitude, often bulldozing through defenses to secure crucial touchdowns.

Although the season has not been extremely successful, Erick still advocates optimism for the rest of the season.

"The season has been a battle so far. We've had



#1 PIPPA COOPER drives through a Stamford defense in an away game against the Black Knights. Photo by Adam Levy/Zapshots Photography

many tight games, but we just come up short. We're still working each day to get better as a team and hopefully turn things around for this season and also change things for the future of the program," said Andrade.

Erick's story is

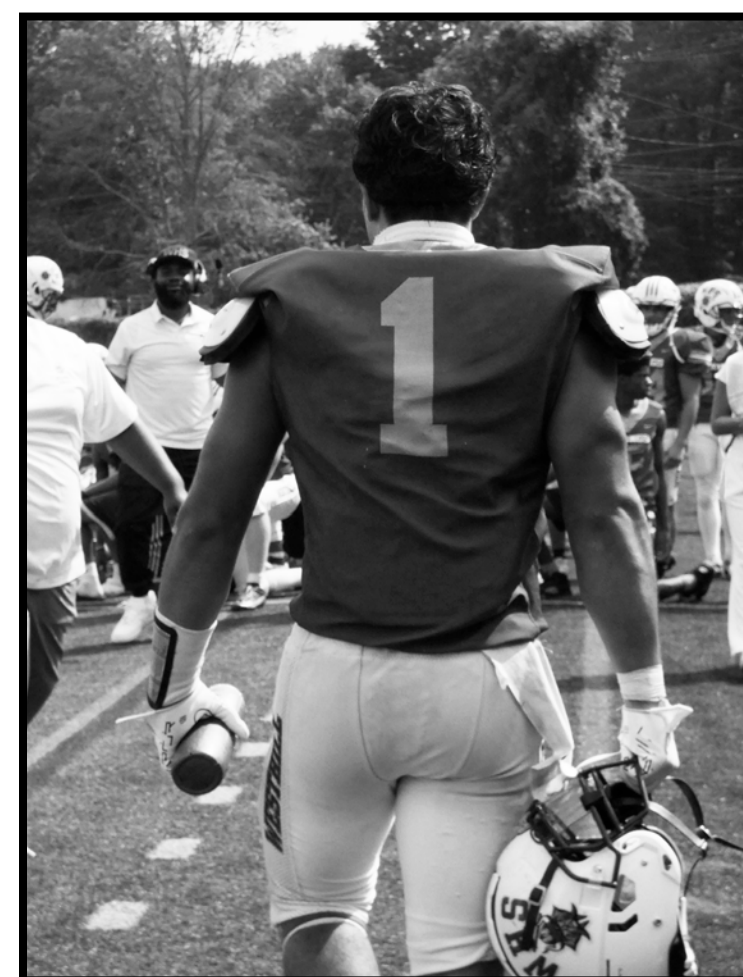
a testament to his hard work, resilience, and undeniable talent on the football field.

Dynamic duo, Patrick and Kristian Larsen, are twins who have been lighting up the soccer pitch this fall season. These brothers share an uncanny synergy on the field, their telepathic understanding of each other's movements resulting in breathtaking plays and coordinated goals.

"I think that our team has worked really hard to prove ourselves as a team to compete again in the FCIAC," said Kristian.

Their teamwork and determination have propelled our soccer team to one of the best in the state, and their infectious energy has made them fan favorites, further solidifying their reputation as soccer's twin sensations.

Pippa Cooper's skill in the sport of field hockey has been nothing short of remarkable this fall. Pippa's exceptional stickwork, speed, and other abilities have been instrumental in her team's success.



#1 ERICK ANDRADE walks through the sidelines after scoring a touchdown against Newington. Photo by Eugene Caibal



CAPTAINS PATRICK AND KRISTIAN LARSEN stand side by side after leading their team in the FCIAC tournament. Photo by Arleny Flores

"This season has been memorable. Aside from our record, we've definitely improved and grown as a team and as players. It's been the perfect end to my four years of field hockey at Westhill and I'm glad to have shared it with this team and these coaches," said Cooper.

Pippa's passion for field hockey is evident in her tireless work ethic and her eagerness to mentor and

inspire younger players.

She stands as a symbol of excellence in field hockey, representing the unwavering dedication and skill required to excel in this dynamic sport.

With the end of the fall season, the stories of Erick, Patrick, Kristian, and Pippa stand as testaments to the dedication, teamwork, and talent in our community.



VIKINGS SPORTS REVIEW



GIRLS VOLLEYBALL: 11 - 5

BOYS SOCCER: 7 - 4 - 4

FIELD HOCKEY: 1 - 11 - 1

CROSS COUNTRY: 3 - 12

GIRLS SOCCER: 0 - 13 - 1

FOOTBALL: 0 - 5

GIRLS SWIM: 0 - 6

KEY: WIN - LOSS - TIE



Westhill Vikings

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