



Taking up the chalk: Board members return to classroom

Jensen and others use job skills to teach for a day

By David Thomas

For one day, Board of Education member Doug Jensen played the role of a teacher.

According to math teacher Gwen Geiger, Jensen seemed to fit in the role.

"I would love to have him as a substitute," said Geiger. Jensen taught Geiger's algebra classes first and second hour, and her third hour AP calculus class Nov. 22.

"I also liked that he and several students knew each other, which is always helpful in teaching," said Geiger.

But what had Geiger impressed was the fact that Jensen related everything back to his

work.

"Right now, I'm relearning calculus," Jensen told the dominantly-freshman class. "I'm still using the stuff you're learning."

Jensen presented a real world example of linear equations, the day's lesson. In the example, Jensen compared the salaries of people working without a high school degree, with a high school degree, and with some form of college degree.

Jensen earned his master's in electrical engineering and is currently employed by Lucent Technologies, a company that designs, develops and manufactures telecommunications systems, software, and products.

"He knows his stuff," said Geiger. "He did a very nice job of relating his life to the work we were doing."

But Jensen could not dive straight into teaching.

For Geiger's calculus class, Jensen was to introduce a calculator program for generating slope fields. At the time, Jensen had never worked with slope fields and, as Geiger described, had to do "some serious homework" before teaching.

The idea of a board member, or anyone who is not a teacher, teaching class is not restricted to the high school.

(See Board teaches page 2)

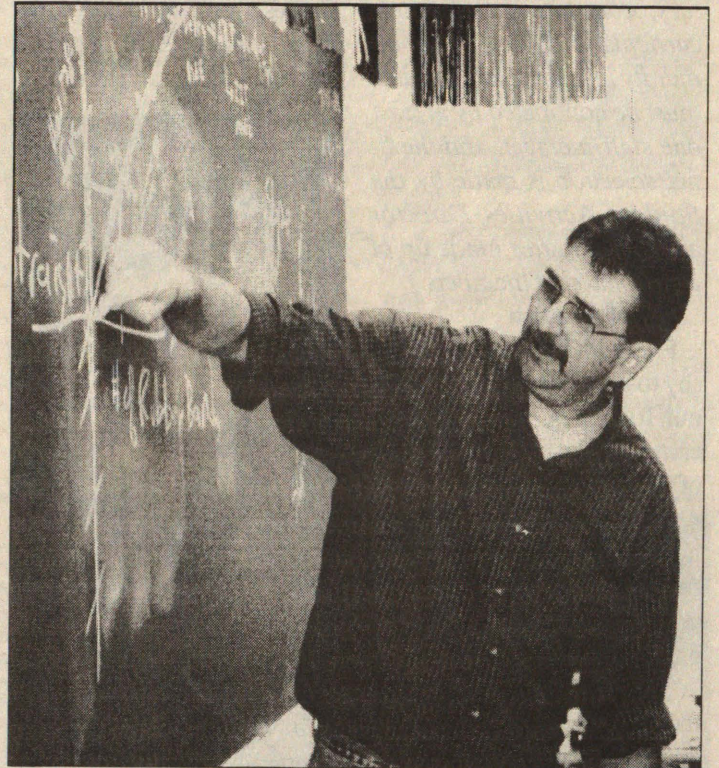


Photo by David Thomas

Board member Doug Jensen used skills that he utilizes every day in his job to teach algebra students, but had to re-learn calculus before attempting to relate that to students.

Wego 2 Africa project engages whole school

By Julie Youngwith

An order of Starbucks coffee, a new lip-gloss, a value meal at McDonalds. By donating the amount money it costs for one of these items, students can help the Wego 2 Africa project rebuild Angola's education.

The students in community leadership class, taught by social studies teacher Mary Ellen Daneels, are combining with other school clubs, local businesses and RISE International to raise \$10,000 in order to build and supply a school in rural Angola.

Angola was devastated by a 27-year civil war in which Angola's entire infrastructure, including the school system was destroyed.

"There has been a whole generation of Angolan citizens who have never had an opportunity to receive an education,"

said Daneels.

The school, along with RISE International, hopes to help rebuild and restore the schools in Angola. The school will be for all ages and will also serve as a health care center on Saturdays and a church on Sundays.

The students involved in Wego 2 Africa are excited about the project.

"We want to spread our influence because we have so much and they have so little. The Angolan people have been through a lot, they deserve this," said junior Stephanie Gore.

Daneels calculated that if every student and staff member in the school donates \$5 then they will have reached their goal of \$10,000, enough for both building and some school supplies.

(See Wego 2 Africa page 2)



Photo by Kellie Virnich

Picking up on the community leadership class' initiative, several other school groups have contributed to the Wego 2 Africa project. Thespians donated \$200 to the fund, Horticulture Club is selling trinkets for the cause in commons during lunches until Friday, and International Club began a donation contest between all of the foreign language classes, whose total donations will be matched by the foreign language department. Juniors Rochelle Chacon, left, and Alex Molina were excited to see the T-shirts, when the community leadership students delivered them Dec. 8.

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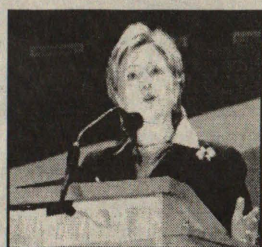
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Vodicka opens up to Student of the Month through participation and performance

(Student of the Month is based on a solid academic history, commitment in extra-curricular activities, and community involvement. Students must be nominated by at least one staff member, and the final selection is made by the Student Activities Director and a committee made up of additional staff members.)

By Kellie Virnich

Far from the freshman too shy to make new friends or try out for plays, Lora Vodicka earned the last title for Student of the Month in 2005.

Quickly finding her niche in high school, Vodicka has performed in everything from choir and thespians to dance production and color guard.

"I love performing and being on stage. Those are my favorite memories from school," she said. "You get a rush, and you meet amazing people."

Current president of thespians and color guard co-captain, Vodicka has come out of her shell these past four years, which she said was the biggest

change she has seen in herself. She said getting involved was the best thing she ever did, because it made her more outgoing and willing to try more.

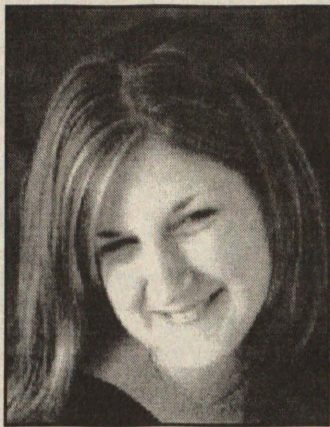


Photo courtesy of Lora Vodicka
Lora Vodicka hopes that performing in college will allow her to meet people outside of her friends, as it did in high school.

"I didn't do much in middle school and high school went by so much faster because I participated more and put myself out there," said Vodicka.

She hopes this change will help her transition to college, though she is still unsure of her school and major. She plans to

keep performing, and said that students should always work for something they want, because even if it does not work out, they gain that experience.

Vodicka has learned about the result of working toward goals not only through her studies, with her current valedictorian standing, but also outside of school. She takes piano lessons and dance classes, worked as a dance teacher and a camp assistant, and volunteers at her church.

"You have to have a goal, and stick with it. I didn't like piano when I first started playing it, but in high school I really tried, and ended up getting a lot better," she said. "I was also worried about AP English 4, but it's become one of my favorite classes this year."

Though Vodicka was nervous at first about college, she said that the closer she gets to it, the more excited she is to move on. She will miss her family and friends, but she is happy about not having to wake up so early.

Board teaches...(continued from page 1)

According to Teacher's Association president Barbara Laimins, the National Education Association (NEA) had suggested that every Board of Education member teach class for a day in order to increase awareness of what goes on in a school.

"We invited all board members to come in and teach. So far, we've only had four that have expressed interest," said Laimins.

The four board members that have taught or will teach are Jensen, Bill Brown, Gordon Cole, and board president Tony Reyes.

Chronicle editor recognized at national writing competition

By Julie Youngwith

Kellie Virnich, editor in chief of the Wildcat Chronicle, received an honorable mention for newswriting at the Journalism Education Association and National Scholastic Press Association Convention Nov. 11.

"I was surprised I won anything with so many people competing," said Virnich.

Eight yearbook and journal-

Brown is also an electrical engineer and taught Geiger's afternoon classes Dec. 9.

Cole will be teaching in social studies, partly due to his strong background in politics. However, a date has not been set for him.

According to Laimins, final arrangements have not yet been made for Reyes to teach. However, if he does teach, Laimins said he will probably do so in marketing and other business classes.

"He would be a good business education teacher, mainly because he runs his own business," said Laimins.

ism students went to the Chicago convention, with teens from all over the world.

"We wanted to meet other staffs and get new ideas," said senior Danielle Romano, a yearbook editor who also attended the convention.

They attended workshops geared toward improving their publications, then competed in various write-offs.

Wego 2 Africa...(continued from page 1)

Daneels plans to travel to Angola this summer to help in the construction of the school and train the teachers and encourages everyone in the community to join in the effort.

"The community leadership students are excited about this opportunity to have a positive impact on the Angolan children," said Daneels. "But they are mostly here for getting ideas out. This project takes the effort of many."

Community leadership is a semester class of 18 sophomores, juniors and seniors where the students explore what it means to be effective citizens of their community.

Community leadership has encouraged all clubs and classes to take part in Wego 2 Africa.

International Club, Horticulture Club, and FBLA, as

well as many classes have all decided to take part in the fundraiser.

Community leadership students designed Wego 2 Africa shirts and sold them in commons for \$10.

Community leadership is also allowing people to donate towards a certain item needed, like textbooks or even the wheelbarrow that will be used to build the school.

"A \$25 donation can buy five textbooks. Donating a textbook also allows a person to add in a nameplate so that the child receiving the book knows who donated it," said Gore.

In order to get a better feel for the situation in Africa, some community leadership students attended a presentation by RISE International where they were able to experience the Angolan culture.

Mind's Eye submission deadline draws near

By Ellyn Fortino

The annual issue of the Mind's Eye literary magazine is nearing its deadline for students to submit poetry, short stories, photos, drawings, essays, and any other artistic media.

Students can submit artwork to English teacher Andrea Cobbett in the English office, or any member of the magazine staff by Jan. 31.

"There are a lot of reasons to turn in artwork," said senior Jennifer Kamphaus. "It helps students recognize not only their own abilities but abilities in others and adds diversity to the school's environment."

After the deadline, the magazine staff will take a blind vote, then compile the chosen art.

The magazine will come out in May, and sold in commons during lunches for \$2.

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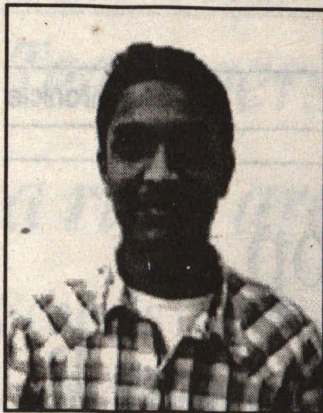


Photo by Cristina Sarnelli

Though he came to the U.S. knowing little English, Nishant Patel made great strides and won Student of the Month.

Patel earns Student of the Month for November

(Student of the Month is based on a solid academic history, commitment in extra-curricular activities, and community involvement. Students must be nominated by at least one staff member, and the final selection is made by the Student Activities Director and a committee made up of additional staff members.)

By Cristina Sarnelli

Senior Nishant Patel was November's Student of the Month for his outstanding achievement in school.

Patel said that he was probably chosen for student of the

month because of his hard work and good grades.

"I have a good grade point average and a lot of teachers nominated me. I came here three years ago with little English, and I had to work hard to learn, so that was my main accomplishment," he explained.

Not only does he earn good grades, but he also gets involved with the school. Patel has been a member of math team for two years and became a member of National Honor Society this year and was nominated for Who's Who Among

American High School Students for two years.

He also gets involved with the community outside of school by doing volunteer work. He helps out at the Manav Sadhna temple, a temple inspired by Ghandi that helps collect funds for the poor and less fortunate.

"I help clean the temple and organize festivals," Patel said.

After graduating, Patel hopes to attend Illinois State University or Western Illinois University. He hopes to study pre-medicine and then major in radiology.

His favorite high school teacher is Janelle Stefancic, who taught ESL 4.

"She is my favorite teacher because she helped me a lot through high school," he said.

Patel's favorite high school memory is when he attended one of the bilingual honor's nights.

"I performed a cultural dance with my friends, and it was honorable and memorable to me," he said.

"I will miss all of my friends and my teachers and the good times I had with them," Patel said.

Prom donations help make girls' dreams come true

By Katie Taylor

The Junior Leagues of Kane and DuPage Counties (JLKD) is asking individuals and organizations to help make dreams come true for financially challenged young women attending prom.

JLKD annually sponsors Cinderella's Closet, an organization that will offer free dresses and accessories donated by the public to young women that can't afford the cost of prom. This year's event will be March 4.

"When women or girls buy formal dresses, it's a special thing," said Jennifer Russell, Cinderella's Closet chair. "Passing a dress on can make regular people feel like they are doing something special too."

Cinderella's Closet is looking for plus size dresses that are clean, undamaged, long, formal, and less than 10 years old. Although they accept dresses of any size, there is a great need for plus sizes.

If donating a dress isn't possible, Russell suggests donating shoes, purses, earrings, bracelets, necklaces, wraps, unopened make-up, and unopened hosiery.

Other services and supplies required include dress storage, dress racks, dry cleaning services, printing and postage, moving services, alterations, mirrors for the boutique, shopping bags, salon services, and food to feed volunteers during the boutique.

Donations should be in clean, like-new conditions. They should not have plastic bags or cardboard inserts. JLKD won't accept hoop or crinoline skirts or pant suits.

Anyone who wants to donate should check JLKD's website, www.jlkd.org for available drop-off locations, and donate before Jan. 31.

"The girls are all very appreciative. It's a very special day for them," said Russell. "This is a easy way to donate and feel good."

Clinton joins ADI in Chicago to emphasize education and voting

New York senator speaks on youth involvement in politics

By David Thomas

Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-NY) emphasized the importance of civic participation in democracy at a recent summit.

"We need a new generation of activists," Clinton told an auditorium filled with high school and college students.

The address, held at Roosevelt University's Auditorium Theatre Dec. 3, was the highlight of a Midwest Regional Summit sponsored by the American Democracy Institute (ADI).

According to Clinton, there were several issues that required civic participation and discussion.

"It isn't right that the world's richest nation has no health care to provide its citizens," said Clinton. "It isn't right that people's jobs are being sent overseas. It isn't right that we cannot give our children a world-class education."

Her speech then took a new direction: voting.

"Young people are given a bad rap. Many people think that young people don't care," said Clinton. "But it was young people who had the greatest percentage gain in voting from 2000 to 2004."

She criticized the nation's electoral system, stating that other countries use electronic voting, and according to Clinton, "there wasn't one complaint."

Several times during her speech, Clinton praised the people simply for being in attendance.

"You can matter," said Clinton. "A lot of people un-

derstand that, otherwise they wouldn't be here right now."

Clinton also remarked on the cynicism of American politics and of the transformation of Washington D.C. in becoming an "evidence-free zone." She cited examples of the government's faults, mainly falling with the boundaries of environmental and energy policy.

'Many people think that young people don't care.'

--Hillary Clinton

"Energy policy should not be made by a secret energy task force made up of oil executives," said Clinton, which ignited applause from the crowd.

Clinton then spoke at length on the war in Iraq. Earlier in her speech, anti-war protestors heckled the senator from New York. The protestors, who demanded that U.S. troops withdraw immediately, shouted out that she supports the war. The protestors were removed from the theater.

"I do not believe we have an easy choice in Iraq," said Clinton. "We should not pull out right away, nor should we stay indefinitely. These elections are a turning point."

As of right now, Iraqis are scheduled to vote on the drafted constitution Thursday. Clinton said that America "can win this struggle. We just have to be smart on how we do it."

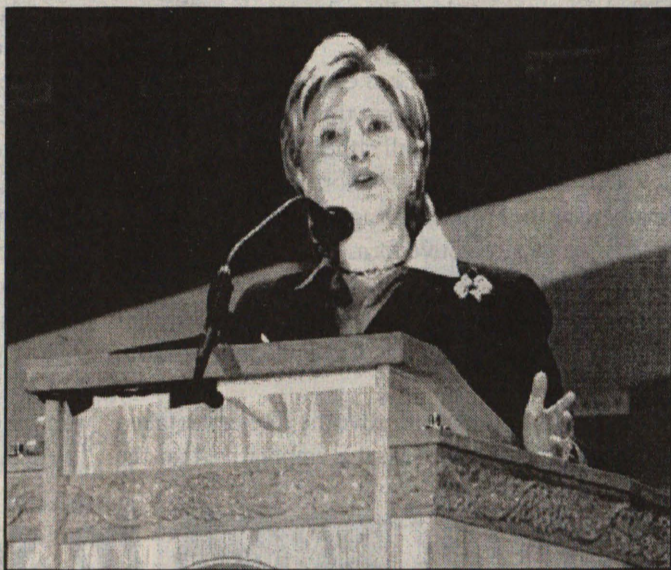


Photo courtesy of ADI

When Sen. Hillary Clinton began speaking on the war in Iraq, protestors began yelling that she supported it, and were escorted out of the summit.

ADI sponsors youth summit

By David Thomas

The American Democracy Institute (ADI), a nonprofit organization promoting "new relevancy for democracy in the 21st century," sponsored the Midwest Regional Summit in Chicago Dec. 3.

According to ADI president and CEO John Hart, U.S. democracy is in danger.

"People are turning away from democracy," Hart said. "They feel their voices are not being heard," Hart said.

Hart, who worked as a deputy assistant to President William Clinton, began ADI to give a voice to youth.

"We'll give you resources for your ideas," Hart said to the audience of almost 4,000 high school and college students. The summit, held at the Auditorium Theatre at Roosevelt University, featured U.S. Sen. Hillary Clinton as the keynote address. Clinton is the organization's honorary chair.

Gov. Rod Blagojevich also addressed the young audience with a warning about politics.

"It's a tough business. You seriously have to think about your motivations and your beliefs," said Blagojevich.

He commented on young people's work throughout time. He mentioned Alex-

ander Hamilton and James Madison, whose "The Federalist Papers" shaped the Constitution. He also mentioned those present when the Berlin Wall came down in 1991.

"Young people, whether in America or around the world, can make real change. You're too young to be cynical," said Blagojevich.

William McNary's speech was another highlight at the summit. He is the president of USAction, a non-profit, non-partisan group dedicated to "strengthening social, economics, and health security for all Americans."

McNary created a firestorm of applause when he shouted that property rights cannot overtake "human rights, women's rights, civil rights."

McNary emphasized the importance of voting and the youth in democracy. He advocated campaign finance reform, the extension of the Voting Rights Act and restoring voting rights to felons while urging young people to vote.

"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams," said McNary. "The future is yours. This is the right moment, the right time in history. We're one step away from taking America back from the hypocrites."

Our View

Bush Administration and FDA need to stop putting religion into science and approve Plan B

When the health and well being of the nation is compromised due to an individual's or group's personal values or when science and factual information is disregarded simply because it does not parallel a political agenda, a re-evaluation of who is running the country is quite overdue.

Although these scenarios can and do relate to many of the recent controversies involving our religiously biased government, this editorial is not about the war in Iraq or global warming.

Once again the nation has engaged in the pro-life versus pro-choice debate, but this time the disagreement revolves around a pill rather than a procedure.

Plan B, also known as the "morning-after" pill, was approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in 1999 as an alternative form of prescription emergency contraception. Plan B, if taken within 72 hours of unprotected sex, has the ability to prevent the fertilization of an egg, like that of a regular birth control pill.

Since Plan B is more effective the sooner it is taken following unprotected sex, it is imperative that the

drug be easily accessible to women.

For this reason, Barr Pharmaceuticals asked the FDA to consider the drug for over the counter (OTC) status; it's only practical.

Numerous amounts of clinical research were performed and presented with the support of a panel of independent experts advising the approval of Plan B for OTC use, however, the FDA overlooked the scientific data and did not follow the panel's recommendations for the first time in over 10 years.

The decision has been indefinitely deferred due to a "lack of evidence" on the drug's safety for young teens.

In protest, Susan Wood, former director of the FDA Office of Women's Health, resigned five days after the deferment stating, "I can no longer serve as staff when scientific and clinical evidence, fully evaluated and recommended for approval by the professional staff here, has been overruled."

The Government Accountability Office reviewed the FDA's handling of the Plan B case, comparing it with other similar applications and concluded that "the FDA's rationale for denying the initial Plan B

application in May 2004 did not follow the FDA's traditional practices."

Due to the unique handling of the case, and the obvious denial of scientific evidence of Plan B's effectiveness and safety, speculations are pointing to an ideological meddling by political appointees of the Bush Administration. A meddling that is causing the FDA to continuously postpone and oppose controversial bills simply for political reasons.

What makes the situation even more mind-boggling is how conservatives can oppose a treatment that is predicted to prevent over half of the 3 million unintended pregnancies in addition to the 1.3 million abortions that occur in the nation each year. That statistic makes this change seem highly beneficial to the women and unborn children and as such, should be made readily available by the agency established to protect the health and well being of the nation's citizens.

The Bush Administration needs to stop pushing only for issues that fit their religious beliefs and stop denying scientific evidence that does not coincide with their conservative political agenda.

School needs to start later to accommodate the sleeping habits of modern teenagers

Walk into any first period class and you will most likely find a classroom full of weary, inattentive kids who have no idea what is going on.

This could be blamed on laziness or lack of interest in the subject being taught, but most likely it is due to the fact that adolescents do not get enough sleep; a problem that could be avoided by allowing high schools to start later in the morning.

According to the National Sleep Foundation (NSF), about 60 percent of minors say that they feel tired during the day.

The NSF has conducted many studies finding that adolescents not only need more sleep (about 9.25 hours a night), but that their internal clocks are shifting to later start times.

Basically, this pattern means that a) teenagers need more sleep, b) they aren't getting it, and c) they are forced to wake up before their sleep cycles have finished.

This means that many sleepy teenagers are getting up in the morning and attending school unprepared to learn.

Many could argue that if kids just go to bed earlier

then there would be no problem, but activities like sports, jobs, homework and socializing are pushing

internal clocks start shifting, making it easier for their bodies to stay up later, like adults, and harder to go to bed earlier.

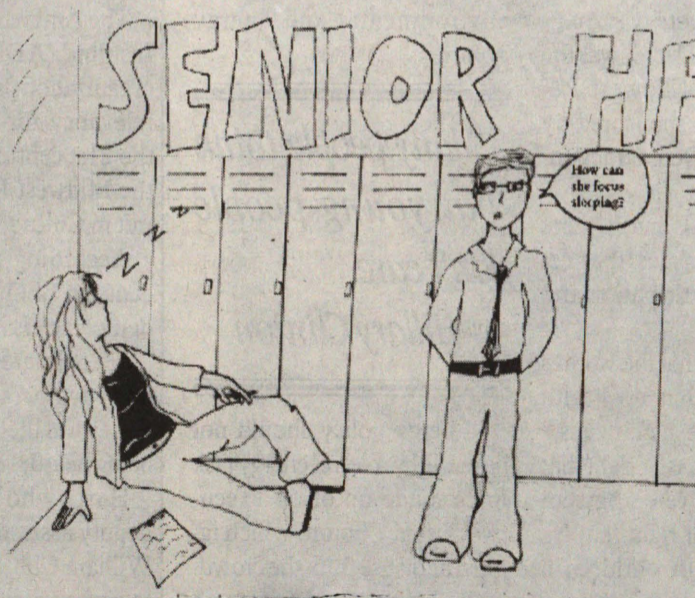
Is it beneficial to students to start the school day at 7:55 a.m.? The answer is no. Adolescent brains do not start functioning at peak until around 8:30 or 9 a.m. At many schools first period is over by then.

School should not start until 9 a.m. That way, students would be awake, alert and able to learn, instead of drooping, lethargic and uninterested in the lesson.

Oftentimes, the students' lack of participation and alertness annoys first period teachers. This behavior is not intentional; it is simply the biological clocks.

The NSF said that schools that moved back their start times found improvement in attendance and enrollment rates, increased daytime alertness, and decreased student depression.

It is time for schools to start synchronizing their schedules with their students' body clocks so that teens are in school during their most alert hours and can achieve their full potential.



bedtimes later.

Also, by the time they hit their teens, young people's

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THE WILDCAT CHRONICLE is the student newspaper at West Chicago Community High School. It is a public forum for freedom of expression and encourages readers to express their views. The Chronicle publishes eight times a year, with the student editorial board making the decisions concerning the paper's contents. Unsigned editorials represent the views of the majority of the staff.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR are welcomed and will be published as space allows. Letters must be signed, although the staff may withhold a name upon request. The paper reserves the right to edit letters for grammar and clarity, and may refuse to publish a letter. Letters to the editor may be e-mailed to Laura Kuehn at lkuehn@d94.org or delivered to Room 319 before or after school.

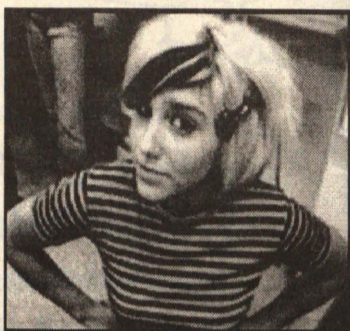
Teenagers choking themselves for a rush are unaware of the dangers

Schools need to teach kids consequences of a game

By Ellyn Fortino

There is a new addiction among America's youth that can easily be hidden from parents. It is known as the choking game.

Experts say that children who play the choking game are not usually troubled and that is what is troubling parents.



Some teens say that it is a high without drugs, but they are really playing suffocation roulette.

Children play the game by compressing the carotid arteries in their necks, reducing blood flow and

oxygen to the brain. That produces a momentary loss of consciousness, preceded by lightheadedness. When they release the pressure, a surge of pent-up blood flows to the brain, creating a euphoric rush.

The practice is also known as the pass out game, the fainting game, the tingling game, as well as funky chicken, blackout, flatliner, airplaning, suffocation roulette and space monkey.

Children do it at parties, sleepovers, in school locker rooms and in bathrooms. But they've added a danger-

ous element to a game some of their parents played as children. Now instead of just squeezing one another, they wrap belts, ropes, ties, dog leashes, even bicycle chains around their necks to produce a tingling sensation.

This allows the game to be played alone, when one mistake — a belt too short, a rope too tight — can doom a child.

Most children have no idea how dangerous this activity is and parents do not know that kids are doing this until someone dies or is brain damaged. Schools seem oblivious to the game though it has been reported numerous times around the country that this is an activity that often takes place at school. Medical examiners and police continue to classify these deaths as suicide when there is no evidence of suicidal behavior or that the child intended to take his life. The only way to stop the deaths caused by this activity is to publicize the danger.

According to George Mason University, over 50 junior high students and older have died due to the choking game, and the number keeps growing every day. In July, USA Today reported that children as young as 10 have tried it; older teens tend to do it looking to increase sexual pleasure, while others are seeking a drugless high.

Why are schools not informing their students about this dangerous game considering so many people are trying it and as a result losing their lives? Schools tend to concentrate on informing students about drugs and alcohol in health classes but nothing is mentioned about dangerous "fun" like the choking game. Turning a blind eye is not the answer; nor is waiting to inform students until someone has died or been injured from the game. Something as simple as informing the students about the different warning signs of playing the game could help save a life.

Greed and early sale specials

ruin the meaning of Christmas

Focus of holiday shifted from giving to material goods

By Cristina Sarnelli

Christmas is known as the season of giving, spending time with friends and family, and holiday cheer, but every year it seems like the "giving" part of Christmas becomes more important, bringing with it frustrated shoppers and annoying television commercials.

The holiday is centered on one main idea: presents. When one hears the word Christmas, the very first thought that comes to mind probably won't be anything other than "Okay, how much money will I spend this year?" or "Hooray, presents!"

"Christmas is a materialistic holiday because everyone is greedy and all people want are gifts," sophomore Steven Szul commented.

It seems that Christmas has lost its joyful spirit and has turned into a chaotic mess dealing only with money, and it's not a small amount of money either.

The U.S. Census Bureau found that department stores alone made almost \$32 billion last December. The total amount of sales last December from online shopping was almost \$22 billion dollars. This is an outrageous amount of money, and to think that this huge amount of money is made in one month's time is mind blowing.

No wonder Christmas has turned out to be this way. With commercials advertising expensive devices such as iPods and game consoles, more and more people want these types of high priced gifts, turning Christ-

mas into an epidemic of greed. Junior Heather Stoeberl gave her input about how she felt about the changing holiday.

"All people care about anymore is what they get for Christmas, and no one cares about others," she said.

And if greed isn't enough motivation to get people shopping, the early holiday commercials surely will. With commercials advertising holiday sales even before Thanksgiving, it's no surprise that people feel rushed into having to start holiday shopping earlier and earlier each year.

Stoeberl added that the early bird specials and outrageous holiday sales are out of control.

"It's ridiculous how people wake up extremely early just to save a couple bucks," she said.

Not only is that crazy, but some people who try to get in on these special bargains end up getting hurt.

This year CNN released a report the day after Thanksgiving about stories in which early Christmas shoppers in search of saving money on holiday bargains were injured. One woman was toppled over in a Wal-Mart because so many people were rushing to get a head start on the good deals. People stepped on her and walked past her, and others got pushed to the ground with her. It's one thing when people become greedy in a matter of days, but when people actually get hurt because of it, then it's ridiculous.

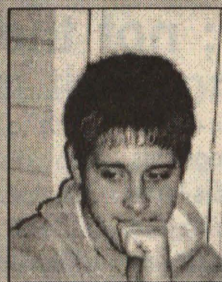
The days where Christmas season meant sitting in front of a warm fire sipping hot chocolate while reminiscing are gone. The idea of sharing and giving through kindness of heart has turned into guilt and greed.

"Instead of spending more time with family, people are out shopping all the time," Szul said.

Christmas is supposed to be a time when people slow down and take the time to enjoy their lives, not rush about trying to squeeze in every possible moment to buy presents and sink into debt. It's time for us to get our values and morals straight. After all, 'tis the season to be jolly.

Question and Answer

What is your favorite thing to do during winter break?



Jordan Meissner
Senior

"Go snowboarding."



Sam Nolte
Sophomore

"Snowball fights and shopping."



Carrie Staton
Junior

"Steal icicles from houses and then eat them."



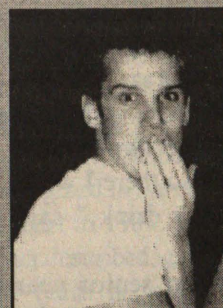
George Fortman
Freshman

"Wait for Santa to come."



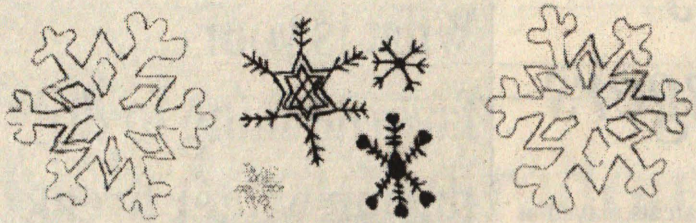
Jackie Boyd
Senior

"Throw snowballs at cars."



Mike Klein
Junior

"Go to Jamaica with the boys."



Dutch boy; not the paint

By Julie Youngwith

Although most people do not realize it, Donner is not this reindeer's real name. His birth name was actually Donder, the Dutch word for thunder, but when he joined Santa's team all of the other reindeer had trouble pronouncing his foreign name. Donder, known as the easy-going, free-spirited reindeer, just went along with it and has been Donner ever since.

"I guess I've just gotten used to everyone saying my name wrong," said Donner.

Donner was born and raised in Holland by his cheesemaker parents, Dirk and Margreet van Zanten. He was a very active reindeer serving as president of both the tree decorating club and Christmas caroling club, as well as captain of the extremely competitive snowman building team. One year his team placed second in the world championship.

On the weekends he cashiered at his parent's Holly Jolly Cheese Shoppe.

He was also a star of his school's track team, and it wasn't long before Santa Claus and his

elves made the long trek from the North to recruit the swift reindeer.

"I saw him run the 50-meter dash and knew I needed him to help guide my sleigh," said Claus.

When he received a letter inviting him to join the team, Donner kicked off his wooden shoes, put on his jingle bells, said farewell to the tulips and pranced on up to the North Pole.

"I was so excited when I found out I was on Santa's list," said Donner. "It was something I was dreaming of my whole life."

At first Donner did not fit in with all of the other reindeer.

"All of the other reindeer, especially Dasher, made fun of my accent. I think they were just intimidated by my wooden shoes," said Donner.

Even though he is living his dream in the North Pole, Donner still misses home.

"I especially miss my parents," he said. "They still send me big blocks of cheese from the shoppe every week."

This year will be Donner's eighteenth year pulling the sleigh on Christmas Eve.

Vivacious and vibrant Vixen

By Andrea Bradley

Although Vixen is a reindeer, she is as sly as a fox.

Ever since she was born, she let others know who was in charge.

By the eighth grade, Vixen joined her school's cheerleading squad and soon became the captain, maliciously tricking the coach into doing anything she said.

Vixen soon had it all, and went into high school as "the popular girl." No matter what, Vixen always found a way to manipulate her friends and little brother.

"She always tricked me into doing things for her. If she asked me to get her a drink, I would always say no. But then, she would say 'I bet you can't get my drink in under 30 seconds!' And you know me, I knew I could, so there I would go, getting her drink," said brother Blitzen.

By her senior year in high school, Vixen had already been

crowned prom queen.

"I had everything. I was the captain of the varsity cheerleading squad and volleyball. My boyfriend Spud was hot, and let's face it, everyone wanted to be me," said Vixen.

It was Vixen's loud mouth that got her the spot on Santa's Sleigh Team. After she lost in

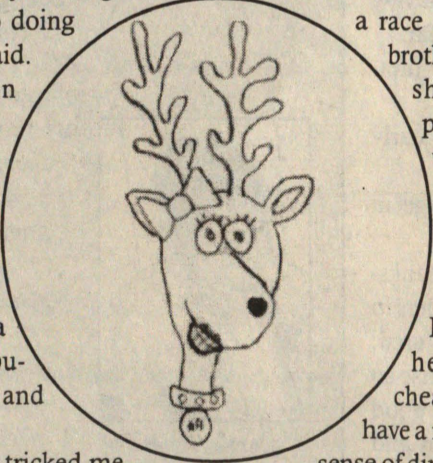
a race against her brother Blitzen, she complained her way into Santa's office.

"It just wasn't fair! He cheated, he always cheats. Plus, I have a much better sense of direction than he does, I would be perfect for the team!" she said.

Santa couldn't take her complaining after listening to her for hours, and he awarded Vixen the spot alongside her brother.

Ever since, Vixen has been bragging about her amazing reindeer abilities.

"I am the best, darn it!" she added, like always.



Cute and cuddly Cupid

By Katie Taylor

Cupid has a refreshingly optimistic outlook on love and romance amidst the ever-complex dating scene of the North Pole.

For years, she has had a crystalline vision of the life she wants to have. First and foremost, she wants true love.

"I have always looked for that perfect special someone," said Cupid. "I hope he has really big antlers."

In addition, she also wants her husband to be wealthy, handsome and belong to the social elite.

Dasher seemed her prince charming, but after a tumultuous relationship, she left him before his stint in rehab.

"He couldn't expect me to deal with that," she said. "I have enough of my own problems to worry about his insecurities."

Not long after the breakup, Cupid fell hard for her long time crush, the star reindeer Blitzen. Despite his reputation for being a Casanova, Cupid saw past his reputation and discovered a "soul mate."

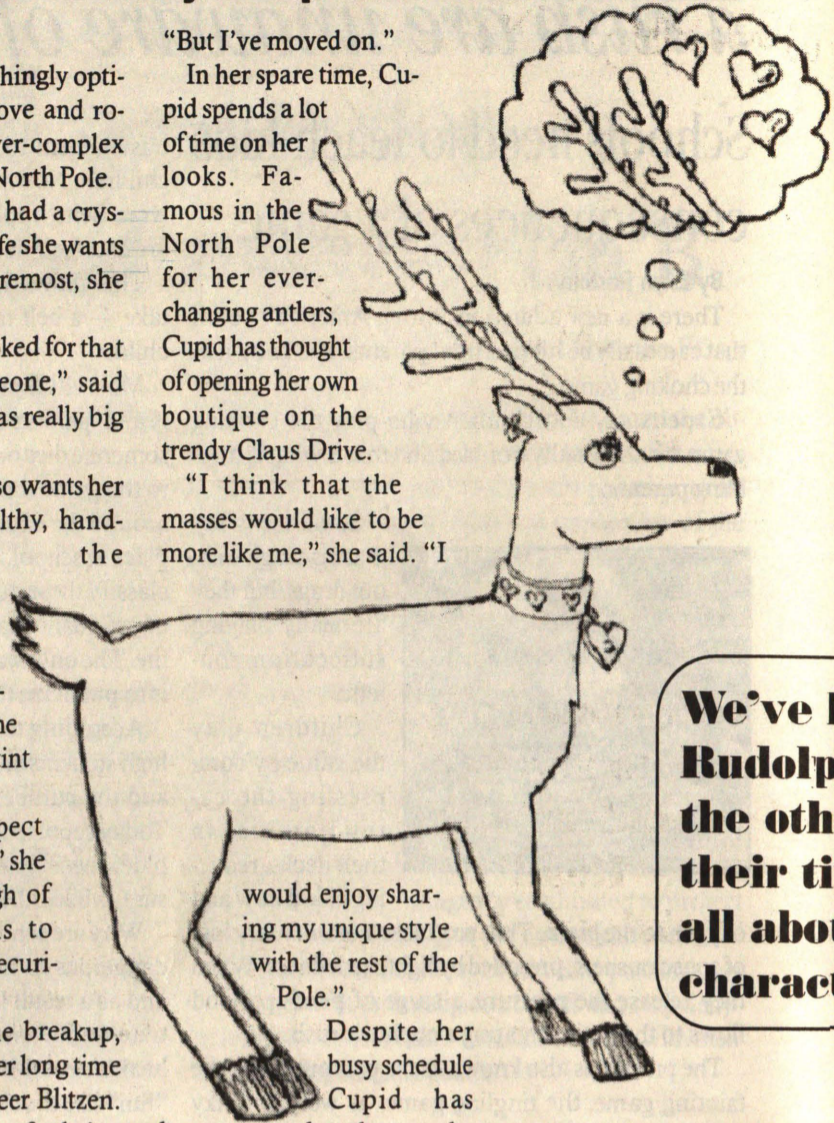
They dated for awhile, but true to his nature, Blitzen became involved with a series of other reindeer, leaving Cupid lonely and heartbroken.

"I was crushed," said Cupid.

"But I've moved on."

In her spare time, Cupid spends a lot of time on her looks. Famous in the North Pole for her ever-changing antlers, Cupid has thought of opening her own boutique on the trendy Claus Drive.

"I think that the masses would like to be more like me," she said. "I



would enjoy sharing my unique style with the rest of the Pole."

Despite her busy schedule Cupid has kept her place on the elite line of Santa's Christmastime sleigh pullers for more than 15 years.

"Sleigh carrying keeps me level," Cupid said. "This Christmas is going to be a great race, and I won't let any of my drama get in the way of the job."

We've heard of Rudolph! But the other reindeer characters...

Look, up in the sky! Comet!

By Andrea Bradley

As a teenager living in the North Pole, Comet was eager to get out on his own and make money. His parents were reluctant at first, but when he found a job at a local McPenguin, they agreed to let him go. Every day after school, Comet went straight to work.

The job wasn't the best, and soon Comet became the slave of the store. Everyday his boss made him clean tables, sweep the floor, and pick up garbage. One day while working a night shift, Comet snapped.

His boss told him that he was only good for washing floors and would never amount to anything. Comet quit on the spot.

One day while watching TV, Comet saw a commercial for the try-outs for Santa's Sleigh Team.

"At that point, I knew it was my time to shine. It was my only chance to show my darn boss who was better!" said Comet.

Comet knew he had nine months to get ready. Everyday after school he went to the gym.

Comet tried to run a mile every other day, but his motivation

started slipping. His close friend Lancer suggested joining the school track team. Comet took the advice and soon was the fan favorite and all the cheerleaders cheered hard for him.

The day of try-outs finally approached and Comet crushed his first opponent. But, Comet's second round didn't go as well as he wanted.

"I was put up against a reindeer named Dasher, I ran against him in a track meet once before, and he blew me away. I thought I was done," said Comet.

The second day of tryouts was much better. Still, believing that he had no chance in winning, Comet refused to give up. This is what got him onto Santa's team.

"I could tell right away that Comet had the heart for my team. He isn't the fastest, but he is the hardest worker on the team," said Santa Claus.

Ever since, Comet couldn't be happier working for his new boss. He doesn't even mind occasionally cleaning up after the others.

Dancer and her

By Brittany Blanchard

After suffering a debilitating injury last Christmas, Santa's most vivacious reindeer has beaten the odds and earned a spot on the North Pole's most prestigious talent competition: Arctic Idol: Dance-o-rama.

Dancer, described by her reindeer peers as thoughtful, unique, and creative, injured her left antler last year after being involved in a head-on collision.

Doctors speculated that Dancer may never be able to carry Santa's sleigh nor perform her original dancing again, however hard work and determination paid off for the spirited reindeer.

These boots are

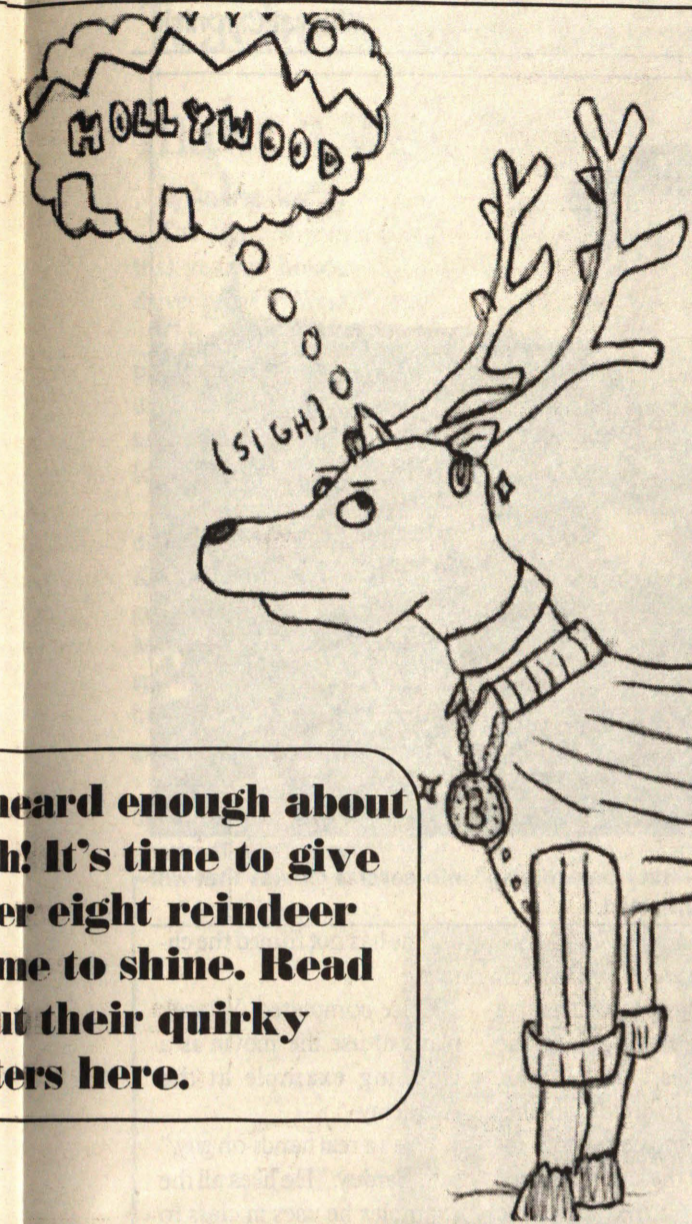
By Ellyn Fortino

Growing up at the North Pole seems fun and carefree for reindeers, but that was not the case for young Prancer.

Due to all the snow at the North Pole, Prancer's mother made him wear bright red, rubber snow boots so he did not catch cold. "I hated those stupid boots," said Prancer. "They smelled like cheap, new tennis shoes, and all the kids at school would laugh."

Comet was the meanest reindeer of all to Prancer at school, and every day he would laugh at his rubber boots and throw snowballs at his face.

"Prancer was such a dork in elementary school with those big red boots," said Comet. "I don't



Blitzen becomes bad boy of the North Pole

By Kellie Virnich

What would Santa Claus' Christmas Eve sleigh ride be without Blitzen?

"Peaceful," said Claus and his other reindeer.

"He was always drinking or doing salt licks. At every club or party we went to he would get a little 'blitzed' and before you knew it, he was being arrested," said reindeer Donner.

Soon Blitzen began filming his reality show "Down to Earth," which involved him living in rural areas with normal deer families.

His career progressed as every wannabe actor's does. He went on to do another year of his show before moving on to star in predictable horror movies and cameo in bad sitcoms. Many thought that Blitzen was, at that point in his career, a double threat with his various product lines and his acting.

"Blitzen was definitely a threat. For a while his presence was almost enough to stop people from watching TV or movies, and even enough for them to not want to

shop. That was how ridiculous he was," said Claus.

People soon got tired of Blitzen's antics. As the deer aged he got desperate to reclaim the limelight, even attempting a career in music. The project failed.

Unfortunately that was not the last time the world would hear from Blitzen. He was recently found with massive amounts of salt lick, resulting in numerous hours of community service.

Currently, Blitzen is taking a break from his high-profile career and is at Claus' ranch, the North Pole. His manager has said that during this brief hiatus his client will concentrate on pulling a sleigh like an honest, working-class reindeer.

Blitzen refused an interview, but in a prepared statement for the media he said, "I am just going to take it one Christmas at a time, and stay focused. I am really starting to hit my stride on the team, and I am back on track and headed in the right direction."

heard enough about h! It's time to give er eight reindeer me to shine. Read at their quirky ers here.

er dancing revolution

as she was able to audition for the regional contest at the urging of Santa to overcome her obstacles and pursue her dancing aspirations.

"She always choreographed the best routines for our holiday showcases but I knew she had the potential for something greater," said Santa.

Auditions took place over the Thanksgiving weekend but the show has conveniently decided to postpone taping until after the holiday season so that Dancer will not have to abandon her sleigh pulling duties.

"As grateful as I am for this opportunity, my priorities lie

first and foremost with Santa as one of his reindeer and I am honored to have the privilege to work for him each Christmas," Dancer said. "No matter what the outcome of this competition I will always remain loyal to Santa and my responsibilities here."

Although Dancer's reindeer colleagues declined an official comment, Santa assured the public that they are all greatly in support of Dancer's latest achievements.

"We're all very happy for Dancer," said Santa. "After everything she has been through, she most certainly deserves this opportunity."

are made for prancing

feel bad at all throwing snow at him."

Every day Prancer would go home crying because of Comet pushing him in the snow and throwing snowballs at him, but his mother still insisted on him wearing the red boots. Over the years, Prancer became more and more scared of snow.

He developed chionophobia, fear of snow. Every opportunity he had, he would avoid it. Prancer started prancing along on the snow so his feet would not have to touch it.

"Every time I see snow I get scared, even to this day," said Prancer. "It just reminds me of being bullied."

His mother started to become

worried when Prancer would not even go outside to make snow deer.

"That was once his favorite thing to do, and when he lost interest I knew something was bothering him," she said. Prancer's mother sent him to reindeer recovery to overcome his fear of snow.

"I was really angry with my mom, but now I know that without her help I would not be able to fly Santa's sleigh," Prancer said. "Now when it snows I smile and play outside instead of shutting myself in my room."

Over the months Prancer has overcome his fear, however he still has the habit of prancing over the snow.

At 18, Blitzen decided to branch out from his life as a socialite, creating a clothing line and acting in several minor films.

Suddenly Blitzen had burst onto the scene, and could be seen on the candy cane carpet at every movie premiere and award show.

The other reindeer were not happy with Blitzen's newfound fame.

Dashing through the snow with Dasher

By David Thomas

True to his namesake, Dasher was one of the fastest reindeer in Santa Claus' pack. The only thing that could keep up with him was his past.

"The worst mistake I've ever made was the whipped cream," said Dasher, now a broken reindeer with broken dreams. "Man, my life was so much simpler then."

Shortly after becoming one of Santa Claus' reindeer, Dasher grew a massive ego. According to some of Santa's elves, Dasher proclaimed himself the fastest reindeer in the world.

"He was annoying to the point of agony," said one elf, anonymously. "Then, one day, another reindeer showed him up."

The reindeer in question was a foreigner who challenged Dasher to a race. The foreigner beat Dasher, and Dasher's ego collapsed.

"I just kept trying to push myself to be the best," said Dasher. "That's when I went downhill."

Dasher started to eat whipped cream constantly. He saw vast

improvement in all his times, but his health suffered.

"The doctor said I was on a path to self-destruction, but I didn't listen," said Dasher.

According to the Food and Drug Administration, digested whipped cream can give reindeer temporary super-reindeer effects, such as

wrong."

Dasher's day of reckoning came on Christmas Eve, 1984. He had just eaten a White Castle slider when his body shut down.

"I completely crashed. I lost all control of my bodily functions. I couldn't do anything," said Dasher.

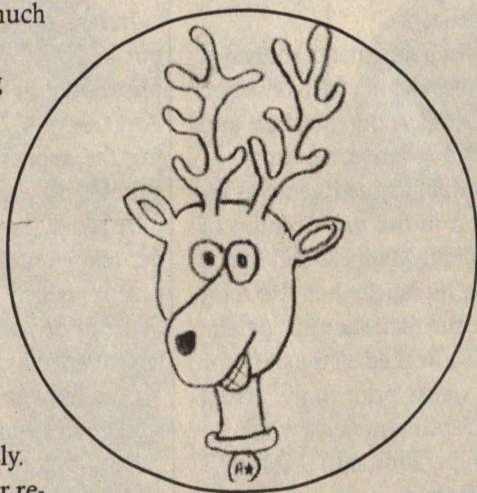
Dasher's incapacitation led to a five-hour delay of Claus' run. The next day, an enraged Claus fired Dasher off the team.

"They replaced me. But not with another reindeer. They just digitally add me with that CGI [computer generated image] stuff," Dasher spat.

On his own, Dasher quickly exhausted his supply of food, and he was unable to buy any.

His life broken, Dasher entered Reindeer Anonymous (RA), an organization that helps reindeer with addictions. He entered their 12-step program, and, despite a few relapses, he has reached step nine, otherwise known as apologizing.

According to him, Dasher has formally apologized to Santa for that fateful night in 1984. However, as Dasher described, getting back on the team is "slim to none."



Movie takes a spin on high school drama

By David Thomas

Senior Eric Lauer had no idea how fun it could be to star in a movie.

"It's really fun, especially when they turn on the cameras when you're just doing normal stuff," said Lauer. "But I have to tone myself down for my character. I just have too much personality."

Lauer is starring in "My First Homecoming," a movie being filmed at the high school. Lauer plays awkward teenager Chris while industrial arts teacher Christopher Bardey plays the adult Chris.

"It starts out with my character, Chris, dismissing class when another teacher comes in and convinces him to be a chaperone for the homecoming dance," said Bardey.

The movie was written and directed by film teacher Andrew Vitacek, a friend of Bardey's.

"Everyone has gone to a homecoming dance or prom," said writer-director Andrew Vitacek. "I just wondered,

'What if you go to your first homecoming, but you're not a student, you're a teacher?'"

Vitacek teaches film, Photoshop, and web design at the American Academy of Art in Chicago. Vitacek got the idea for "My First Homecoming" when he was chatting with Bardey while they were roommates in Atlanta.

"The movie basically started out as a 'what if' question. It stayed in the back of my mind, where I added more details and such as time went on," said Vitacek. "I wrote the initial script in a night."

There have been many changes in the script. More dialogue has been given to Amy, the object of the young Chris' affections in high school. However, his efforts of wooing Amy (played by junior Courtney Antzacak) are hampered by the presence of her boyfriend, jock stereotype J-Bird.

"J-Bird is the man with the ladies at his hands," said junior Derek Soutar, who plays the younger J-Bird.



Photo by David Thomas

Andrew Vitacek plans on expanding "My First Homecoming" into several movies that will follow other characters who are all interconnected.

However, as Vitacek and Bardey will testify, the filming process has been rough.

"It's not as easy to film a movie as I thought it would be," said Vitacek. "I now look at movies and commercials in a completely different light."

Vitacek is debating whether or not to expand the story of "My First Homecoming" into more movies, eventually turning into a series.

"I've already written scripts

for other movies. Right now, even while we're filming, I'm adding things that would serve as foreshadowing into the other movies," said Vitacek. "I just have to decide whether or not the movies would focus around the lead character, or several others, and have them interconnected."

Vitacek is still filming "My First Homecoming." He is primarily working on scenes that involve numerous extras,

and he has not filmed the climax.

Once completed, Vitacek plans to use the movie as a teaching example at the Academy.

"He's a real hands-on guy," said Bardey. "He likes all the examples he uses in class to be stuff he's done."

"My First Homecoming" will make its debut in the high school's film festival, and at the Academy's film festival.

Midnight Madness participants reap the benefits of hard work

By Brittany Blanchard

The annual Midnight Madness took place in the Bishop gym on Nov. 16 complete with pie eating contests, game shows, and the winning of a brand new ATV.

As always, Midnight Madness was a student-orchestrated event produced by the marketing class as a class project.

Formerly run by Dan McCarthy, Midnight Madness was a new experience not only for the students this year, but for teacher Doug French as well.

Being that it was French's first time advising students on such a task, a lot of preparation went into the event starting with watching tapes of previous Midnight Madnesses.

Overall, French was pleased with the outcome of the event.

"I didn't know what to expect having not seen one before, but for the most part it exceeded my expectations," said French.

Although there is always room for improvement, French said it was the students' seniority at the high school and excitement about the event

that aided the organization the most.

"Obviously the class is mostly juniors and seniors and their experience having been here and knowing the teachers and the school was a plus," said French. "They were also very enthusiastic."

French said that the only real weakness within the production was student organization and efficiency between events.

Senior Justine Egert was involved in the organization of Midnight Madness and said it was a lot harder but also a lot more fun than she anticipated.

"We worked on the show for four weeks prior to the actual event and crammed a whole lot of preparation into that time," said Egert.

Despite the work and stress caused by last minute malfunctions, Egert is grateful she had the opportunity to participate in the event.

"At the end when everything finally came together, it was an awesome feeling," said Egert. "It taught me a lot about marketing that I wouldn't have been able to obtain just by reading a textbook or doing worksheets."

College Column...

Students begin sending FAFSA applications in hopes of receiving assistance from colleges

By Kellie Vernich

As first semester comes to an end, both juniors and seniors must prepare for important steps in the college process.

In January, seniors must fill out and send their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), a form tracking the applicant's financial situation. Schools then prepare packages telling the student how much aid they will receive, which can assist students in deciding which college to attend.

Guidance counselor Mary Roley, who is in charge of the school's communications with colleges, urges seniors to fill out FAFSA as soon as possible.

"If a student applies too late for federal assistance, the money may already be gone," she said.

The money can come in the form of grants, loans and work-studies. Grants do not need to be paid back, whereas federal loans must begin to be paid off six months after the

student stops attending the school.

While seniors attempt to afford college, juniors should begin visiting campuses and narrowing down their prospective choices.

According to Roley, students cannot begin their searches too soon, and need to find out what they are looking for in a school before they make any decisions.

She said, "If students can narrow their college search as juniors, then in senior year they can concentrate on applying those few schools they are definitely considering. Students should consider a school's programs, size, distance from home, environment and entrance requirements."

Most importantly Roley said, is applying early on, whether for a school, aid or scholarships, especially for borderline students. Though some smaller and more prestigious schools wait for a pool to grow and choose the best applicants, most public

schools will take students who fit their criteria and apply before the rush.

"Students may not think they qualify for financial aid, but they should still try for it," said Roley. "If you don't at least ask, you're not going to get it."

In the end of the year rush, counselors ask for applications and transcript requests at least two weeks before deadlines, and Roley warned seniors not to panic if a school says their transcripts have not arrived.

"College admissions offices are just as busy and hectic as we are here, so even once they get a student's paper, they still need time to sort and process them," she said. "Sometimes it's just a matter of the papers getting separated or not being in the right office yet."

Rather than sending test scores or transcripts a second time, she advised to wait at least another two weeks, unless students are pushing a deadline.

Teachers help terminally ill children make a wish by gobbling up donations

By Andrea Bradley

The spirit of giving is high this year as holiday charity drives come to West Chicago.

This year, the school participated in a food drive, a toy drive, and the turkey suit contest all in hopes to raise money for those in need.

It all started with the toy drive for victims of hurricane Katrina. Students were congratulated by P.E. teacher Kim Maloney for their "tremendous spirit of giving," and for their help with putting together a great toy drive.

The school also had a food drive, where boxed and canned goods were donated to the West

Chicago Food Pantry.

Before Thanksgiving break, students donated \$200 to the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

Last year's contest grossed more than \$3,000.

Student Council repeated the drive from last year, saying that whichever teacher had the most money in their can would have to dress up in the turkey suit.

This year's contest was between new teachers only, where as last year's drive included most teachers at the school.

"Student Council thought with the number of new teachers this type of welcoming

would be special for them," said Maloney.

Maloney believes that the drive this year made less money due to the multiple drives in which students participated in.

"Maybe the money donated was lower because we went to the new staff and did not have veteran favorite teachers that were included last year," she said.

The day before the long weekend, two teachers had to wear the suit throughout the school day. Although every teacher received donations, winners were Physical Education teacher Andy Rienke and



Photo by Andrea Bradley

Social studies teacher Mitch McKenna (left) and physical education teacher Andy Rienke (right) endure a day in turkey suits in order to raise money for the Make-A-Wish foundation.

social studies teacher Mitch McKenna.

Although last year's turkey contest earned more money, this year the school has raised

over \$8,000 between all three drives.

"Students of We-Go have been quite generous this year," said Maloney.

Lauren Santelli's multiple achievements in dance result in Artist of the Month

(Each month a different fine arts teacher will select Artist of the Month. Helen Zmrhal chose Lauren Santelli as Artist of the Month.)

By Julie Youngwith

December Artist of the Month senior Lauren Santelli hopes to turn her passion for dance into a career.

Santelli had been dancing since she was about three years old when her mom put her in a ballet class to give her poise and good posture.

"My mom never thought I'd love dance so much," said Santelli. "I wanted to dance all the time."

She has been a member of the EXCEL Dance Company for the past seven years and



Photo by Julie Youngwith

Lauren Santelli hopes to pursue a career in dance and eventually become a choreographer.

has studied at Moves Dance Studio and Encore Dance Productions.

Santelli has also taken master's classes from a variety of dance companies, including River Dance Chicago, State Street Dance, Hubbard Street and Ruth Page Dance Center. She is also a member of dance production at school.

Although she has been trained in many types of dance such as ballet, tap, jazz, hip-hop, modern, tumbling and salsa; Santelli's favorite type of dance is lyrical.

"I love lyrical because it

leaves room for interpretation," said Santelli. "It tells a story and lets the audience connect with the performer."

This dancer has proven her talent by winning numerous dance scholarships to take classes in Los Angeles at the EDGE and Millennium dance studios. She has also received scholarships to conventions like Nexstar, Urban Jamm, Hollywood Vibe and Hollywood Connection.

Santelli is inspired by many choreographers, including her

dance company's artistic directors Rachelle Oschner, Brian Friedman and Mia Micheals.

One of Santelli's favorite memories of dance involves her performances at several benefit shows including

"Dance for Life", an AIDS benefit show in 2002 and 2003, and a Sept. 11 benefit show in New York for orphans.

Santelli plans to attend Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles to major in dance and eventually become a choreographer. As of now, she is focusing on becoming either a professional performer in a professional company.

"I love dance, it's fun and I enjoy being on stage. Plus, for me dancing is my way of expressing myself and how I feel," said Santelli.



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'Pride' goeth the fall...into bad movieland

Visuals: A-
Story: C-
Acting: B
Overall: C+

By Cristina Sarnelli

Love stories are expected to be romantic, enchanting, and heartwarming, triggering "aww's" from the audience and uplifting their spirits. Unfortunately, "Pride and Prejudice" (based on the book by Jane Austen) did exactly the opposite with its drawn out plot and confusing dialogue.

The movie starts off by introducing the Bennets, a poor family made up of five girls and their parents. Their mother, (Brenda Blethyn) is rather annoying and obsessed with finding husbands for her daughters.

When word gets around that someone is sponsoring a local ball, the mother goes absolutely ballistic and urges her daughters to get ready for the occasion. Here, Elizabeth Bennet (Keira Knightley) meets her future husband, Mr. Darcy (Matthew MacFadyen) who, at first impression, is an arrogant self-centered snob that she cannot stand.

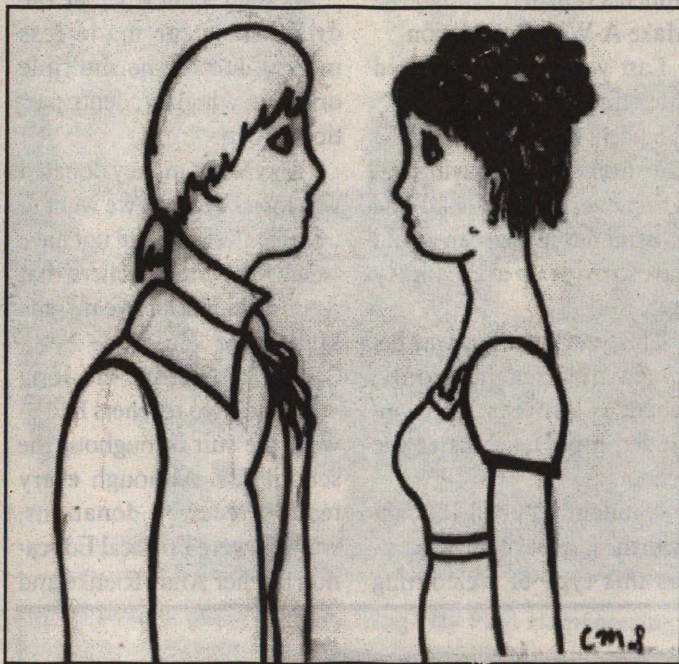
Elizabeth also known as Lizzie, is a witty, slightly sarcastic, and intelligent young woman who knows exactly what she wants in a man and

thinks she knows all there is to know about love. Knightley's performance in the film is absolutely superb, perhaps the only thing that saves the movie from being downright horrible. She puts the right amount of emotion into every scene, and she makes her character believable, while MacFadyen's performance, on the other hand, was bland. His facial expression was always solemn, and he never put much emotion into anything, making it hard to believe that he actually loved Lizzie when he said so.

'Most of the time the characters were in distress and turmoil, and the most romantic part of the entire movie isn't until the end.'

--Cristina Sarnelli

After meeting Darcy at the ball and hearing awful stories about how he betrayed his friend and her sister Jane (Rosamund Pike), Lizzie is disgusted. But Darcy has feelings for Lizzie and asks for her hand



Mr. Darcy is a high class snob who is arrogant and self-centered. Lizzie Bennet is a witty and sarcastic young lady. Will they make it as a couple?

in marriage, but is turned away.

At this point, the movie gets very choppy and skips around a lot, going back and forth between Jane and her love interest, then to Lizzie's other sisters, and then back to her and Mr. Darcy. It's also hard to understand how the characters ended up where they did, especially since the dialogue is weighed down by thick accents and older vocabulary.

In the end, Lizzie realizes that her assumptions about Mr. Darcy were false, and the feelings that she was denying through the entire movie finally come out and the two charac-

ters get hitched.

The most disappointing part about the movie was that it was not as romantic as the previews. The characters were in distress and turmoil most of the time, and the most romantic part of the entire movie is not until the end. By then the story becomes so tiring that it was not even that cute.

And man was it long. For the movie's runtime being about two hours, it certainly felt like much more. Instead of leaving the theater with a satisfied, happy feeling it's more like a "thank goodness it's finally over" type of feeling.

'Hypnotize' is definitely no 'Mezmerize'

Lack of focus in music causes System of a Down's newest effort to fall short of previous album

Vocals: B+
Rhythm: B
Lyrical Content: B
Overall: B

By David Thomas

What can be said about System of a Down that already hasn't been said?

Anyone who has listened to the band's work will testify that their music is chaotic, political, and in some cases, downright weird.

Thankfully, the band's latest album, "Hypnotize," is true to those roots. In terms of soundwise, the album fits along with the rest of their work, so any accusations of "selling out" will remain very few.

Still, the album is less focused than their previous album, "Mezmerize," even though both albums were recorded at

the same time, just released at different points.

"Hypnotize" is not a bad album. It remains true to the band and to its fans. The band's political diatribes can be found throughout the album. But they're different than those in "Mezmerize." The statements made in "Mezmerize" are sung as if action should be taken. The songs in "Hypnotize" seem to depict the aftermath. "Young men standing on the top of their own graves/Wondering when Jesus comes/Are they gonna be saved," (from "Soldier Side") and "Superstition taking all of us for a ride/Mimes overtaken by the signs of the Right/The bombs are falling overhead with no sight/While you are talking all detached, so tell us," (from "Tentative").

But like all System of a Down

albums, there are few songs that can make even the devoted fan scratch their head and say, "What?"

Here are the opening lyrics of "She's Like Heroin." "She's like heroin/Sipping through a little glass/I'm looking for some help/I need someone to save her [expletive]." Then

'Hypnotize' is not a bad album. In a live setting, all of these songs would be amazing.'

--David Thomas

there's "Vicinity of Obscenity, where vocalist Serj Tankian

chants "Banana banana banana terracotta pie."

Tankian does a tremendous job of switching from a soft, soothing voice, to a raging, sometimes screaming one (often in the same song), and making it sound perfectly natural.

Guitarist Daron Malakian, who provides backup vocals and even sings, bassist Shavo Odadjian and drummer John Dolmayan also create riffs and beats that are very catchy and can get stuck in one's head. The opening riffs of "Hypnotize" and "Attack" are examples of this.

Again, "Hypnotize" is not a bad album. In a live setting, all of these songs would be amazing (especially "Vicinity of Obscenity"). But "Hypnotize" does not rise up to the standards set by "Mezmerize."

In the end, "Hypnotize" will be successful, both commercially and critically. It's a good album with some solid riffs and lyrics. It's just not great. It's no "Mezmerize."

Grading Scale

- A = Awesome
- B = Good
- C = All right
- D = Could be worse
- F = Absolutely horrible

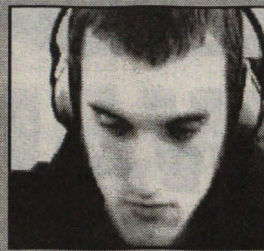
Top 10 holiday movies

December is the most festive month of the year. Christmas, Hanukah, and Kwanza all reside within these 31 days. Thus, the Top 10 Holiday Movies, as chosen by the Chronicle staff.

1. It's A Wonderful Life (1946)
2. How The Grinch Stole Christmas (1966)
3. A Charlie Brown Christmas (1965)
4. A Christmas Story (1984)
5. Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer (1964)
6. The Nightmare Before Christmas (1993)
7. The Santa Clause (1994)
8. Miracle On 34th Street (1947)
9. Scrooged (1988)
10. National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation (1989)

SONIC BITES

What students are listening to:



Student:
Adam Olson
Year:
Junior
Listening to:
Deftones



Student:
Sam Vitro
Year:
Sophomore
Listening to:
Disturbed

Coach's Corner

Coach Gimre centers his game around support

Encouragement and hard work are key to team's successful year

By Kellie Virnich

During his 16 years at the school, Kevin Gimre has adapted his approach to his work, whether in coaching basketball or teaching geometry, but has not changed his focus of improving the teens he works with.

Winning was never the most important goal for Gimre, even growing up as the middle child in an athletic household of three boys in Sylvania, Ohio. He said that being very involved in sports was one of the most prominent memories of his young life, though he did not play anything during college at Miami University of Ohio.

After his wife found a teaching job in Illinois, Gimre also found a job nearby, and has been teaching and coaching here ever since.

"I was always interested in math, but I originally intended to major in finance," said Gimre.

He said that the path he was on did not feel right to him, and cited a favorite college professor as one of the people who inspired him to teach.

He views coaching as another teaching experience al-

ways focused on improving his players, even when they are doing well.

He encourages the boys on his team to continue working hard and also to cherish this time in their lives.

He said, "These games are unforgettable not only for the team, but the fans watching as well. I'll always remember how our stands were full last year, even at away games."

Though Gimre is disappointed at last year's eventual loss in the playoffs, he also sees it as a lesson in work ethic and improvement, and stresses to his senior athletes to make their own memories, rather than trying to build on last year's.

Gimre has built many memories in his own home, with a 16-year marriage and four children, including newly-adopted Sarah.

Having only brought their 3-year-old back from China in August, Gimre said his daughter is adjusting well to her new country and family.

"My wife and I felt strongly that God was leading us to do this," said Gimre. "There were struggles with choosing a child to adopt, but we are so excited about having her with us."



Photo courtesy of wheatonwesthockey.com
Students from the Wheaton-West co-op ice hockey team practice at Center Ice of DuPage. Wheaton North player Luke Scheffler gets ready for an important face-off.

Local high schools unite to dominate ice rink

By Sabrina Potirala

Tough competition isn't preventing Wheaton West's combined hockey team from hitting the ice hard.

"We are up against a lot of tough teams this time around," said JV player freshman Shane Smith.

The team's members include students from West Chicago, Wheaton North, and Wheaton Academy.

Head coach Matt Kasper feels that the team can improve their skills by understanding the game as well as continuously practicing their offensive and defensive plays.

The team meets every Monday and alternating Tuesday at the Center Ice of

DuPage in West Chicago to practice the drills that will be used in the next game.

The junior varsity team meets one hour prior to the game and the varsity team meets 75 minutes prior to the game.

The goal is that the players have enough time to do warm ups and off the ice drills," said public relations coordinator Teri Brown. Kasper's methods seem to be paying off with a varsity team record of 5-4-1, as well as a JV record of 4-6.

"Hockey is a rewarding sport that can help teach leadership, character and decision making," said Kasper.

Varsity player, junior Derek Soutar, feels that no matter how

discouraged someone gets while playing hockey, they should never give up hope.

"You should never ever stop working towards any of your goals," said Soutar. "It will all pay off in the end."

Varsity's schedule consists of a Saturday game versus Lockport/Minooka at Center Ice and a Sunday game versus Lake Park. JV's next game will also be played on Saturday versus Lincolnway Central as well as a game Sunday versus Marist.

If an individual is looking to try out for the team, next season tryouts will be held in August. Wheaton West's season runs from September until March.

Athlete of the Month

Award given for remarkable talent

(Each month a different coach will nominate an athlete for Athlete of the Month. Head basketball coach Kevin Gimre selected Dennis Rocha for December.)

By Brittany Blanchard

Dennis Rocha is December's Athlete of the Month for his contributions and outstanding leadership on the basketball team.

"Dennis has been a team leader in practice as well as games and has been working hard to help the team in as many ways as he can," said coach Kevin Gimre.

Rocha has been involved with Wildcat basketball throughout his high school career and currently serves as the varsity team's shooting guard. Today, Rocha only competi-

tively participates in basketball but was involved in football, baseball, and swimming when he was younger.

Enjoying the fast pace of the game, Rocha loves basketball.

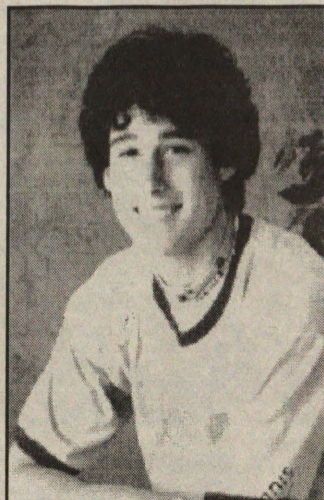


Photo courtesy of Dennis Rocha
Rocha plans to attend the University of Illinois next year.

"(My favorite part of basketball) is trying to dunk on fast breaks," Rocha said.

Although Rocha is working hard to prosper this season and is optimistic regarding the team's potential, his favorite memory involving basketball is attributed to last season.

"I'll never forget beating West Aurora twice last year in the same week," Rocha said. "The feeling of those victories will always stay with me."

"(My biggest inspiration in basketball) is Dee Brown because he was the littlest player on a national championship team," Rocha said.

Rocha will become much closer to this basketball icon as he is attending the University of Illinois next year as a chemistry major.



Photo by Kellie Virnich

Coach Kevin Gimre pumps up his team during a practice. His 5-year-old son Jason stands watching and admiring his dad while he does his job.

Girls rebound after unexpected loss to Glenbard

With only two seniors on the team, the juniors step it up

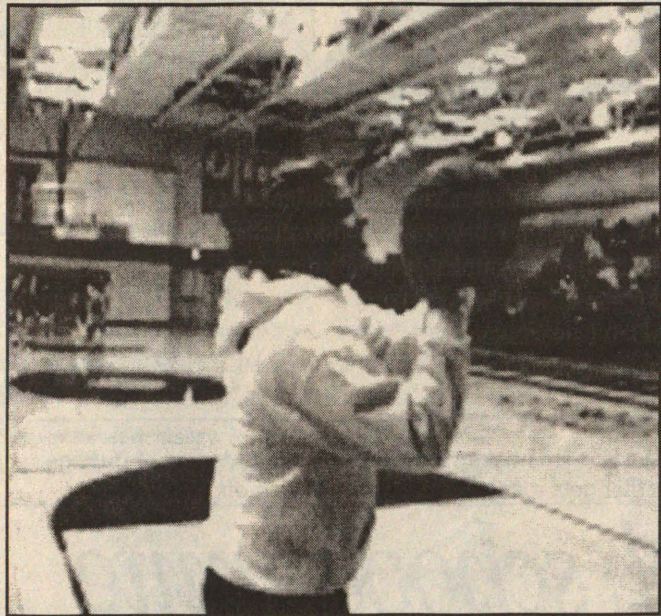


Photo by Andrea Bradley

Junior Katie Norton warms up before the game. Norton hopes the team can work together to beat Naperville Central.

By Julie Youngwith

Despite the lack of seniors, the girls basketball team hopes to shoot for victory this season.

"We relied mostly on the seniors last year, but this year the juniors really have to step it up and control the paint a little more," said Wallner.

The team has four returning players including senior Jessica Crawford, and juniors Kelsey Monroe, Kate Norton and Melissa Olsen.

This year's newcomers are senior Kelly Mateas, juniors Jordan Hall and Kristin Grimm, and sophomore Kayla Radloff.

The starters are Crawford as shooting guard, Monroe as point guard, Olsen as power forward, Mateas as shooting guard and Norton as center.

The girls currently have a record of 4-3, and a 0-1 conference record.

The team lost to Glenbard North Nov. 29. The team stayed in control of the game for the first three quarters, leading by 11 points, but ended up losing the game 32-35 in the last quarter.

But the team rebounded Nov. 8 when they won 66-42 against Glenbard East.

"It was a pretty tough game," said Wallner. "We lost to a team that we weren't expecting to lose to."

Despite their unexpected loss, Wallner and her team have good expectations for the team this year, and are working to improve even more.

"We need consistent efforts and results from the returning players. If we get that then we will get positive result," said Wallner.

Last year the team won 18 games and this year they are trying to surpass that mark.

"This year we want to try to be competitive in conference. Hopefully we can be one of the top two or three teams," said Crawford.

At practice the team works on trying to control and contain the three-second lane, which had proven to be a weakness for them so far. However, their excellent defense proves to be a huge strength as it consistently holds the team.

"We should be pretty good this year if we learn to play together," said Norton.

Wallner says the team needs to work on getting more consistent with their offense and taking advantage of more fastbreaks.

One of the team's personal goals is to win against Naperville Central on Feb. 9 because they have consistently lost to them in the past and would like to defeat them.

Dancers continue to prepare for the show, taking all of the steps in the right direction

By Andrea Bradley

Dance: Is it in you? Well, it is in all 32 dancers in dance production, and it is also the name of the 2006 dance production show.

The production will take place on Jan. 19 and 21 and will cost \$2 per person.

Each year during first semester, the dance production class practices everyday in hopes to pull off an entertaining show.

The dancers do all the work to create the show, including the choreography to their songs, light work, and costumes.

"My favorite part (of the

show) is seeing the creativity of the choreography that the students came up with and helping them to make adjustments to make it the best dance that it can be," said instructor Helen Zmrhal.

This year's finale will be to "Call Me" by Blondie.

During the dance, each grade is highlighted during a part of the song where the dancers will wear shirts with their phone numbers written on the back.

The audience can look forward to dances to variety of songs from "It's Raining Men"

to "Kung-Fu Fighting" to "100 Years".

There are also separate songs to emphasize each grades talent.

Since all girls must create a solo, duet, or a trio for a grade, these dances will also be presented during the show.

"I think we're going to have a really good show this year," said senior Maria Espinoza. "We have so many talented dancers."

Each dancer must try out for the class, with Zmrhal.

Dancers are chosen by Zmrhal and graduating seniors on their dance knowledge and technique.

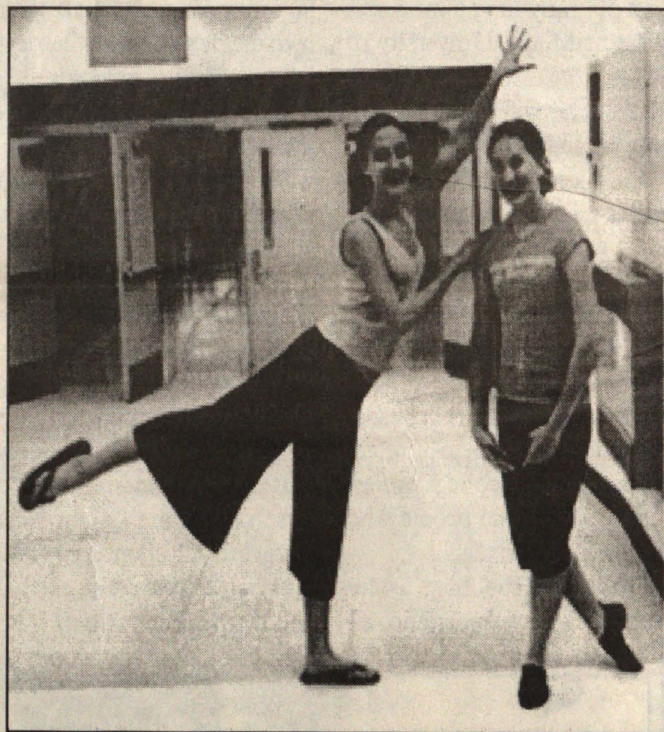


Photo by Julie Youngwith

Freshman Rachel Molinaro and Carissa Gouskos rehearse their dance for the dance production show, "Dance: Is it in you?"

Andie's Angle

The Bears begin to show opponents who has the crown

By Andrea Bradley

First the White Sox, now the Bears? Chicago teams are taking control.

Chicago teams are stepping it up, and giving their fans exactly what they want, wins.

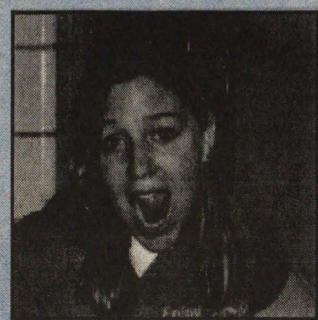
This season, the team headlining major Chicago-land newspapers is the Bears.

It's been a defining year for our Chicago heroes, and still, many can only manage to whimper out the name of Brian Urlacher.

Not that supporting our teams is a bad thing, but it gets a little obnoxious when these "true" fans cheer for the Bears, but end up only cheering for

one player.

Although Urlacher is an amazing player, these new fans need to realize that he is not the only person carrying the



team to victory.

The entire defense is ranked at number one in the NFL, and there is more to the defense than just Urlacher.

Take Nathan Vasher for example. In a recent victory over the Green Bay Packers, the left cornerback scored the only touchdown for the Bears during the game, from defense.

No offense to the big guy, but I believe that name was Tillman, not Urlacher.

Another honorable mention in the big rivalry game is Charles Tillman, intercepting a ball and turning the game around right before halftime.

These are amazing plays by people other than Urlacher.

Not only is the defense making amazing plays, but the offense is doing well too.

Although Bears' quarterback

Kyle Orton is not the best quarterback in the league, he is in a tie for second place for most wins in a season by a rookie.

He is doing exactly what the team wants him to do.

Along with Orton, other offensive players have been racking up great statistics too.

Wide receivers Muhsin Muhammed, and Bobby Wade have some great catches to their name.

Let's not forget running back Thomas Jones. Somehow, he can always find the holes for solid yards.

All of these players deserve honorable mention from their so-called die-hard fans in Chi-

cago.

There is so much more to the Bears than Brian Urlacher. Once again, he is a great player, and his name is behind a few great plays, but he is not the only one on the team.

The defense does in fact say

A team does not win with one player, which is why it is called a team.

A team learns to work together to make great plays, which is exactly what the Bears are doing.

So next time you sit down and watch the game, pay attention to everyone. It's amazing to see just what the Bears will pull off as a team.