



Snow day adds time to schedule

By Cristina Sarnelli

Due to the snow day on Dec. 1, the last day of school will be June 1 instead of May 31, according to Supt. Lee Rieck.

Rieck explained the reasoning behind the calendar extension.

"The state requires we be in session 176 days, and we had exactly 176 scheduled this year, so because of the snow day, we had to add a day," he said.

Teachers also have to stay an extra day as well. Instead of ending June 1, teachers will go until June 4.

In the case of another snow day, seniors would not have to attend the last day.

"Graduation is June 3, so seniors would not come back after that. Anything that takes place before June 3, seniors have to come too. If we lost another day, everyone but seniors would come," he said.

Inside

Center Spread



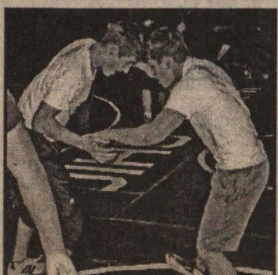
Did you know that there are students who practice Hinduism here? Find out about all the other religions that students practice on page 6.

Features



Having trouble finding a gift for someone? Check out the ideas on page 8.

Sports



Find out how the wrestling team is doing on page 11.

School may leave DVC

Board is still deciding

By Leah Kuzmicz

Lack of school spirit is one of the driving forces behind the Board of Education's consideration to have the school leave the DuPage Valley Conference.

"The spirit is missing. Not too many successes and competition has gotten worse. It's a clear belief that students should enjoy rewards," said Board of Education president Tony Reyes at the Dec. 5 meeting.

Reyes also mentioned an article from the Wildcat Chronicle written by contributing writer, junior Justin Kutilek, about how the school has lost its school spirit and that when football game day comes around the Wildcats don't show their support for the team. Reyes feels that this is due to the level of competition in the DVC.

Leaving the DVC was considered in 2000 but a split

vote rejected the idea and it failed. The school was thinking about switching into the Suburban Prairie or the Upstate Eight.

Not only would this affect sports teams, but also organizations like band and clubs that participate in the DVC.

Board member, Rich Nagel, said the Board is already focusing on the schedule changes, and that they should not put this on the table as well.

Nagel also stated that the grass is always greener on the other side, and he is not in support of bringing up the DVC debate again.

Students have various views on how they feel about switching out of the conference but many lean toward not switching.

Varsity basketball athlete, senior Donnie Smith, disagrees with the idea of switching out of the DVC.

"I don't think it would be a



Photo by Jessica Bergmann

Sports such as basketball would be affected if the school decided to leave the DVC.

really good idea to switch out of the DVC. We are in DuPage Valley and it would be pointless to switch out of the conference," said Smith.

Junior Sara Fouts, who is on the varsity track team, also agrees with Smith in not changing the conference.

"I think that it would be a bad idea. It would make us

look even weaker because people would say that we couldn't handle the competition," said Fouts.

Board members agreed that they need to have more information on the subject, and would like to hear comments from the athletic department chair, and students.

Finals week change in effect

By Ryan Nesemeier

With the end of the semester coming, students are left wondering what is going on with finals.

Policy has changed and finals week is gone. New policy states that there won't be a specific week for finals, instead there will be a few set days where each department will give their finals during regular class periods.

"Now we have other classes

to go to after we take a final. That's terrible. I'm going to be so wrecked after the final. I don't know if I will still be able to participate in all my other classes," said senior Chris Correa.

Other students also commented on the fact they will no longer only have half days for finals.

"It's not the same. I'm going to miss the 15 minute passing period. I like going home after

a couple finals and just going to sleep for hours," said senior John Dimas.

The decision to change finals occurred in spring when teachers requested more instructional time. With the new policy there will be five instruction days instead of three.

Teachers are to give their finals within a few set dates. English, bilingual and fine arts gave their finals on Monday or Tuesday. Math, science, business and industrial arts are scheduled for Thursday and Friday. Jan. 9 is for social studies and English if a teacher would like to give a multiple choice test. Science can give their finals on Jan. 10 or 11.

Seniors are still waiting to know whether or not they have finals. The incorrect scoring of 160,000 Illinois high school student test scores by Harcourt Assessment continues to prolong the confirmation of preliminary results for the school reaching AYP.

According to the Chicago Tribune, test results may not arrive until February, too late for hopeful seniors.



Photo by Ryan Nesemeier

Finals will take place in 50 minutes, just like the time Hank Muphy's human anatomy class has for this regular test.

Board finds new principal

By David Thomas

The Board of Education approved Hinsdale South Assistant Principal Moses Cheng to take over when Principal John Highland retires on July 1.

According to assistant superintendent of human resources Kim Chambers, the Board of Education extended a contract to Cheng, who signed it, ensuring his appointment to the position at Tuesday's board meeting.

"We did a number of reference checks on him, and he had the most positive reviews any candidate we have ever received," said Chambers.

Supt. Lee Rieck also spoke highly of Cheng, remarking on his "solid base of experience, good instructional leadership, and his interpersonal skills are impressive."

"His enthusiasm to working in a diverse setting is good," said Rieck.

Twenty-three individuals overall submitted applications

See Cheng page 2

Winner for logo contest chosen

Computer classes help Christine Valaski win \$100 because of artistic talent

By Kym McDaniel

Senior Christine Valaski's balance of design and healthy graphics pushed her to the top of the pyramid to win the Wellness Committee's logo contest.

"I wanted to represent the combination of being mentally and physically healthy," said Valaski. "I used icons I thought would look good on a shirt."

The Wellness Committee offered a contest for a design logo. The committee then voted for the best.

Valaski, who won \$100 for the competition has honed her artistic skills through computer art I and II taken at the school.

"We decided it would be a great logo for both students and families," said Wellness Committee member Linda Pfeifer.

The logo will be printed on shirts, donated by West Suburban Bank.

"We took into consideration how the logo would look on a shirt, but also how it would print in black and

white and on newsletters the school sends out to families," said Pfeifer.

The beginning ideas for Valaski's logo were what would look and print well on a shirt.

"I've won second place in other graphic design competitions so it was really cool to win first," said Valaski.

The Wellness Committee also looked positively at Valaski's logo because it represented a fit and healthy lifestyle.

One logo was chosen out

of the several Valaski submitted.

"Her logo was pretty much a shoo-in," said Pfeifer. "We feel it was the best choice out of the logos we received."

Wellness Committee members hope the logo will involve the school and motivate them to become healthier.

Along with the shirts and logo, the committee plans to participate in the Relay for Life which Pfeifer said will hopefully bring more teens together.

Valaski said that although the money was definitely the best part about winning, she said that it "was cool" to be recognized.



Logo designed by Christine Valaski

Senior Christine Valaski's logo, shown above, was chosen because it represents a healthy lifestyle.

Cheng: New principal

Continued from page 1

for the principal's job. From there, the number was narrowed down to seven after reviewing the candidates' qualifications and records.

Then, a team comprised of two parents, two administrators, two teachers, a board member, a secretary, and a student, further narrowed the field after interviewing each of the seven applicants.

The team recommended three candidates, and Rieck, Chambers, director of business Dan McCarthy, and board vice-president John Jensen interviewed each of them. From there, Cheng was recommended, and the

board interviewed him over dinner at Tivoli Restaurant in West Chicago on Dec. 12.

"I think he will interact well with the students," said Chambers.

Cheng earned his bachelor's degree at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and his master's and doctoral degree from Aurora University.

Cheng's first job in education was as a science teacher at West Aurora High School.

Cheng moved into his current job as the assistant principal of learning and teaching at Hinsdale South after seven years of being principal at Schneider Elementary School.

Frosty Fest melts due to confusion

By Aaron Pennington

Frosty Fest will not be happening this year, due to some misunderstandings and schedule conflicts.

The community service program was originally scheduled for Dec. 9, and was a day set aside that had activities for kids in the community.

NHS adviser Kristina Mallon said Frosty Fest's cancel-

lation was caused by a lack of understanding.

"We just misunderstood what it had been in past years, and we didn't have enough time to plan it out correctly," Mallon said.

To make up the lack of Frosty Fest, NHS will be hold a fundraiser that will include collecting donations and visiting kids at Loyola Hospital.

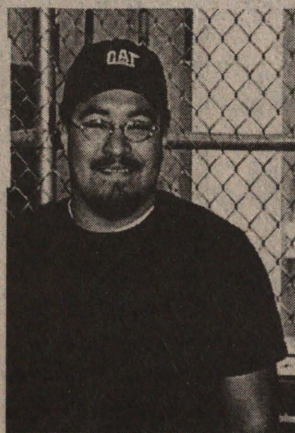
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Today: Caterpillar Work/Study Internship
Joliet Junior College
Goal: Electrical Engineering Technician



1996-98 Multimedia program at TCD
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Wildcat Chronicle

Promoting heroes through strong leadership skills

By Allison Rysell

Operation Snowball is creating heroes through building strong leadership skills in students.

The theme for this year's Operation Snowball is "A Hero Will Rise, Everyday Heroes and the Heroes among Us."

The program will be held at Camp Laredo Taft from Jan. 12 to Jan. 14.

Special education teacher Cat Thielberg, one of the directors of Operation Snowball, feels that the program "helps students develop leadership skills in hopes of helping them make healthy decisions."

Students improve their communication and problem solving skills as well as obtain accurate information about teen issues.

Senior Ben Warren has been a teen leader for Operation Snowball for two years.

"The program helps kids to feel more comfortable with being drug free," said Warren.

Activities planned for the trip include the "Giving Clown," workshops, team building, and challenge courses.

If you are interested in joining Operation Snowball you can pick up an application at the counselor's office.



Photo courtesy of Cat Thielberg

Seniors Katie Wood and Ben Warren were team leaders at last year's Snowball event.

Budget cuts put an end to peer helpers after 15 years

By Cristina Sarnelli

December marks the end of the peer helpers program after 15 years.

Because of budget cuts, the school was unable to pay adviser Judy MacDonald's salary and had to cut the program.

MacDonald said that the program actually ended in June, but thanks to a helpful staff member, peer helpers continued through December.

"Due to a lack of funding, peer helpers ended last year. Peer helping only exists this year because of Ms. Maloney and the Student Council who offered to pay my salary," she said.

Peer helpers are a group of upperclassmen who spend time aiding freshmen in the study halls. They do various activities with the students to help them get acquainted with the school.

"At the beginning of the year, the helpers would do

tours for every study hall class, they put together presentations on topics such as drugs, alcohol, and smoking, and most importantly, serve as role models for the students," MacDonald said.

She added that every week the peer helpers would do a group meeting once a week to discuss problems such as peer pressure and stress. One on one time was also given to two students every week.

"The peer helpers would have individual contact with the students to talk to them more or to do homework," she explained.

Senior Christine Williams, who was part of peer helpers for two years, enjoyed the group and individual meetings the most.

"My favorite part of peer helpers was the group and individual time because we have cool discussions, and it is interesting to see the freshmen point of views," she said.

In the past, the organization went to Peoria and Springfield to participate in the IDEA conference. There the students heard presentations about leadership, listened to a motivational speaker, participated in team bonding, and played games.

Williams is upset to see the program go.

"I'm really sad because I know I liked it as a freshman, and it's good bonding time to have with them. It especially helps the people who are shy," she said.

MacDonald feels the same.

"Peer helpers was a great program, especially for the freshmen. Whenever the freshmen would see a peer helper in the hallway, they would have a connection with that person and feel more comfortable," she said. "I don't know what I am going to do next year because I have large freshman classes who will have no role models."

Read and earn a TV

Book Club lures readers in with giveaways

By Dave Thomas

Coming in January, there will be a book club that not only allows students to choose what they read, but pizza and raffle tickets will be offered for a grand prize at the end of the year.

"I'm kind of giving new life to an idea that did not have support last year," said English department chair Chris Covino, referring to last year's Book Club.

Covino is trying to play to teenagers' interests by offering pizza at the first month's meetings.

When testing out his book club idea before one of his English classes, Covino said that their reaction to the Book Club was negative.

However, when told that the meetings would have pizza and that students would be able to pick the books they want to read, the students became positive about the idea.

"Students will be given one raffle ticket for showing up, another raffle ticket for bringing friends to the meeting, and a raffle ticket for each meaningful contribution they make to the discussion," said Covino.

As to what the grand prize is, he said he didn't know.

He is leaning towards a TV, finding it a little ironic that a book club would award its members with a TV.

Covino said that he was

asked by one of the librarians and former English department chair Jeff Kargol to start up the Book Club

"I think it's a nice avenue for students to be able to talk about books in an organized way," said Covino.

Students will be given a list of 20 to 30 books in a specific genre every month. For example, the genre for January is fantasy, and students will be able to choose books from all three "Lord of the Rings" books to "Eragon."

"It is our great hope that the club becomes less teacher-run and more student-run, so the students that do read would be able to choose the genres," said Covino.

The first meetings are Jan. 23 and 25 during all lunch hours, and Jan. 24 after school.

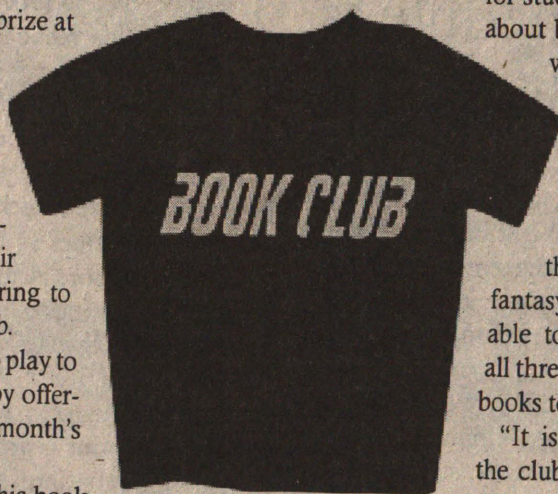


Photo courtesy of Chris Covino
Chris Covino designed this image of the front side of the book club t-shirt. The back lists all the rules of Book Club. But we cannot tell you the rules. You have to join first.

Top scholar, top athlete

The November Student of the Month and pole-vaulter Jim Foreman sets his sights on attending the University of Pennsylvania

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 Jessica Bergmann

From placing fourth in state competition for pole-vaulting to being vice president of the senior class, Jim Foreman has dedicated his time to track and field as well as academics, which is why he is December's Student of the Month.

What are your accomplishments in high school?

I have a 4.0 GPA, I'm president of NHS, vice president of the senior class, and a student ambassador. I'm also captain of the track team,

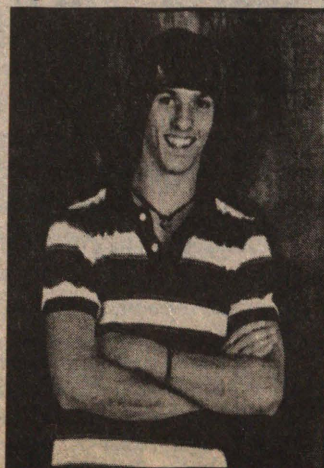


Photo courtesy of Jim Foreman

where I placed fourth in state last year for pole-vaulting and sixty-third in the nation.

Who has been your favorite teacher?

Mr. Malinsky because he was an inspiration to everyone. He taught me a lot about life.

What is your favorite high school memory?

Painting my body for games. It was a lot of fun because I had a lot of school pride. It was exciting because we tailgated too.

Where do you plan to go to college?

The University of Pennsylvania if I get in, which I probably should.

What do you want to major in?

Business. The University of Pennsylvania is the best business school in America. That's where Donald Trump went and he's rich.

Will you continue track and field throughout college?

Yes, I plan on continuing. I hope to become an All American Division 1 NCAA qualifier.

Why do you think you were chosen as Student of the Month?

I'm just that great of a guy. No, probably because of what I've accomplished in school and in the community. Plus, I'm extremely good looking.

Our view

Finish your tests faster Finals schedule is very inconvenient

It is definitely finals time when the freshmen take out their planners, write down when exams are, what percent it will cost them and what they should be studying; and the seniors are sitting back in their seats relaxing because it will be the fourth year they are taking their required finals. Well, half way required at least.

But finals are a little different this year, and not necessarily for the better. Finals week has been changed into a regular week, with finals being scheduled "conveniently" into students' schedules during regular class times.

Well convenient or not, finals are something that everyone will partake in, not just underclassmen and juniors. Since the PSAE results have not been returned, seniors will have to suffer through a semester of taking finals and not being rewarded their "prizes."

Principal John Highland has been scheduling times for departments to give their finals. Most finals have already occurred, or will occur when students return from their winter break. And we all know that when students return from winter break their minds are fully lucid on the subjects they will be tested on... Right?

Seniors definitely have a right to have some angst because they are suffering like everyone else taking their finals, when promised last year that if they passed their PSAE tests, they would not have to participate in the joy of taking a final.

Well, no PSAE results and seniors find themselves sitting in class.

Not only seniors will be suffering from this new schedule change, but freshmen are being impacted as well. Freshmen will learn what it is like, unlike any other class, to take finals without actual time scheduled for finals. Then next year they will have to adjust to the block scheduling. They will never know what it is like to have an actual finals week, or even have mandatory finals in every class.

Another major disadvantage to many this year is that students cannot leave school early, or leave because they do not have a certain final a particular hour, but stay at school while everyone is taking their finals and sit in commons... Studying for their next hour final perhaps?

Trying to find the advantages this year is quite difficult even though this new schedule is supposed to be a relief on most of the students; it is turning out to be annoying.

Finals week will come and go, but one thing is for sure; halleluiah they will be over soon.

Racism in the hallway

Walking down the hallways it is clear there is diversity among students. Although diversity offers a variety of different cultures to our student body, racism seems to lurk in the quiet corners of the school, peeping out every now and then.

Unfortunately, our school isn't exactly the great melting pot it should be. Having people of all kinds of different backgrounds join together provides so much variety in opinion, more ideas, and best of all, more knowledge to our school. That is, if everyone is accepted for who they are.

It's hard to go a week through school without hearing about the latest fight that broke out because of a racist comment or reading the government forums on issues such as immigration where people are lashing out at each other with phrases loaded with prejudice. It's ridiculous because there is no reason that will clearly justify why such comments are said. What's the big deal if someone is culturally different?

Without diversity, everything would be uniform. Everyone would come from the same backgrounds, practice the same religion, and celebrate the same holidays. It all sounds so...boring.

Having a school with no diversity would be like having a box of crayons that were all blue. No color-

ful, imaginative pictures would ever exist.

It's the same with race. If we didn't intermix with different races, we'd have such an uninteresting school. And as kindergarten as that comparison sounds, the idea of acceptance is really that simple. So simple that we all should have learned it and be able to apply it by now.

Just because someone of a different race practices a different lifestyle does not mean someone else should mock him/her because that way of life is foreign. In fact mocking someone because he/she is different is completely ignorant. It should be accepted that that person has a right to practice a different lifestyle. And to accept means to allow that person to be different without cutting him/her down with negative remarks.

It's unbearable to walk down the halls and see the individual groups of race segregated. It shouldn't have to be that way.

In grade school the teachers always stressed how everyone was unique and equal. The kid shows on T.V. always have diverse people playing and working together. Everyone was accepted, and the word racism was inconceivable.

It was so easy to understand what acceptance meant then, and it's mind-blowing to witness how many people can't comprehend it now.



Crazy mother ruins Christmas

Mothers and Christmas don't mix well together because of the added stress due to holiday parties and shopping, but having your child arrested for opening a present early is completely unacceptable.

According to the Associated Press, a 12-year-old boy from South Carolina went into his great grandmother's home and took a Game Boy from her closet which he was going to receive for Christmas.

His mother, who was fed up because this was not the first time her son had done this, called the cops and had her son arrested on petty larceny charges. The boy was taken to the police station and had to wait there until his mother returned from church.

The mother said, "It was only to teach my son a lesson. He's been going through life doing things and getting away with it."

Whatever happened to time out?

This case will be presented to the Department of Juvenile Justice, which will decide the punishment for the boy. The mother hopes that the department will assign him to a program that will scare him straight. Wow, thanks mommy dearest!

Seriously thank you mommy dearest for messing up a lot of lives. First off, instead of disciplining him like everyone else she calls the police and has them take time out of their busy day to arrest this kid. Yep, thank goodness the police took this "criminal" off the streets using our money.

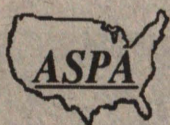
Also, thanks mommy, for having the court system use our tax money to help pay for this case. This is a giant waste of money that could've been fixed by moving the Christmas present to another location.

Finally, how do you think this kid will be affected if at such a young age he is brought into the justice system? The results of this are going to be pretty negative either way.

This mother has paved two roads for her son, one road which will lead him to being scared to do anything in his life, and another road for risky behaviors which may end him back where he started in the police station.

The holiday season is a time of being thankful and happy to be with your family. Well, be thankful that this woman isn't your mother.

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THE WILDCAT CHRONICLE is the student newspaper at 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 paper's content. 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 staff members 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.

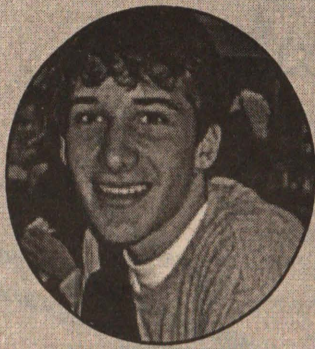
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Students Speak



Will Devore
Freshman

"A lot of Hispanic kids call me "white boy," yet they would be offended if I called them a name back."



Brian Skrzypczak
Sophomore

"People make nasty comments to black people in my English class."



Heather Knoll
Junior

"(I have seen) certain groups calling other groups bad names."

Have you witnessed racism within the school?



Megan Green
Sophomore

"I noticed that a group of Asians were sitting alone and people were telling others not to talk to them."



Megan Ogorcalek
Freshman

"A lot of people call Mexican names in the hallway."



Mike Mart
Junior

"Once, I saw a Vietnamese kid throw food at a group of Mexicans, and then the group of Mexicans got up and caused a fight because (the Vietnamese kid) was threatening to beat them."

'Mean girls' are a reality

After surviving four years in the clique-intensive war zone of high school, I have noticed a huge character flaw in some of the female student body.

That personality deficit is in an area I like to call class. Let me be blunt: Girls can be evil, shallow, petty

and mean, and in this column I will attempt to paint a picture of girls that every female on the planet has encountered at some point. Call them what you may, but I call them "mean girls."



Kait Taylor

In the everyday life of such an evil specimen, there is no limit to what can be said about an "enemy." Crossing the line does not occur because the line does not exist.

Insults can include, but are not limited to, comments about one's weight, race, family, friends, clothes, hair, boyfriend, intellect, and personal life.

Slurs are not required to be true, either. In fact, false pieces of information are preferred to completely ruin the reputation of their undeserving prey.

When it comes to the cruelty of "mean girls", the manner in which contempt is displayed is especially tactless. "Mean girls" don't only fight dirty, but shamelessly. Online quips or curse-ridden slurs shouted from a great distance in the hallway are the preferred means of communication.

Harassment is another popular means of insult. Threatening an individual's home, car, body, etc. is quite common, which is really a shame. Exchanging blows this way is not only tactless but immature. I mean, seriously, grow up.

Most of the time, these threats are idle because "mean girls" don't think about or really mean what they say before it comes out of their big mouths. And as a result of their low self-esteem (the stem of all bully mentality), they generally do not possess the guts to carryout a serious threat.

"Mean girls" move in packs that are as exclusive as they are inclusive; embracing each other as best friends for life while talking behind each other's backs constantly exchanging death threats. They're hypocrites in the truest sense.

The saddest part of the entire "mean girl" world is that one cannot just dislike someone, much less agree to disagree. One must completely and totally loathe an individual and be fully committed to destroying that person's reputation. Mean girls aren't happy until they hurt someone completely to the core, make them break down in tears, or feel depressed and alone. They're totally "hardcore" now, right?

The actions of these girls are the real disgrace to our gender. I'm sure many of you have your own experiences that would lead you to agree.

Mean girls are everywhere; in every grade, in every school, in every state across the nation. Malicious, evil, self-loathing, hateful individuals are out there torturing whomever they feel deserves it. Somewhere, someone is picking out her next victim. Will it ever end? Even when I finally go off college, I'm pretty doubtful that these types girls ever go away.

The purpose of this column is partly for me to complain, but it is also a plea for these girls to just stop. I'm asking girls to refuse to put up with "mean girl" attitudes from themselves and their friends. If you find yourself threatening another girl or talking behind someone's back, stop yourself!

Bottom line, girls need to treat each other with respect if they want to be treated with respect. It's the golden rule, or Karma, or whatever you want to call it. Seriously, grow up, and stay classy, girls.

People should care about real news, not just shallow celebrities and gossip

I recently spent an unusual Friday slumped in front of the television set when I started to think about



Ellyn Fortino

what a teacher told me. He said how ridiculous it is that celebrities make headline news for insignificant things. I agreed which led me to ask a question of my own, where have all the real people in our country gone?

If you are looking for them, you can almost never count on them being featured on the 10 o'clock news. Instead, they are shadowed by more valuable information like how George Clooney's pet pig died. I know it's sad but, contain your sadness for a few more paragraphs.

Yes, I am aware that the news may not be good all the time, but I would rather hear about ordinary people doing whatever than sugarcoated celebrity stories that do not tell me about world events.

I don't care who is on the A list and who is breaking up, screwing up, hooking up, or shooting up. Who really cares? Celebrities are just like us—they put their pants on the same way as we do.

the bills every month and just getting by.

It's pathetic that news stations would use garbage stories like these to lure viewers. The news should be educating us instead of filling our minds with nonsense.

Celebrities are not good role models but for some reason we've elevated them to a God-like status and think they are important enough to hear about.

Real people that deserve some recognition are the single parents that bust their butts off making minimum wage to support their children and the people who are fighting for our country, just to name a few. The people that put others before themselves and want to make a difference in the world are the people I want to see on television and deserve all the attention, money, and praise.

Don't get me wrong, I am genuinely happy when someone famous does do something good for third world countries, but it should be selfless, not to make themselves look good. No one gave me a parade when I donated my clothes to charity or when any of us donated to Wego 2 Africa.

Once a celebrity finds a cure for AIDS or cancer, or who actually does something about world hunger rather than just talking about it, then I'll care.

It makes me sick to know that some people have worked hard their entire life, sometimes working two jobs just to make ends meet, while others make millions of dollars to play pretend and act like they deserve it. Our society's priorities are so messed up.

It's a very sad day when extremely important issues are glossed over because we wait with breathless anticipation to find out if Lance Bass is gay or if Ashlee Simpson really got a nose job.

Unfortunately there are plenty of shallow people that find this gobbledygook more interesting than real news.

Muslims live a life of kindness, courage, honesty, and patience

By Greg Vodicka

Islam is the fastest growing faith in the world, but so few actually know the true meaning of it.

Around 1.5 billion people are Muslims worldwide, forming the majority in more than 50 countries. Today Islam is the fastest growing faith in the world.

The literal meaning of Islam, according to Islam.com, is peace and compromising your own happiness for the happiness of God.

Islam believes each person is born pure and God has given everyone the choice between good and evil at birth.

This monotheistic religion is based on five articles: To bear witness that there is none worthy of worship save Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, to Observe Prayer (Salat), to pay Zakat (alms giving), to perform the Pilgrimage to the House of Allah (Hajj) and to observe fasting during Ramadhan (Bukhari).

Muslim's believe there is one creator of the world and Muhammad is his messenger and teacher.

Some other things Mus-

lim's believe in are God's angels, all the prophets from Adam to Jesus, and the Judgment Day will come.

Muslims are encouraged to live life with qualities of kindness, chastity, honesty, mercy, courage, patience and politeness.

Today, Muslims are found throughout the world, from the Middle East to Central Asia.

Islam has many holidays commemorating important individuals or events.

One very important holiday is Ramadan. During Ramadan all Muslims are asked to fast for the 30 day period.

Sophomore Sarah Zaidi's family participates in Ramadan along with many other Muslim holidays.

"We do not eat from sunrise to sunset," said Zaidi. The food that we don't eat is supposed to go to the poor."

Zaidi's family follows the lunar calendar so this past Ramadan was during September and October.

"Two years ago Ramadan was on our holiday break," Zaidi recalls. "But it is not during break every year."

When celebrating Muslim holidays, Zaidi's family visits the mosque in the morning.

"After that my whole family gets together and we eat lots of food including a variety of meats, not including pork, and sweets like cakes and custards," said Zaidi.



Religion is presented at school. Here are some things to follow...

Third largest religion claims 837 million followers

From Pujas to Yogasana, Hinduism remains profound

By Jessica Bergmann

Hinduism is a religion different from many others, believing in more than one god, karma, and reincarnation.

It's the third largest religion in the world with 837 million followers making up 13 percent of the world's population.

However, some people may be oblivious to the religion because the majority of followers reside in India, with only 1.1 million Hindus living in the United States, according to religioustolerance.org.

"Hinduism is a way to study our god Brahman," said freshman Karan Panchal.

According to religioustolerance.org, Hinduism is a polytheistic religion, meaning they worship more than one god. Hindus recognize their main god as Brahman, and view other gods and

goddesses as manifestations of Brahman.

"We have three gods that take form. One is the god of birth, one the god of life, and one the god of death," Panchal said.

Hindus often conduct pujas, the act of showing reverence to a god, spirit, or another aspect of the divine through invocations, prayers, songs and rituals, in temples, their homes, or sometimes public places.

Like many other religions, Hindus worship their gods at temples, where services are lead by a priest-like figure who dedicates his life to the Hindu religion.

Priests reside in the temples in order to serve the needs of the gods. Hindus believe that if proper care is not taken of the temple's images, the deity will abandon the temple.

Other Hindus conduct their own services at home,

for visiting a temple every day or even regularly is not mandatory.

Hindus believe that the essential aspect of puja is not congregational worship but an individual's offering to a deity. Worship in the home usually takes place daily.

Hindus also believe in life after death, otherwise known as reincarnation. Reincarnation is the belief that after one dies, the soul is reborn into another body, and it will continue the journey of life.

However, reincarnation does not only occur in human bodies. Animals are believed to be reincarnated as well, being able to enter a human body in their next life. Hindus also believe in karma.

"We believe that what you do in your present life results in what's going to happen in your next life. If you do something good, then in return something good will

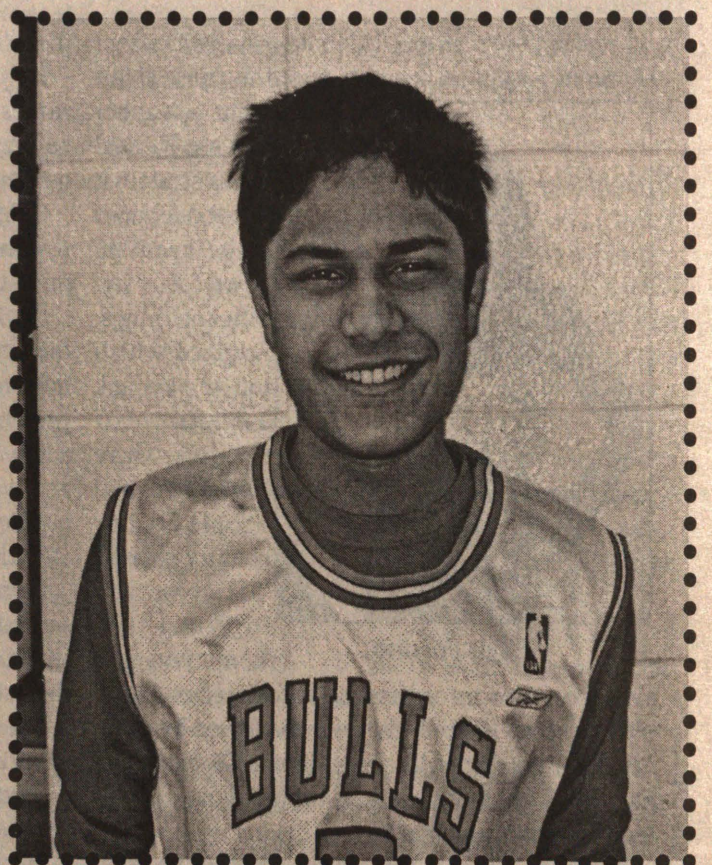


Photo by Jessica Bergmann

Freshman Karan Panchal practices Hinduism. Panchal said Hinduism believes in the god Brahman.

happen to you. Reincarnated life will be better if you do good deeds," said Panchal.

Hinduism also involves the reading of scriptures. There are two types of scriptures including primary scriptures (Sruti) and secondary scrip-

tures (Smriti).

Hinduism practices yoga (Yogasana) daily that includes exercises. They do this because they believe in a sound mind and a sound body in order to be completely spiritual.

something that is well represented in school. Students and teachers practice many different practices. Some of the religions practiced at our school.



Eight days of tradition

By Jacob Wucka
Hanukkah is the Jewish holiday in which one candle is lit for eight days straight, and during that time gifts are

given. But the true meaning of Hanukkah is much more than giving and receiving. It's the miracle behind the menorah which counts.

According to Judaism, about.com, the Syrian King forbade the Jewish people from practicing their customs and studying the Torah. Instead he had them worship the Greek gods.

Because of that Judah Maccabee and his four brothers created a resistance called the Maccabees. They fought against the much larger Syrian army and won after three years.

After the Syrians were chased out of Judea, the Jews cleaned out the temple. However once they finished cleaning they found that

their menorah had only enough oil for one day.

They lit the menorah, but the miracle of Hanukkah is that the menorah burned for eight days. Thus, the menorah has eight candles.

"One misconception about Hanukkah is that it is not a religious holiday, but a holiday of festivities and family. It's more of a holiday of tradition instead of attending special religious services," said business teacher Donald Zabelin.

Many traditions make up Hanukkah including lighting the menorah, playing dreidel, eating special foods, singing Hanukkah songs, gift giving, and a Hanukkah feast.

For the eight nights of Hanukkah a gift is given, and for that many days the candles are lit. This tradition is performed by Zabelin but he never really understood the gift giving part.

"When I was a child I asked my Sunday school teacher why we give gifts for Hanukkah when Hanukkah was such a hard time for the Jews, and the Maccabees. And my teacher responded by saying that it's the gift giving season," said Zabelin, "There is no real reason to be giving gifts, only because it fell at this time."

But this issue of gift giving

doesn't stop him from giving gifts. As a matter of fact each Hanukkah Zabelin gives a pair of thermal socks because of those cold winter nights.

Another tradition of Hanukkah is playing dreidel.

A dreidel is a spinning top with letters from the Hebrew alphabet on the sides. It is used in a game where the players have 10 items like nuts, or pennies.

Whatever side the dreidel lands on, that stands for either take five, lose five, don't lose anything.

This game is played primarily by children, but Zabelin does carry a miniature dreidel in his pocket for demonstrations for his students.

The sides of the dreidel also have a special meaning.

Here the sides of a dreidel mean "a miracle happened there" and in Israel the sides mean "a miracle happened here" said Zabelin.

Another tradition, for almost every religion, is eating special foods and for Hanukkah latkas are a specialty. It is a potato pancake fried in oils, which symbolize the oils that burned for eight days.

Finally the family will get together and have a Hanukkah party, where they will eat, play dreidel, and even listen to Hanukkah songs.

Redemption is a way of life for many Christians

By Aaron Pennington

No doubt one of the more well-known religions, as well as one of the most popular religions, is Christianity.

Its believers accept that Jesus Christ, only son of God, was crucified and died, yet rose from the dead three days later.

Pastor John Schuurman of Wheaton Christian Reformed Church, believes the message Christianity is trying to send is positive and tries to uplift people.

"Christianity is trying to say that there is hope and redemption for the world," said Schuurman. "Though the world is full of trouble, it teaches those things are in the world because of humanity's sinfulness and damages it as a result."

As it says in the Bible, Christianity started after the return of Jesus, and his disciples spread the word of his coming, planting the seeds for the religion.

Spreading the word is something Schuurman can

relate to, as a pastor requires a lot of words.

However, he says that pastors and priests aren't that much different from other Christians.

"We do things that all Christians are required to do, like to care about the sick, help out the poor, and our neighbors," said Schuurman.

Someone who has answered God's call is freshman Nicole Bridgeforth, who started practicing Christianity last year.

One of the activities Bridgeforth does as a Christian is attend a youth group, where a group of teenagers talk about Jesus, and share emotional issues.

Bridgeforth was talked into going by some friends and has been going since.

"For me, Christianity is the most believable religion out there, and more fun," said Bridgeforth.

Schuurman also believes that while all other religions have some truths, Christianity is the only truth.



Photo by Jacob Wucka

Business teacher Donald Zabelin keeps Hanukkah traditions alive like playing with a dreidel. He carries a miniature dreidel for student demonstrations during the holidays.

Find the perfect gift for those on your 'nice list'

By Kait Taylor

Finding the right gift for that special someone can be a difficult task during the last few days of the winter holiday season, but it can become a lot easier when one knows the hottest gifts on everyone's list.

This year, the ladies want to stay warm with a variety of cuddly hoodies and scarves. The Gap is a good place to start, where Sherpa lined zip-up hoodies come in an assortment of colors and styles for between \$38-\$54. The Gap also has a multicolored variety of striped, polka dotted, patterned scarves to match any winter jacket for as little as \$16.99.

A matching hat couldn't hurt either, for between \$9.99-\$14.99.

Another hot item at the Gap this season is Product Red, a collection of t-shirts made in Africa with an organic look and feel to reflect the country's land and spirit. 50 percent of proceeds go towards the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

For the fellas, electronics are hot this year. The Sony Playstation 2 is a hot selling item this year, and it will take some luck to find a \$129 fun-box to put under the Christmas tree. Another option is the Snap TV NCAA football

DVD trivia game, an electronic board game that tests his knowledge of highlights of over 100 years of football for \$24.99.

For dad, the Norelco 6-in-1 professional grooming kit, a hair clipper comb, beard and moustache comb, nose, ear and eyebrow trimmer is a practical choice this Christmas for only \$32.99 at Best Buy.

For mom, a Gilligan & O'Malley long satin robe may be a nice choice for lounging around the fireplace. For \$21.59 at Target, mom can enjoy the satiny luxury of a long robe that pampers her in every season.

Any grandparent would be excited to receive a digital photo frame filled with photos of the grandkids. The Royal 8-inch digital photo frame is \$150, and very easy to use. All one has to do is place any major format of flash memory into the appropriate slot located on the back of the frame and the pictures will be displayed instantly on screen.

If finding a last minute gift becomes an impossible task in the hustle and bustle of the Christmas season, a homemade gift or card always warms the heart.

Remember, it's not about the gift, but the generosity of the season.

'Tis the season for last minute shopping ideas ❄️

Sherpa lined zip-up hoodies from The Gap come in an assortment of colors and styles for between \$38-\$54

Multicolored scarves, hats, and gloves \$9.99-\$14.99 at The Gap

Gilligan & O'Malley long satin robe \$21.59 at Target

Norelco 6-in-1 professional grooming kit \$32.99 at Best Buy

The Royal 8 inch digital photo frame \$150 at Target

Zip-up hoodies \$38-\$54 at The Gap

Snap TV NCAA football DVD trivia game \$24.99 at Best Buy

Retail employees vs. angry shoppers

By Ellyn Fortino

There's nothing that says holiday shopping quite like long lines of crabby customers, out-of-stock items, ransacked departments, and overheated and crowded stores. Yet those are just some of the issues holiday retail employees deal with every time they hit the selling floor.

During the holiday season, and especially on Black Friday (day after Thanksgiving), competition is cut-throat among retailers and unsettling elements of human behavior seem to come out when people are shopping.

The anger and animosity towards an employee whom they have never met is astonishing.

The mention of "No, we are out of that" or "We do

not carry that item" make customers cuss, scream, roll their eyes and whine. Immediately after this they ask, "Are you sure you don't have any in the back?"

Some employees may hum anti-holiday songs in their head after being forced to hear "Jingle Bells" 40 times throughout the day or some may escape to the stock room and take a few slow, deep breaths.

Nonetheless, how do teenage retail employees survive the holiday shopping stress and mayhem without losing their marbles?

Senior Kate Krecek who works at PetSmart, says that during the holidays the store gets crazy and a lot of customers are cranky.

"I was showing a customer

what to do on the credit card machine and she hit my hand away," she said. "Then she told me that was not what she wanted. It made me very upset."

"Someone came in and bought an item and it came up the wrong price. He started yelling at me and said he was never coming back here"

--Junior Julie Leveille

Krecek has a good piece of advice for other teenagers

working retail.

"Don't make big mistakes because other employees and customers will get mad, and when a customer does get mad at you, don't overreact."

Both Krecek and senior Becky Lemon, who works at Hobby Lobby, said that a good aspect of the busy season is the amount of hours they can work.

"I get a lot more hours than usual during Christmas time," said Krecek.

Lemon said that the rudest thing a customer has done during this time of the year was when she was doing a return that was only a few items. The man waiting behind in line was very impatient.

"By the time I finished the return I had also taken three

customers and he was waiting behind the other people," she said. "He said 'is this going to take any longer?' in a very rude tone."

Although Lemon said that it is annoying when shoppers change their mind after she has rung an item up, she said that singing a happy song in her head helps when dealing with rude people.

Junior Julie Leveille, who works at Ace Hardware, said that during the holiday season customers come into the store and expect everything to be perfect.

"One time someone came in and bought an item and it came up the wrong price," she said. "He started yelling at me and said that he was never coming back here because of that. It was lame."

Holiday hot spots

By Dave Thomas

The holidays are not simply a time to get expensive gifts or visit relatives that live on the other side of the country. Instead, some students opt to travel to Chicago, and absorb all the attractions the Windy City has to offer.

A popular site located on State Street is the decorated windows of Marshall Field's. Although it is now called "Macy's on State Street," the windows are known for their themes. Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, Cinderella, and Harry Potter are all examples of past themes.

Not so far away is the Christkindlmarket, the German Christmas market in Daley Plaza. Originating in Nuremberg, Germany, the market hosts over 40 different vendors, ranging from authentic German food to Christmas trinkets.

"It's hard to find good German food, and it was good because it was made by actual Germans," said senior

Merrick Doll, who visited the market last year. Some of the food Doll feasted on including schnitzel, bratwurst, and a variety of Germany pastries.

"It was like being back in Germany, with German music playing," said Doll. "It was a fun, interesting place to go."

Doll also said he liked being able to converse with the Germans there. However, he did say that they do speak English, but the vendors talk to each other in German.

But the market is not exclusively German. According to the Chicago Tribune, other cultures are represented in the market. While enjoying the potato pancakes and the wiener schnitzel sandwich, students can view "sweaters from Ecuador, Scotland-cashmere scarves, Ukrainian walking toys, and Palestinian nativity carvings."

The Christkindlmarket runs through Sunday.

However, if an open-air

market does not sound appealing, Millennium Park is nearby, complete with an ice rink. Junior Kristina Kuhn said when she visited there, it was crowded, but also said it was an ideal place for couples.

Skating is free, but skate rentals cost \$7. The rink is typically open from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. through March 16. In addition, the Chicago Children's Choir will be caroling outside of Cloud Gate from 6 to 7 p.m. on Friday.

Zoos are also a very popular attraction during the holidays. Many zoos, including both Brookfield Zoo and Lincoln Park Zoo, are decorated with Christmas lights. In addition, Lincoln Park Zoo is hosting "A Holiday to Remember." On Wednesday, the zoo will entertain visitors with ice carvers and Santa, along with players from the Chicago Blackhawks visiting from 5 to 8 p.m.

Admissions to all of the events are free.

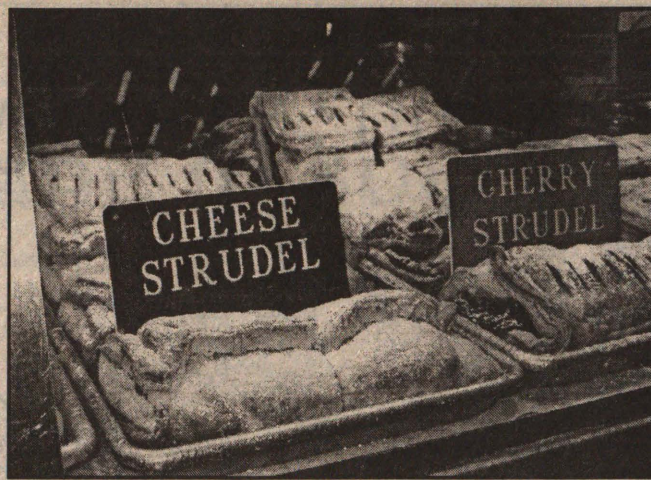


Photo courtesy of Terry Strohm

International Club indulged in cheesy strudels and other German munchies while visiting Christkindlmarket in Chicago Dec. 14. Christkindlmarket operates through Dec. 24.



Photo courtesy of Terry Strohm

Students in International Club shopped at Christkindlmarket for holiday gifts. From left, sophomore Jimmy Egert, freshmen Nicholas Hawco, Brad Gerwin, Nate Gorski, and Louie Richards.

What to do when roads get slippery

Winter driving proves hazardous to all drivers regardless of experience

By Leah Kuzmicz

Driving alone can be tricky to master, but driving during the snow and winter conditions can be a tough skill to accomplish.

Department chair of physical education, Dan Johnson, knows what to do when situations turn rather icy.

"You should always allow more time according to the road conditions," said Johnson. "Move slower than you usually would, because conditions can change quickly."

Senior Pete Konchar can identify with difficulty driving in the snow.

In February, Konchar was driving down Highlake Road during a mild snowstorm and hit an icy patch.

His car started drifting towards the left and over corrected his wheel and went into the trees.

According to Konchar his car was not damaged too much.

"I damaged the windshield wipers, back tire and the back of the car," said Konchar.

He was not hurt during the accident, and it proved to be a lesson for cautious driving in the winter.

Sophomore Taylor Jaconas can relate. Jaconas has a learner's permit and is trying to learn all the rules of the road.

"I was driving with my mom and a truck came out from the side, so I tried to switch lanes. My car started to slide when I tried changing lanes and I just remember my mom yelling at me to get out of the car," said Jaconas.

Jaconas only had a little dent on the front right side of the car, but she says that it really shook her up and gave her a scare.

Winter driving tips are available at www.thsao.com/winterdriving.

While driving the tires of the car should always have good tread depth, the windshield wipers and lights should be properly working, and brakes should be in top condition. The battery in the car should also be checked, because cold weather lowers battery power.

While driving, the driver should also be very aware of road conditions and know when it is too slippery to drive, and make sure that the tires have nice traction.

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'Eragon': Visually awesome, but a ripoff

By Cristina Sarnelli

Hardly an epic film, "Eragon" had the ability to soar like a dragon, and only a few abstracts of the film kept it from crashing and burning.

Based on the best-selling book by Christopher Paolini, "Eragon" begins with a poor farm boy named Eragon (Edward Speleers), who comes upon what looks like an enormous blue stone while hunting in the forest. He brings the "stone" home with him, and soon after, an extremely adorable baby dragon hatches from the egg. At the same time, a weird scar appears on Eragon's hand.

Unfortunately, Speleers' reaction to this wonderful realization is anything but excited. His expressionless face twitches and squints at the sight of the dragon. He might as well have the script in front of him as he recites his lines with fake feelings. Director Stefen Fangmeier could have done a way better casting job by picking someone who knew how to cry for real.

Nevertheless, the dragon, named Saphira, steals the movie with her believability and cuteness, extracting some "awws" from the audience.

Saphira grows bigger and eventually learns to fly. Eragon climbs on for a ride,

and that's when the special effects start to do their magic.

Better than what the previews let on, the special effects are stunning. Saphira starts out looking like a dinosaur with bird wings, but when she starts to fly, the fantastic detail of her body is revealed, and she seems to be fiercer. Eragon and Saphira can also communicate mentally now.

As the film progresses, Eragon meets up with a strange man named Brom, (Jeremy Irons). Brom tells Eragon of the legend of The Dragon Rider, and sees the scar on Eragon's hand, realizing that the legend is true. He helps Eragon on his journey to meet up with the Vardin, rebels who want to overthrow the evil King Galbatorix.

Unfortunately, Irons' performance is cut short, which is a shame because he is the best actor in the movie. He offers light humor with a tad of sarcasm as he cracks a joke here and there, and he is one of the few who looks comfortable with their character.

This movie is definitely no



"Lord of the Rings." In fact, many of the scenes seem to be ripoffs, with Orc-like enemies, glowing swords, sorcerers, a language made up by Elves, and the battle sequence similar to the one at the end of "The Two Towers."

Although this movie does not do the best-selling book justice, it was cool to see a film with a dragon, and if it weren't for a few well done special effects and one or two exceptional performances, "Eragon" would have been a major dud.

Not hollerin' back for more

By Jessica Bergmann

Gwen Stefani's first solo album left listeners with catchy lyrics about bananas playing in their minds. The only thing that comes to mind after listening to her newest album "The Sweet Escape" is the ridiculous yodeling on her new single "Wind It Up."

Stefani is a talented songstress, but it just doesn't come across in this album. If anything, she's only following the now trendy hip-hop approach, which not only doesn't work well for her, but makes her seem like a poser.

Her first track off the CD and new single "Wind It Up" was a bad way to start the album. It's a wannabe styled after the Black Eyed Peas' smash hit "My Humps."

Most of the songs are terrible, but not all. "Wonderful Life" gives a difference in pace with a retro '80's vibe instead of hip-hop. It's a nice change, and the music doesn't override the vocals.

And instead of tribal chanting, the vocals also

make a great improvement from tribal chanting and wailing to the Stefani voice people have grown to love.

These vocals also stand out in "Early Winter" one of the songs she mastered well. Although it takes more of a clean pop song tone, it's one of the few songs not dominated by hip-hop beats, which is what makes it so good.

But just when the album seems improve, the disappointment continues with "Breakin' Up," a pointless song on a cell phone connection that somehow relates to breaking up a relationship.

Stefani does tries a new approach to the typical break-up song by relating it to cell phones, but it's more bizarre than genius.

The lyrics are repetitive, and the vocals are more of a whine than her usual best. Even her new image is recycled.

Sorry Gwen, but it looks like there will be no more hollerin' back until some much needed originality is brought back to the table.

Ridiculing nerds for passion is wrong

In this land of 300 million (and counting) Americans, there was bound to be a handful who took the adventures of Harry Potter a little too seriously. Whether they actually believed in magic, or that Harry Potter and his friends promoted Satanism and witchcraft, is irrelevant; the point is, they exist.

I have found them. And they're coming to Chicago.

On Dec. 4, the Chicago Sun-Times reported a Harry Potter-themed conference is being scheduled in Chicago for August 2008. Amongst their activities is a Muggle-modified (the word for humans in the series) version of Quidditch.

In the series, Quidditch is a cross between basketball and soccer, but on broomsticks. The picture the Sun-Times provided was quite pitiful. But these folks are not stopping at Quidditch. They're organizing themselves into the Hogwarts' houses, listening and discussing the deep

philosophical meanings with college professors, and eat two great dinners in celebration for the convention itself, and for the seventh book in the series.

After reading the article, I laughed. I laughed at the complete ridiculousness of these people. One of the organizers interviewed in the article, 30-year-old Amy



Dave Thomas

Tenbrink, is a lawyer from Denver. I just wanted to scream: "Don't you NERDS have husbands or jobs?"

I ridiculed them for their passion, which everyone seems to do in the presence of nerds. After all, it's all right to be passionate about sports, politics, or cars, but if one starts writing programs or acting out their

favorite scenes from sci-fi movies, then they're nerds.

But then, like a very bad movie, a moment of realization overcame me. In terms of our passions, the only thing that separates me from a nerd or a football player is what we're passionate about.

Using myself as an example, I would require time to work out the Fundamental Theorem of Calculus, but I could recite all the positions on gay rights or heavy metal lore.

I might be a nerd. I might not. It's debatable, but there's one statement I can make without flinching: If people go to movie premieres in costume, there's something wrong with them. Being knowledgeable or a nerd is one thing, but dressing up for a movie premiere is crazy.

It's one thing to know excessive information like politics or programming, but dressing up as Spiderman or Darth Vader for a movie premiere is inexcusable.



Photo courtesy of Go Moxie

Experience and success

By Kait Taylor

Girls basketball is depending on experience to win games this season.

"We have a lot of experience coming from last year and it shows," said coach Kim Wallner.

The team is ranked in the top 20 teams in the area this year, which is a leap from no ranking in previous years.

The girls have quite a few wins under their belt with a 7-3 record, and are coming back for more during the Benet Academy invite Thursday, Friday, and Saturday.

Wallner hopes that the girls stay consistent during these vital games.

"We tend to play well for one, two, three quarters and then allow a lot of points in the remaining time or fall flat offensively," Wallner said. "We're trying to focus on execution and aggressiveness. But even more important is bringing what we need on a regular basis."

Seniors Kelsey Monroe and Melissa Olsen average 16 points per game, and Monroe leads the team in assists and saves. Olsen also leads the team in rebounding.

Wallner emphasized that all of the girls are playing well this year and that the reason the team functions successfully is because of the team effort.

The varsity lineup is made up of mostly seniors, including captains Monroe, Olsen and Kate Norton, who Wallner considers "great representation of the team."

Other varsity players include seniors Kristin Grimm, Jordan Hall, Jenna Bodie, Laurin McCaffrey, and junior Kayla Radloff.

"These girls have been with me for awhile, and I have enjoyed working with them. They're a very tight group," Wallner said.

When the girls get back from break, they will be playing what Wallner considers some of the most important games of the season.

"We have some pretty big conference games coming up after break," she said. "I'm looking forward to the challenges and beating some tough teams."

Swimming in lane to success

By David Thomas

Despite losing to Naperville Central on Dec. 12, several swimmers on the boys swim team earned some notable accomplishments.

The first was from freshman Matt Kuly, whose time of 32 seconds in the 50 yard freestyle event won him first place. Junior Matt Ziffra came in second place in 100

yard butterfly with a time of 1:02, and junior Greg Pelke accomplished a lifetime best at the Naperville Central meet, clocking in at 1:06 in the 100 yard butterfly.

"We're going to change up the relays, try some things," said varsity coach Curt Herrin. He noted how it was difficult to tell exactly "where the team is at" because there

have only been two meets.

Herrin did say that his swimmers' techniques and mechanics were good, but also admitted that their stroke techniques and turns needed improvement.

He remarked how at least four swimmers on varsity were "ahead of schedule." Those four are juniors Mike Dalton, Brian Hummer, Greg Pelke, and Matt Ziffra.

The same formula of mixed success was also evident at the team's first meet, the 25th Annual Wildcat Relay, where 12 teams competed at West Chicago.

Although the team came in ninth place overall, Herrin did say that they "beat the three teams that we wanted to beat." Those teams were West Aurora, the Illinois Math & Science Academy, and Oak Forest.

"Their times are better than the times they had at the end of last season," said Herrin.

West Chicago came in sixth place in three different events: the 200 yard freestyle relay, the 200 yard backstroke

relay, and the 400 yard freestyle relay. Sixth place was the highest place the team reached at the meet.

In the 200 freestyle relay, seniors Brendan Sullivan and Jake Murphy, Ziffra, and Dalton finished with a time of 1:41. In the 200 backstroke relay, the team of Pelke, Hummer, Sullivan, and Murphy finished with a time of 1:58. And in the 400 freestyle relay, Sullivan, Murphy, Ziffra, and Hummer finished with 3:48.

According to Herrin, some of the up-and-comers at the lower levels of the team include sophomore David Peace, a distance swimmer, and freshman Evan Krotz, a breaststroker.

As for the rest of the team, Herrin said that the number one goal for this year is to stay competitive by improving times and focusing on the "little things" like the start, the streamline, breathing control during races, and finishing races.

The team's next meet is Jan. 2 against West Aurora.

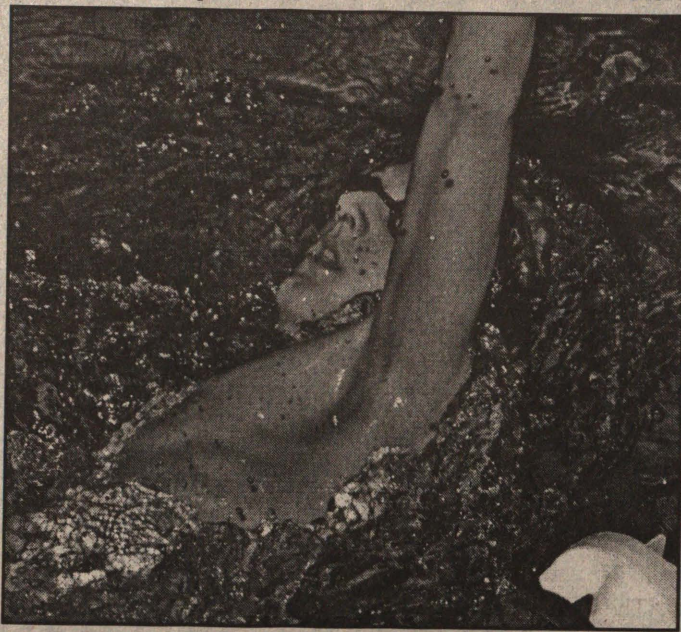


Photo by Dave Thomas

Junior Brian Hummer and other varsity members of the boys swimming team are swimming much faster than last season.

Wrestlers strive to live up to their potential after a tough competition

By Jacob Wucka

After a disappointing wrestling loss on Dec. 8, coach James Phillips made the team run three miles in hopes of keeping their motivation up for what so far is a good season.

"It's been a pretty good start," said Phillips about the season which consisted of a "good" win against Oswego and a second place position in the Wildcat Invitational Tournament.

However the good start abruptly stopped on Dec. 8, when the teams didn't perform to their potential.

The varsity team won four out of 11 matches, freshmen won five out of 10, and junior-varsity did not win any matches.

"I hope we bounce back," said Phillips.

Following the matches, Phillips made the team run one mile under seven minutes and no one succeeded. Then he made them run another mile under seven and a half minutes and everyone made it. Finally he made them run an additional mile under

eight minutes and everyone passed.

Instead of whining and droning over Phillips' penalty for their performance, the team knows what he wants, and they realize the passion he has for the team.

Junior Adrian Cruz said, "Phillips always gives a lot of good advice. He makes me a champion."

Sophomores Preston Hauptman and George Foreman agree that the coaches give keep them motivated.

Besides the coaches keeping the team motivated, the wrestlers use their own methods to keep high morale.

They prepare mentally by thinking about how good it feels to win and how bad it feels to lose, and others are in the mental stage of always being ready to fight. All the students are ready to fight, but some feel as if they're more ready than others.

Wrestlers like Cruz believe

they're always pumped up and ready to win.

Cruz said, "I give 110 percent except for those who don't deserve it."

The next junior varsity meet is on Saturday at Glenbard North, and the next varsity meet is on Wednesday at Thornton Fractional South.

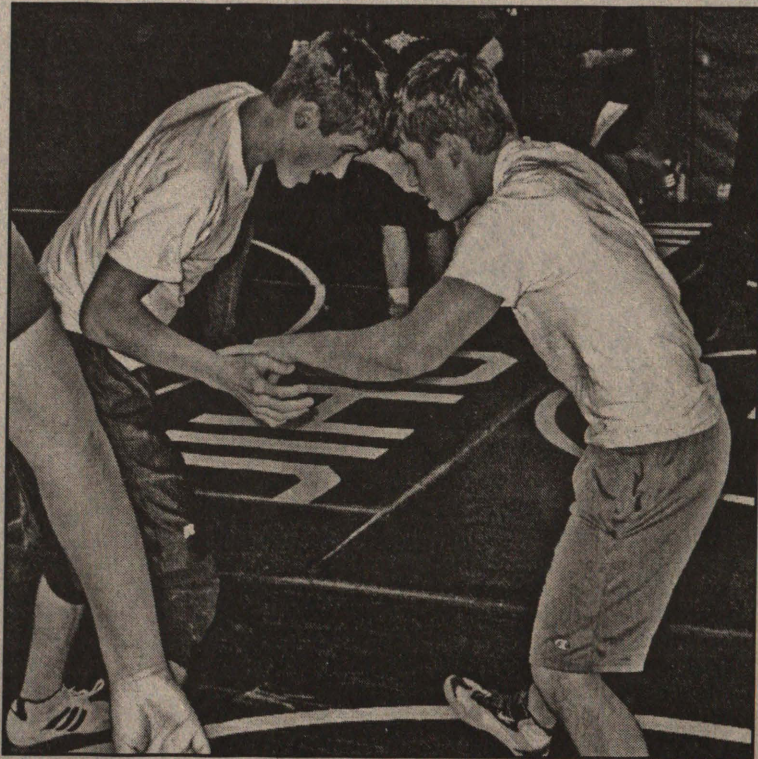


Photo by Jacob Wucka

Senior Brandon Klekamp and junior Scott Wetherald hope to bounce back from some tough meets by practicing.

Correction

The wrestling team had one senior on the team last season.

The Wildcat Chronicle incorrectly reported the number in the November issue and regrets the error.

Basketball shooting for better record

By Ellyn Fortino

Although the boys basketball team may not have any pre-game traditions, each player has their own personal routine to help improve not only themselves but also the team record, which currently stands at 1-7.

Senior Donnie Smith said that listening to music and hydrating before the game is essential along with preparing for the opposing team.

Senior Nate Sullivan agreed with Smith.

"We scout the opponent's playing style and game strategies," he said. "We also shoot around and go over plays."

While the team may have many areas of improvement they have more areas of achievement, including a solid defense and an opportunist offense according to Sullivan.

Coach Kevin Gimre hopes that before the season is over the team will be playing their best as each game passes on.

"Every game we strive to provide ourselves with an opportunity to win the game. Therefore, in practice our focus is to continually improve on the skills and game situations that will put us in position to win ball games," he said.

The key players this season are seniors Pete Konchar, Dan Rizzo, Mike Sorgatz, Alex Pelej and Matt Claude.

"Pete is a team leader, very talented, and intelligent," Sullivan said. "Another key player is Dan Rizzo because he never complains, has a great work ethic, and has exemplary character. I refer to him as the 'little engine that could' and he is great proof that good things come in

small packages."

Gimre agreed that the team has many key players.

"Seniors Pete Konchar, Alex Pelej, Mike Sorgatz, and Matt Claude are some of the players that will play a key role and help the team to be successful," he said.

The season may have just

recently started, but the boys already have had many memorable times.

"The most memorable moment in the season so far is getting our first win against Leyden 53-51 on Nov. 21," said Sullivan.

And Smith's favorite memory was using 100 rolls of

toilet paper on Larry Pope's ('06) house.

Before the season ends, the team hopes to become more physical and aggressive. Playing solid team basketball and shooting more three pointers are also key.

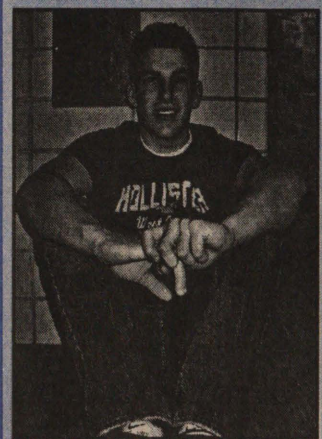
They will play Thursday against Glenbard West.



Senior Pete Konchar is leading the boys basketball team in points, rebounds, assists, and saves. He also is a team captain this season. Photo by Jessica Bergmann

We should stay in the DVC to preserve tradition and competition that it offers

The question has been flowing in and out of our mouths for some time now.



Greg Vodicka

Should the Wildcats stay in the DVC, the toughest conference in the state of Illinois?

The reason for the dispute comes from the Wildcats' losing record for most of the major athletics such as football, basketball, and volleyball.

Many people argue that

leaving the DVC would be a good choice because it would put us in a conference with schools like our size, which may cause West Chicago to start winning games. This also may lead to boosting school spirit and bring more and more athletes out for sports teams each year.

Obviously larger numbers can be a good thing, but is it worth leaving the conference our school has fought in for over a decade?

I understand what my colleague Justin Kutilek said in his September column about school spirit. I too would love a winning season.

I also understand the DVC has some of the biggest schools in the state of Illinois. West Chicago, however has less students than the big Wheaton or Naperville schools.

Wheaton Warrenville

South has won the state football championship for the last two years. Their enrollment this year was 2,454. That is only about 300 more students than we have enrolled at West Chicago this year.

We may not have the numbers the larger schools have but we have committed athletes. If I were choosing a team I would pick the player who wants to play the sport over the kid who just came out for the first place trophy.

There are many remarkable athletes we have walking our halls who may never get recognized because of the competitive conference we are in. They may never see a state championship or even the playoffs.

With our smaller teams athletes get the attention from the coaches they deserve. With teams twice our size, some very good athletes

never get an opportunity to develop and show coaches their capability. They may never get to see the field and may even end up quitting.

The athletes in these larger schools are no different than us. They too wake up and put their pants on one leg at a time. The difference is after their pants are on they get to work; working towards a state championship.

We have some of the hardest working athletes at West Chicago, but that isn't enough. We're the underdogs. We need to work twice as hard as other schools.

Wildcats seem to have the goal to just get a few wins during the season. We should be shooting for playoffs like the other schools.

Until we can believe in ourselves why should anyone else? Ask yourself why we don't win. Do you think

changing conferences would really change that?

If we moved down to a smaller division what would we accomplish? Sure we may get the winning season we all have been praying for. Maybe the fans would start coming out and school spirit would sky rocket. But what would we be winning?

We would always know we couldn't cut it in the DVC. Even with a conference championship under our belts, we would always know we were not the best.

We could simply take the easy way out and leave the DVC, or we could stay and finish what we started.

Students need to realize we can make it in the DVC, and until we do make it there will be no leaving for this Wildcat. We have some unfinished business to take care of.