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ThreeSixty

Minnesota Teens Report Stories & Issues That Matter

SLEEP & THE TEEN BRAIN

Teenagers continue to underestimate a full eight hours of sleep at their own peril, but is too much homework or technology to blame? ■ Page 12



Kimberly Martinez



STAYING GROUNDED

Jeremy Messersmith keeps his music goals minimal. ■ Page 8



PERSONAL PRIDE

Young voices help shape the same-sex marriage debate. ■ Page 16

FREQUENTLY **ASKED** QUESTIONS

What is ThreeSixty Journalism? ThreeSixty Journalism is a youth journalism program of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of St. Thomas. The non-profit program is committed to helping Minnesota teens tell the stories that matter in their lives and communities.

What is ThreeSixty's mission? ThreeSixty's mission is to bring diverse voices into journalism and related professions and to using intense, personal instruction in the craft and principles of journalism to strengthen the literacy, writing skills and college-readiness of Minnesota teens.

Whom do you serve? ThreeSixty Journalism directly serves more than 100 Minnesota high school students each year via after-school classes, weekend workshops, school partnerships, individual coaching and summer journalism camps. About 60 percent of the students served come from low-income homes and more than 70 percent come from communities of color. We serve thousands more via our writing contests, print publications and website—www.threesixtyjournalism.org.

How did ThreeSixty Journalism start? The program began as the Urban Journalism Workshop in 1971. UJW provided basic journalism training to Minnesota high school students, particularly low-income and minority teens, at summer camps at the University of Minnesota. In 2001, the program moved to the University of St. Thomas and became a year-round program with a full-time staff.

What's the name ThreeSixty Journalism mean?

In 2006, the program's name changed to ThreeSixty Journalism to reflect the program's growth and the range of backgrounds among the students we serve. We are interested in telling stories from all parts of our community, using a variety of media tools, including words, photos, illustrations and video.

How can I get involved? To submit ideas, essays, photos or artwork, email them to info@threesixtyjournalism.org or contact Editor Thomas Rozwadowski at thomas.rozwadowski@stthomas.edu.

To arrange classroom visits, contact Community Outreach Editor Katie Johnson at katie.johnson@stthomas.edu or Executive Director Lynda McDonnell at lmcdonnell@stthomas.edu.

FOR MINNESOTA **TEACHERS**



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ThreeSixty

Writers in this issue Simone Cazares, St. Paul Conservatory for Performing Artists • Ellie Colbert, Washburn HS • Mairead DeBruin, Avalon School • Dillan DeGross, FAIR School Downtown • Tyanna Dickerson, University of St. Thomas • Dami Gilbert, Robbinsdale Cooper HS • Hannah Gordon, Washburn HS • Nichelle Heu, Harding HS • Madie Ley, Elk River HS • Kimberly Martinez, Harding HS • Shay Radhakrishnan, Math and Science Academy • Elena Renken, St. Paul Central HS • Lana Rubinstein, River Falls HS • Amolak Singh, Nova Classical Academy • Brianna Skildum, Roosevelt HS • Danielle Wong, Eastview HS • Thomas Wrede, Cretin-Derham Hall • Gabie Yang, Forest Lake Area HS • Mina Yuan, Wayzata HS

Illustrators in this issue Isaura Lira Greene, Great River HS • Aamino Hirmoge, Harding HS • Kimberly Martinez, Harding HS • Mina Yuan, Wayzata HS

Publisher: Lynda McDonnell

Editor: Thomas Rozwadowski

Design Consultant: Diana Boger

Community Outreach Editor: Katie Johnson

Communications Marketing Coordinator: Briana Gruenewald

Administrative Assistant: Tyanna Dickerson

Editorial offices

Mail 5057, 2115 Summit Ave.

St. Paul MN 55105

651-962-5282

info@threesixtyjournalism.com

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Ex officio member Dr. Terence Langan, Dean, College of Arts & Sciences, University of St Thomas

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PERSONAL PRIDE PERSONAL CHOICE

IT DIDN'T MATTER THAT SOME COULDN'T EVEN VOTE YET. Young voices helped shape this year's historic political battle to pass same-sex marriage legislation in Minnesota by phone banking, door knocking, and perhaps most important of all, talking about their families. ThreeSixty reporter Elena Renken spoke with teens and same-sex parents about the impact of marriage equality on their past, present and future, and further examined the political and personal ramifications with the man who orchestrated the Minnesota ground game for same-sex advocates, Richard Carlbom. Yet as the celebrations continue, St. Thomas student Tyanna Dickerson reflects on her own beliefs—and how dedicating herself to religion may have changed her vote, but (hopefully) not her friendships. ■ **Pages 16-19**

Send comments to ThreeSixty Journalism

Send your letters to ThreeSixty Journalism at 2115 Summit Ave., Mail 5057, St. Paul, MN. 55105, or comment online at www.threesixtyjournalism.org You can also join ThreeSixty Journalism's Facebook fan page or follow us on Twitter@ThreeSixtyMN

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@16 with Jeremy Messersmith With a new album arriving in February, the self-proclaimed "Pied Piper of wuss rock" chats about his struggles, successes as a musician. ■ **8**

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Own your story. Own your voice.

IT'S A MANTRA HERE at ThreeSixty, the idea that whether you're a teen reader or (hopefully) teen writer, you should own the power of your life experience—what you see on a daily basis at home, school and in the community. Without it, we don't have a magazine.

After all, if adults always steer the narrative, you can't really complain when stereotypes or misconceptions force you into a role of their choosing.

While driving Nichelle Heu, a Harding senior, back to St. Thomas' campus after a fall ThreeSixty event, I asked her about the summer violence in east St. Paul that grabbed headlines.

These are some of my favorite moments in ThreeSixty, when away from the stress of deadlines—you know, the pesky part of my job—I



Thomas Rozwadowski
Editor

can just pick teen brains for unique insight.

Have you ever thought about how that reflects on you as an eastsider? Slight nod.

Do you enjoy living on the east side? Slight nod.

Does what other people say about the east side matter to you? OK, now we were talking.

Sensing a switch had been activated, Nichelle and I developed an essay that veered to various corners of her east side upbringing, good and bad. It's a story she knows and should get to tell. But first she had to own it.

Coincidentally, the same

conversation led me (along with executive director Lynda McDonnell) to Johnson High School after its student council reached out to us about recent Pioneer Press coverage. They were upset by a perceived rash of unfair youth labeling after that same violent surge—in particular, Ray Widstrand's near-fatal beating in August.

We met with several motivated Johnson students who were ready to have their voices heard. In fact, on our walk to the student council room, one of the teens said the group letter to the editor they were crafting would serve “to continue the feud.”

Wait ... what feud, we asked? Shouldn't you be just as upset as a Pioneer Press columnist that an innocent man was beaten within an inch of his life by a group of young people on the east side?

Slight nod.

Instead, we implored them to look at journalism as a community dialogue to create greater respect and understanding. Reporters, by their very nature, are hardwired to explore. They can't know everything

about their backyard, so why not offer the Pioneer Press an opportunity to see what you, the everyday east side teenager, believes to be true?

That's your story. Own it.

I'm happy to say that a meeting between the Pioneer Press and Johnson student council is being

finalized at this very moment. I'm not sure that a resolution needs to be reached, only that it's a positive step for all parties—media and students alike—to facilitate conversation and (gasp!) learn more about each other.

That's journalism.

And guess what? Anyone can own it.

Online curriculum



Stories with this icon have curriculum online tied to the Minnesota Common Core Standards. Visit www.threesixtyjournalism.org/teachers for more information. Three stories in this issue with curriculum are “Faith in a box” on page 6, “No rest for the bleary” on page 12 and “The game within the game” on page 23.

Strong voices

Carlson -Supported Content

Carlson, an international travel and hospitality company based in Minnetonka, is committed to protecting children from sexual exploitation and trafficking. The firm trains all employees in its hotels to recognize and report suspicious activity. As part of its commitment to protecting women and children, Carlson is supporting ThreeSixty Journalism's coverage related to the empowerment of young women during the 2013-14 school year. We are deeply grateful for this support.

My life on the east side

What you learn in east St. Paul shapes who you are, how you can get out

“TRUST NONE.”

It might not be an original motto only said in east St. Paul, but it's one that several teenagers swear by on this side of town.

The way we, as eastsiders, carry ourselves lets others know where



Nichelle Heu
Harding High School

we're from and who we are as a community.

Trust none: Don't open yourself to anybody because they might betray you with that information.

For me, I don't tell anyone my business. I keep to myself. I don't want anyone to know anything about me besides my name. The only person I trust is my boyfriend.

The people you trust are your “day ones.”

These are the friends who you know will be there in the long run, through the good and bad. It's not based on how long you've known the person, but the loyalty that lies within your friendship. It's a rare quality, and you might only have a few “day ones” you can truly trust.

Why is this important to us?

Because it helps define who we are as eastsiders.

ON YOUR OWN

Daily life on the east side isn't all that exciting. I live on Earl Street, in the middle of the Payne-Phalen neighborhood, about four blocks from Johnson High School.

I don't necessarily love the east side, but I don't hate it either.

After all, living here has made me who I am. It's all I know.

Being an eastsider means I don't let people step on me and I always speak my mind. Not that I have a tough exterior. Anyone who knows me would probably say I'm an extremely positive person, always laughing and cracking lame jokes. I

do my best to make people smile.

I'm also fiercely independent. Part of that is just my nature as a young woman who needs to get things done. But most of it is also a product of living on the east side.

In fact, I don't think you can survive here without embracing your independence. I see it in a lot of my friends. We all balance school and part-time jobs, for me, multiple ones. Not having a driver's license means I take the bus everywhere. I always have to check my phone when the buses are due so I get to my destinations on time. That responsibility is on me, no one else.

Basically, I feel like a 17-year-old with a 20-year-old mindset. I don't depend on my parents except for a

bed to sleep in. No one asks where I am, so I don't feel the need to tell them.

Then again, that's also the problem. Since I'm only 17, I can't choose to wake up to a nice breeze and ocean waves down in South Beach. I have to accept being an eastsider. My parents decided to live here, so that's where I've grown up.

MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS

Just like you can't choose your family, you can't choose your home. This is what I want people to understand about the east side, especially with all the bad news circulating about my neighborhood.

Summer in east St. Paul was particularly newsworthy, for all the wrong reasons.

On June 11, 17-year-old Vincent Allison was shot on Payne Avenue by gang member Kelvin Nickles. Earlier that night, about 30 people had been involved in a fight. Nickles shot Allison as he and his gang tried to make a run for it.

Nickles and I attended Murray Junior High School together. We weren't friends or talked much, mainly just walked past each other in the hallways.

But it's a reminder that these are the people you see every day. Whether it's to the rough-looking teen who ditches class or the popular jock everyone knows, we're never really sure as eastsiders what could happen next on our block.

Probably the most shocking incident came on August 4 when 26-year-old Ray Widstrand was almost beaten to death after walking past a group of 40 to 50 young people watching a fight near Preble Street and Minnehaha Avenue in Dayton's Bluff.

Widstrand, a bystander who lives in the neighborhood, appeared to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Then again, I see these scenes all the time.

One night in August, I decided to take a late walk, and a few blocks

from the McDonald's on Maryland Avenue, I saw two girls fighting each other in the parking lot. A larger group had jumped in, so it was broken up fairly quickly.

Later that same night, my friends and I were walking down Maryland and bumped into one of the girls who had been fighting. We had a mutual acquaintance, so she and her friend stopped to tell us they were going to another house to fight again.

In times like that, I just try to ignore what's happening in my surrounding area.

Don't get involved. Don't talk long. Mind your own business.

Like I said before, "Trust none."

WHAT CAN WE DO?

According to a Pioneer Press article about the Widstrand beating, nearly one-third of residents in Payne-Phalen are under 18.

Maybe our problems are worse than everyone else's, I don't know. That's what people who don't live on the east side seem to think.

But no one is perfect, especially not teenagers, and I think that's what older generations are pushing us to be. It's why a lot of us hear their advice and let it go out the other ear.

No one else really knows what my life is like, so while I don't mind your advice, why should I listen? How can I trust it?

I think a lot of teenagers here feel the same way. Don't try to make us be exactly like you were as a teenager. We don't live by the same rules. We don't have the same community.

Especially once we get to high school.

I'm proud to be a product of recreation centers on the east side. Hazel Park, specifically, played a huge part in my life.

Every day after school, I'd go there with my friends to hang out and do homework. We'd set up activities for grade school kids and help Crystal, a staff member at Hazel, pass out snacks at 4:30.

Going there kept me out of

trouble and helped me concentrate on more important things. I had fun with my friends and always got my homework done before dinnertime.

But while it was great when I was at an age where I couldn't really cause that much trouble, when I got older, I found myself pulled into new groups.

When teens start high school, so many factors come into the picture. You're introduced to different crowds, your hormones are all crazy, and really big changes in your social circles can happen overnight. Everybody just wants to fit in, so maybe you start acting out, or you skip school if your friends start doing it, or because your parents don't give you a curfew, you stay out later than you should.

TAKING CONTROL

Going into my junior year of high school, I realized that I needed to stop being a follower and start becoming a leader. I had to get rid of the friends that would tempt me or hurt my chances at college, so I just started saying "no."

It's hard at first, and they'll give you a hard time. But then you get in the habit of it.

I had to realize that my junior year was a turning point if I ever wanted to leave the east side. I needed to start thinking about my future.

If I didn't make that choice, I'd be stuck in the same situation all of my life. I'd end up letting what everyone told me about being an eastsider define me.

That, in the end, is what ended up motivating me to do better.

I had to want it for myself, had to want to be better than what people told me I could or should be. As much as I appreciate my neighborhood, no, I don't want to live here forever.

I still don't have all the solutions or know what the future will bring. But if I've learned anything about being an eastsider, it's that the only person you can trust is yourself.

What does living on the east side of St. Paul mean to you?

ThreeSixty asked several members of the student council at Johnson High School to share snapshots of their life so readers could see the neighborhood they know and appreciate—through their eyes. Here's how they responded:



"I hear from people who don't know about the east side and they'll say, 'Oooh, they like to fight' or 'Look at her, she thinks she's bad!' That's what people think about us, like we always have a bad attitude or everyone wants to get in your face all the time.

"There's stuff here that's real, I mean, crimes do happen. But there are really good parts to the east side, too. I think you can connect more with people here and become more open with your opinions because

you see everything. I just feel like I have a completely different perspective of other people and the reasons they do certain things or say certain things."

—*Josalyza Thao, 16, junior*

"Being here has made me look at cultures differently. Because everyone came from a different background to come to America. Except in the classroom, we learn about white people or Europeans coming here for religious freedom, so we already have their backstory. But written underneath, or maybe between the lines—to know where other people come from, that hidden history for like, the Chinese or the Hmong—no one really looks at that. But here, you have all this diversity around you, so you can ask questions of each other and re-educate each other. Then you'll see how similar their journey was and you can relate to them because it's just like your ancestors or your father or grandparents."

—*Peevswm Yang, 17, junior*



"If I were from someplace else, a suburb, I definitely wouldn't know about the Hmong culture as much as I do. All throughout my schooling on the east side, I've always been with people of different cultures. I think it prepares me for the real world. I'd like to go into international business for a career, so I think it really helps to be aware of other cultures, or the fact that not everyone does things the same way, not everyone celebrates the same holidays, that sort of thing. Being

an east sider makes you more aware of those differences and not to expect the same thing from everybody."

—*Sarah Wolters, 17, senior*

"One thing I really appreciate about this side of town is the dancing. Not just for my race, but for a lot of other races. It's a really big thing that bonds people together and it's had a big impact on my life. I see it as this really great way for everyone on the east side to know each other, and though I haven't really gone anywhere else, it seems like something only we're into and get to do. It's not just Hmong, but Chinese too, or some people do hip hop, some Korean, Indian and Thai. Everything."

—*Hlee Yang, 17, senior*



Faith in a box

Conflicted feelings confirm a new approach to religious identity

2 Bibles

12 Christian rock/alternative CDs

1 neon pink “Jesus Freak” shirt

1 Baptism certificate, candle and gown

1 photo album of mission trip pictures

3 wooden Tau crosses of St. Francis

1 confirmation pin

1 “Jesus Freak” testimony book

2 devotion books

Numerous decorative crosses

A GIRL I USED TO KNOW resides in a box. Folded, packed and shoved to the back of my closet.

A girl I used to know—defined by faith, once so out in the open—sits idle between four walls of cardboard, collecting dust. Though I look at the box’s contents from time to time, this once familiar girl has become a mystery to me.

How did she display herself so openly like that, without caring what people thought? How did she gain so much confidence with who she was? Where did she learn to be so devoted to something so intangible?

I was raised in a strictly Catholic family. Granted, I was never sent to Catholic school, but with a family so connected to the church—my mom currently works there—I never thought to look beyond my bubble of faith.

I was pre-programmed to act, talk and pray a certain way. I was born into a trap that I grew to fight my



Madie Ley
Elk River
High School

way out of.

From birth to 10th grade, I was sold. I went above and beyond my peers at church—volunteered, went on mission trips and retreats, participated in youth group.

You name it, I was there.

I loved every minute of it. Enjoyed the looks people gave me when I displayed my faith in extraordinary ways, be it serving poor communities, leading worship activities or teaching kids about Catholic values. I fed off the way people were inspired to have faith like mine.

Except just when I was supposed to cement an important bond with my faith, I began to drift from it.

In my freshman year of high school, one man in particular reached out and taught me to question the bigger picture. My Confirmation teacher, who had been a family friend long before I was his student, lit a spark in me. He made Confirmation class something to look forward to.

Our class discussions about political issues, underlying messages in the Bible or the ever-thriving “what happens after we die?” were never concluded by our teacher giving us definite answers. Rather, he left it to

us to determine what we believed was the answer.

This gave me an open door to begin questioning my faith, to analyze it and turn over unknown rocks. I know he didn’t intend to sway my faith. He just wanted me to explore it deeper.

Each Sunday, the debates with my Confirmation class grew more heated, the topics more controversial. By the time spring came, I was uncertain about what I was declaring with my faith.

On the surface, I was more ready for Confirmation than any of my classmates. I knew inside and out what they hadn’t the slightest inkling. Patron saints, Bible verses, prayers, church history. I was dedicated to knowing everything I could.

But I soon learned what it meant to truly explore my faith. At the same time, I also became aware that being rooted in my church came with labels, stereotypes and assumptions.

I could no longer find confidence in my “Jesus Freak” identity.

True, the stereotypes regarding homosexuality, abortion and other hot-button social issues represented the most outspoken facet of followers. It also happened to be the polar opposite of what I believed in.

Is this really who and what I want to be associated with? Should I be committing my life to Catholicism when I haven’t explored other options first?

Being a typical teenage girl, I did what we do best. Overanalyzing the decision I was going to make in a few months became a daily pastime.

My knowledge became a hindrance as the sacrament date approached. I mulled things over, and after a month of biting my tongue, finally summoned the courage to speak with my mom.

We were in the car and I had offered to drive. I wanted to be in control of the situation, and honestly, I thought her reaction might cause an accident.

“Mom, I don’t think I want to get confirmed.”

Silence.

Her lack of a response was more of a slap in the face than if she had yelled at me.

The silence continued for two weeks. She rarely acknowledged my presence and neglected my attempts at communication.

Eventually when the ice broke, she approached the situation calmly. But to me, her words were burning my brain, regardless of whether they were spoken or shouted.

“I think you should reconsider your decision before you regret it.”

“Mom, I’ve thought about this for a long time. I’m not nearly old enough to decide if I want to be Catholic for the rest of my life.”

Looking back, I understand why my mom reacted the way she did. Prior to our discussion, I hadn’t told her I was struggling with my faith or showed any signs of drifting from my family’s traditions.

I was still her little “Jesus Freak.”

With so little time before Confirmation, I didn’t give her a chance to think things over. As selfish as my actions were, I wanted her to be OK with my decision. I wanted her to think I was acting with maturity by choosing to explore my options before committing to one.

Above all else, I thought I was entitled to act however I wanted, with no regard for how my actions would affect the people I love.

After a few argumentative months, I finally gave in and got confirmed. My faith remained unsteady,

doubting Christianity with every step I took to the church altar.

Since Confirmation, a build-up of tension, turmoil and angst has overflowed in my gut.

My best friends, both atheist, continued to give me grief about my traditional set of Catholic values. I found myself surrounded by people I couldn’t begin to explain my faith to.

Furthermore, I couldn’t shake the stereotypes. My Catholicism brought overgeneralizations that I no longer wanted to be associated with. In general, I didn’t know what I wanted to be associated with.

These bottled feelings eventually escaped and found their home in “the box.”

One particularly sleepless night, I grabbed a cardboard box and put everything connected to religion and God in it. My room was desolate and empty. I saw firsthand just how deeply I was rooted in Christianity.

Once I had collected everything, I sealed the box and tucked it away.

I wanted a clean slate—not necessarily to start over, but to remain blank until I knew what I wanted out of my spirituality. I felt as if I was in a free fall.

Free from Catholic guilt. Free from my parents. Free from myself.

That was 10 months ago.

I still can’t define where I’m at with my faith, and I don’t think I’ll ever be able to. Or if I even want to.

That’s the beauty of spirituality. It’s a multifaceted part of our lives that we can shape into whatever we want it to be. This, above all other things, is the most important lesson I’ve learned from my experience.

Nothing we do should fit so neatly in a box.

Isn't it a wonder, (nerd) women?

In a galaxy (not so) far away, females face an unfair backlash

NERDS ARE COOL.

Sure, they're still the same weird kids worshipping "Star Wars" in their parent's basements. Only these days, that's not someone to shove into a locker for fun.

This opinion isn't disputed much in our society, no matter if the nerds in question like sci-fi, or fantasy, or comic books, or regular books, or television shows, or British actors (a little too much, actually), or video games—or all manner of other quirky things.

The reason for this awesomeness—the thesis of the nerd, if you will—is presented by author and vlogger John Green, who said that nerds are "allowed to be unironically enthusiastic about stuff."

Well, almost.

Some nerds are persecuted if they try to fully express their nerdity. I'm speaking, of course, about the nerd girls.

Apparently, a person's gender is enough to make them totally worthless as a nerd, enough to brand them a mindless fool.

If you're a man, you can go ahead and appreciate unironically. It's cool, you're doing it right.

But if you're a woman ... "Oh, do you actually like that? It's somehow totally mystifying as to why you'd like that! You're a fake!"



Women are accused all over the Internet (by both men and other women) for enjoying TV shows like "Sherlock" and "Supernatural" not for the plots, but for the attractive actors that convey said plots. Women who are into male-dominated fandoms like comic books or games are accused of pretending to be into nerd culture only to attract male attention.

For the people who do this, I have a few rhetorical questions that I will promptly answer for you in ranter's fashion.

Firstly, why do you play "Call of Duty" or "Halo" or whatever your poison is? To sit down with some friends, eat some chips and get around to filling some ghosts/zombies/Nazis/robots/aliens with bullets, right?

Do you play games—any games at all, not just the two I mentioned—in the hopes that a girl will see you and decide to fall at your feet while drooling over your ineffable beauty?

Of course you don't. You play it to sit down with some friends, eat some chips and get around to filling some ghosts/zombies/Nazis/robots/aliens

with bullets. We've established that.

Now, I'm going to move onto the stuff that seems like it's really difficult for people like you, hypothetical sexist gamer dudebro, to grasp.

GIRLS CAN DO EXACTLY WHAT YOU DO, EXACTLY AS WELL AS YOU, AND FOR THE EXACT SAME REASONS!

And in the case of gaming, those reasons are to relax and have fun—not to end up with the saliva of an entranced female all over your shoes.

This issue doesn't just apply to the consumers, though. In many cases, it slithers its nasty self all the way to the mainly male creators of popular nerd culture.

Superheroines are routinely depicted in skin-tight leotards with flotation-device breasts poking out like children of The Blob from massive keyholes in front. And the backs? Basically thongs over the tail ends of spines seemingly made of elastic.

These are both grossly impractical and frighteningly chauvinistic. But it's worse when seen for what it is:

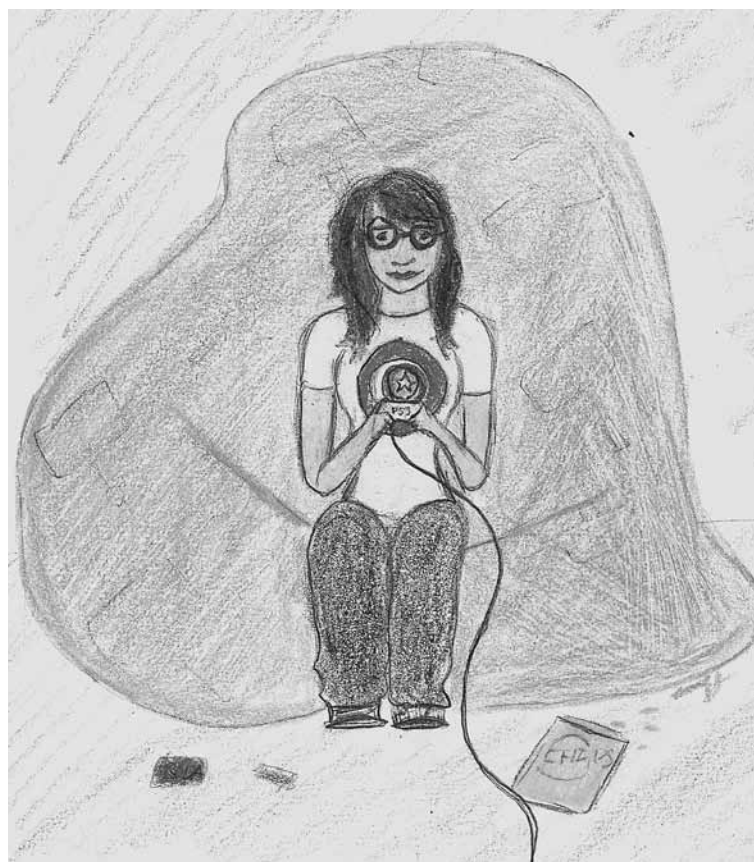
Half of a double standard.

A woman will put a ton of time and energy into creating an awesome costume that looks exactly like the one in the comic book. Yet when they wear it proudly to a convention, they're called a "slut" for dressing like, say, Wonder Woman, even though Wonder Woman herself isn't at all regarded as "slutty."

Or maybe the cosplayer doesn't have the same physique, or skin color, or about a trillion other things that shouldn't matter. What matters is that a woman wanted to come to a convention dressed like Wonder Woman.

This insane brand of slut-shaming was brought into the public eye last year when comic book creator Tony Harris posted on his Facebook page about the way female cosplayers were supposedly "preying on boys" at conventions.

His longer post resembled something that you'd find on the wall of a 12-year-old boy whose other interests include screaming racial and/or homophobic slurs at people on Xbox



Aamino Hirnoge

Live. But it's not. This man, a grown man, is a respected artist for comics like "Iron Man." What is the world coming to when even the creators of comic books berate women for wearing the same costumes that they've given their creations to wear?

Which brings me to a subject that Mr. Harris also briefly mentioned: "Real nerds."

Women are constantly interrogated when they declare their love for a fandom. We're constantly asked to recite an obscure piece of trivia, just to prove that we actually like whatever it is. Stop. It's ridiculous.

If I tell a person that I'm into "Star Wars," they should take that at face value rather than raise a cocky eyebrow and ask me what the species of alien that Han Solo killed in the Mos Eisley Cantina was called. Maybe I do know that, maybe I've been a "Star Wars" fan all of my life and spend days reading about that very information. Maybe I'm just an excited newcomer who watched "The Empire Strikes Back" last Tuesday.

It doesn't matter! If I say I like something, and you like it too, shouldn't we just be able to have a decent chat about it, maybe get really excited and shriek a little?

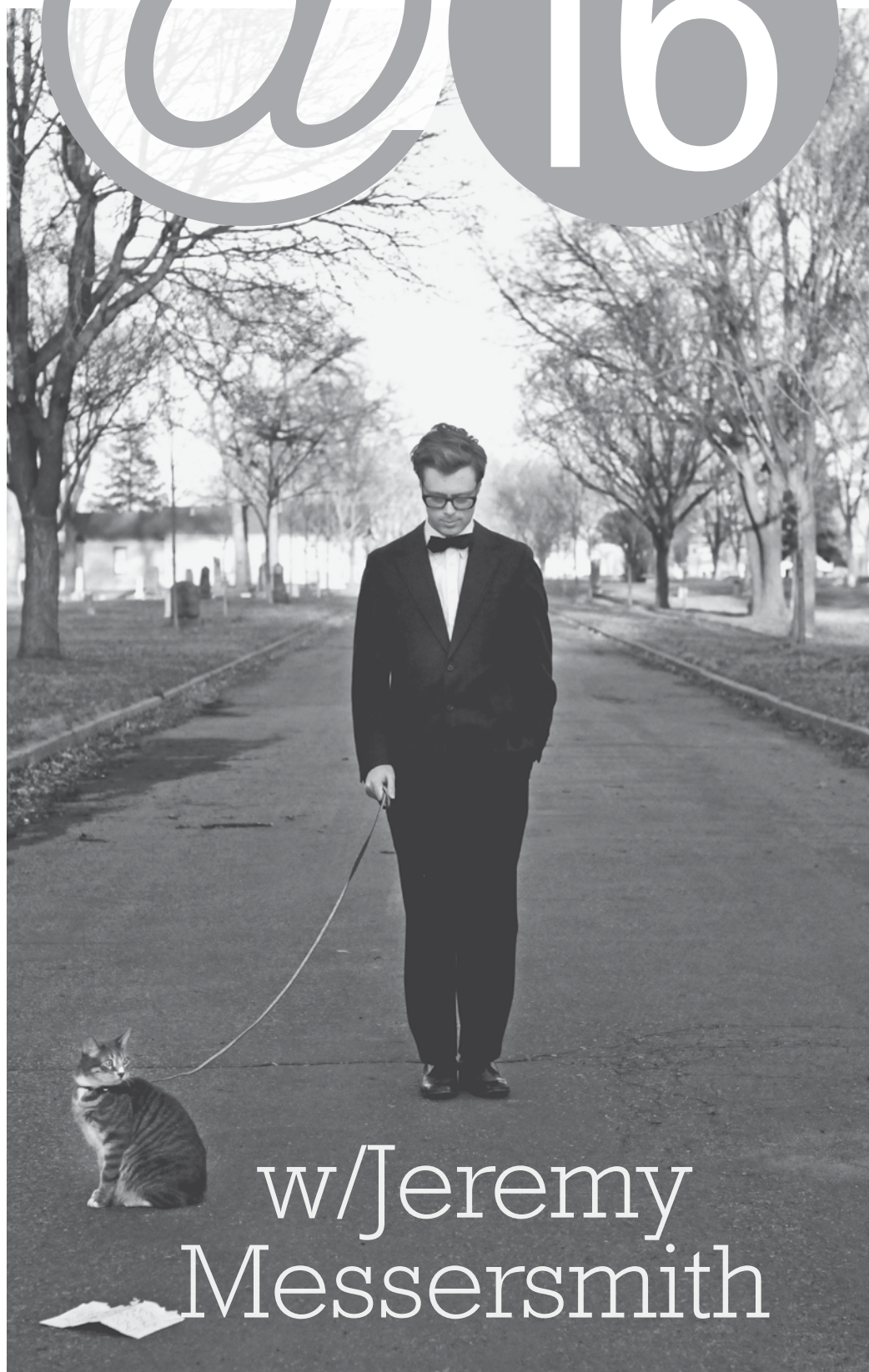
You know, be nerds?

Isn't this just a small reflection of the world as a whole, anyway? Men are so awesome and can get through life with little flak about what they choose to do, but women are subject to so much inquiry and criticism for their choices.

I used to like being nerdy for the ways that it was so different from the rest of the world, a weird little escape. But now I see that the only real discrepancies, at least in the case of sexism, are the amount of sci-fi gadgets involved.

Good job, nerd culture. Good job.

@16



Submitted

On his new album, “Heart Murmurs,” Jeremy Messersmith tackles the topic of love, which he admits, “I’ve sort of been baffled by for awhile. Like, wait a second, what is that exactly? I’m still really confused by it.”

WHETHER HE’S PLAYING THE main stage at First Avenue, opening for Neko Case or signing a deal with Glassnote Records, Jeremy Messersmith has made his mark as one of the most accomplished singer/songwriters in the Twin Cities.

But he hasn’t let success go to his head.

After all, Messersmith remembers what it was like to play shows in cafés for only ten people. Sometimes just a bartender.

Not that playing sold out shows feels any different to him now. Messersmith is still doing the same thing he’s always done, just for more people and with more media attention.

“It’s not like I now have a collection of ivory backscratchers,” Messersmith joked.

Often infusing elements of Elliott Smith, The Beach Boys and The Beatles into his music, Messersmith tells stories through his songs—each album dedicated to a phase of his life or challenge he’s facing. Recently, he released his new single “Tourniquet,” an upbeat, lullaby-like pop song that uses the tourniquet (“When there’s nothing left to do, I will hold you close and wrap my arms around you”) as a metaphor for love.

For Messersmith, the trick to finding success in music was “just to be wonderfully obsessed with whatever it is you love doing. I had to suck for a long time. And you just have to do that. You just have to be OK with sucking.”

Since releasing his last album—“The Reluctant Graveyard,” which NPR named one of its top ten albums of 2010—Messersmith has taken his already



Simone Cazares
St. Paul
Conservatory
for Performing
Artists

successful career to the next level. He organized a set of popular “supper club” shows at audience member homes, signed to New York-based Glassnote Records (home of Mumford & Sons) in March, and put the finishing touches on his new album, “Heart Murmurs,” which will be released with a headlining First Avenue show on Feb. 22.

Before touring with BOY this fall, Messersmith spoke to ThreeSixty reporter Simone Cazares about growing up as a teenager in Washington, immersing himself in the Twin Cities music scene, and how he’s assessing himself not just as a musician, but as a person.

What was it like growing up in Washington as a teenager?

Well, I grew up in rural Washington, kind of by Yakima in this place called the Tri-Cities. I grew up in this little town called West Richland. It’s a desert for one, so there aren’t really any trees that you would associate with Washington. The two main industries are basically agriculture, a lot of farms, and Hanford Reservation, where basically the U.S. was in a hurry to build the atomic bombs for the Manhattan Project. They found all this plutonium in the (Hanford) desert, but they didn’t really know what they were doing, so it ended up being this huge environmental disaster.

About this series

This marks the fifth installment of ThreeSixty’s “@16” series, where our teen writers interview Minnesota newsmakers and difference makers about life as a 16-year-old high school student. Who should we talk to next? E-mail thomas.rozwadowski@stthomas.edu with your suggestions.

The Messersmith file

Profession: Musician, signed to Glassnote Records

Age: 34

High school: Homeschooled

College: North Central University, Minneapolis

Find 'em: On Twitter @jmessersmith and www.jeremymessersmith.com

Best advice for teenagers: "Be wonderfully obsessed with

whatever it is you love doing. Just do it. I mean, the only way you'll actually get better is if you spend lots of time just doing it ... That's going to apply to any field you go into. The more you do it, the better you get at it. You have to come out of your shell a little bit and discover what you're really good at."

What do you do for fun in a place like that?

Well, I think generally what you would do in any small town. I went to see a lot of movies, well the ones that would come there. So no art house stuff. I don't know, I feel like I was a little bit different in that I was a geek growing up. I wasn't really into sports so much. I played baseball until I was about 15 and then realized I was like, terrible at it. So for me, I was kind of playing a lot of video games, bowling, mini golf, stuff like that. I was really involved with church too, so I spent a lot of time there.

You were also homeschooled. Did that affect you in any way?

(With a smirk). I think it affected me. I mean, I think a lot about how homeschooling has affected me. I was homeschooled from when I was in kindergarten until I was 15 ... when I went to do post-secondary at a community college. I guess one of the benefits (of homeschooling) would be that it kind of turns you into a self-starter. You do all your own work. Well, I mean, I had my parents pushing me to do things, but it teaches you to figure out your own systems on how to reward yourself, because your time ends up being unstructured. The down side is that you miss out on hanging out with people your own age, and at least for me, there was the lack of other viewpoints in a huge school setting. My parents were Christian fundamentalists. I was raised strictly in that worldview. It wasn't until I got to college that I was exposed to a lot of other ways of thinking.

Do you wish you would've gone to a regular school?

Well, (my parents) did take me to band and music classes—because band was something that they

enjoyed when they went to public school. So, for an hour a day, I would go hang out with kids and play trumpet. But do I wish I (hadn't been homeschooled)? Well, a lot of the time I do. It's sort of like asking, 'Do you wish you hadn't gotten spanked as a child?' No, I wish I hadn't gotten spanked as a child. But at some level, I think it's made me who I am, so I can't really discard it. But would I homeschool my kids? If I had kids? Probably not.

You mentioned participating in band at a junior high school. Had you always been involved with music?

The church I grew up in, the denomination was called the Assemblies of God. They were known for a kind of rambunctious music. It was very participatory, so I remember when I was six or seven, my dad would sit in the front row, pull out his trombone and play along with hymns and stuff. I remember being given like a block, a shaker and a tambourine as a small child, and it was kind of very participatory in that way, which was one of the best things about it. I mean, obviously I played in church every single Sunday. And usually Wednesday nights ... but it was a very small church, so half the time there were more people in the band than in the pews. Which is very funny to me.

When did you start establishing yourself in the Twin Cities scene?

The one place that would take me was called the Acadia Cafe, which used to be on Franklin and Nicollet ... and it was really the only place in town where you could book a night without having to send in a demo. You could just say, 'I'm a musician. Can I get a night here?' And they would just be like, 'OK.' As long as you brought in some people, like five

or six friends, it was generally OK.

I started playing at the Acadia about once a month, and really, grabbing any other kind of gigs I could get. So I played at coffee shops, open mics, I would just play for, like, anyone. I wasn't picky. The whole time, I was just learning how to write songs. I mean, for the most part, nobody was really at any of my shows. I'd be lucky to play for, like, ten or 15 people. And that would be an amazing night. So, at the time, I was working at Dunn Brothers and playing some shows. And then I started doing bedroom recordings. And then eventually, I finally got a bunch of demos to make my first record.

That was the first thing that got me any kind of press. I got a write up in City Pages. I went from having like five people at shows to it being packed! And ever since then, there have been people at my shows, which is kind of nice.

You recently signed to Glassnote Records. How have you been able to deal with the pressures of that and stay true to what you want to do instead of what everyone else says you should do?

Well, I was very, very picky with what label I signed with. I've been approached by a few labels over the years who were interested, a couple of big ones, a few majors. And I just always said no. It would have been an artistic compromise. Giving up too

much control. But Glassnote, they're really artist-centric, and they're actually a small label. They're kind of getting bigger now, with Mumford (& Sons) exploding, but they're still very artist-centric. They like to sign bands and artists who are maybe a little bit different than the mainstream. Big respecters of the process.

I was having a conversation with (Glassnote founder) Daniel (Glass) ... and he was like, 'Look, we may fight about things, but I want you to know that you're the artist and you'll win every single fight.' And I was like, 'I'm sold!'

I imagine it feels good to be in a place where you're free to explore what you want with your music.

I must say, it doesn't really feel any different to me ... I haven't really changed. Although it seems like it's changed people on the outside, their perception. Like, 'Oh Glassnote! That's a really big deal.' I'm like, 'I guess so.' It seems very normal to me. I just don't get excited about that kind of thing.

You have a computer science degree. How did you get from there to a music career?

Well, my parents were kind of like, 'Look, can you at least try and do something real before you go out and do these artistic things?' The funny thing is that most of the musicians I know and work with, especially some of the sound engineers, are also

super computer geeks. And they are very comfortable working with data systems or operating systems. I don't know, it seems like there is definitely a math/computer geek crossover into music. I learned a lot. I remember the first couple of computer programming classes I took where the goal was to be able to program computers using as little code as possible. So basically, you want to be super, super lazy. And I was like, 'This is amazing! This is my calling. I can totally do this!'

But that kind of minimalism, not using more code than you need to, is something that I very much apply to my songs, as well. And I think I'm somewhat known as a songwriter, which implies, like lyrics, you know. But I'm actually very minimal on lyrics. I try to cut out words that I don't need. I think it's the only form of writing I'm actually good at. Because I've done some reviews and articles, that sort of thing, but I've never been really happy with the way they came out. For me, it's just too many words.

Do you have any influences in terms of lyricists who spoke to you in that minimalist style?

Elliott Smith is a good one as far as packing a lot of emotion. I think he was a great lyricist, but ... his chord progressions are incredible. I think that carries a lot of weight. That was a big one.

John Lennon would be another one, as well. His rule kind of was, 'If you're writing rock 'n' roll lyrics, then you just try to say whatever you gotta say as simply as possible.' And that's it. Like, you don't try to fancy it up or dress it up. You just try to say what you're saying very, very simply. That can be a hard thing to do. Finding just the right word is such an agonizing experience sometimes.

Give yourself a break

Look in the mirror to see your worst critic

I WAS FAR DIFFERENT than anyone else at my school when I moved from Stillwater to Woodbury in 4th grade.

Stillwater and Woodbury are both suburban towns with little ethnic diversity. However, when I went to school in Stillwater, my classmates were too young to notice differences between themselves and their peers.

I arrived in Woodbury at the age when people noticed differences and began making friends who were similar to them. I didn't follow their religion. I ate food that "smelled weird." My two front teeth seemed to be at least a mile away from each other.

And I had a confused sense of humor: When my teacher talked about guerilla warfare, I heard *gorilla* warfare. I giggled until my teacher gave me one of those looks.

I also didn't dress or work the way other girls did. While they wore Abercrombie & Fitch stitched across their chests, Hollister down their legs and Uggs on their feet, I was still letting my mom pick out clothes for me.

Everyone knows how that usually ends up: T-shirts emblazoned with "Daddy's Girl" and butterflies in tacky shades of pink. At that point, the only thing I had going for me were my brains—which, let's face it, only got attention when someone needed help during a group project.

I was alienated for two years, or at least until I switched off the regular public school course for middle school. Even at Math and Science Academy, a public charter school also in Woodbury, I clashed with a lot of popular students and, I'll admit, had annoying tendencies.

Above all, I struggled with my self-image.

The only thing I had going for me were my brains—which, let's face it, only got attention when someone needed help during a group project.



Shay Radhakrishnan
Math and Science
Academy

My hair became less easy to manage. I had skin breakouts all the time. I thought I was fat. The smell of curry stuck to me no matter how hard I scrubbed. I still wore whatever my mom bought me. And, of course, I was still annoying—my loud, high-pitched voice carried through the hallways with ease.

Except my close friends always contradicted me and said I was being too hard on myself. Everything negative I had to say was me being my own worst enemy. Just stop it, right?

Then they turned around and criticized themselves. But that's stupid, I thought. All my friends are hilarious! They're smart! They're great people!

That's when I caught it: Everyone is his or her own worst critic. No one spends as much time with you as—well, *you*—so you're always going to judge yourself the harshest.

Society makes it so that magazines tell girls that they need to be skinny and have an unattainably perfect face with clear skin. They need to be demure, funny, confident, sweet, smart—actually, maybe not *so* smart—all these things that cannot be combined into a single person. We know the "perfect" girl in the magazine doesn't actually exist, yet we feel pressure to look like that.

Guys have pressures too. Men are supposed to be emotionless, strong-willed, protective, intelligent, outdoorsy and physically buff.

It doesn't help that both genders start feeling contradictory pressures from elementary school on.

Last summer, I had to do something with my time. Colleges don't want teenagers who sit around and watch TV for hours on end. I had no passion for the engineering camp my parents were pushing me towards. Instead, I preferred writing.

That's how I ended up applying for a journalism camp. All ten of us were from different parts of Minnesota, representative of different cultures. Nobody even listened to remotely the same music as the next person. But the first three days cleared and all of us became good friends.

I felt appreciated and wanted that feeling to spread to everything else I did. I didn't want to feel like I did before. There's nothing to

romanticize about depression or self-hatred.

Because I'm young, it feels like everything that goes wrong is the end of the world. But I realize that one day all my current problems will seem trivial.

I worked hard to change the way I react to self-criticism. But it took weeks to sink in, and I still don't entirely believe it. Sometimes I look in the mirror and think, "Oh god, my nose is huge." But then I immediately dash that thought.

"I don't care," I tell myself. "Never mind my nose. No one's paying attention to that, anyway."

I can still look back at something I said an hour ago and deeply regret saying it. Then I realize, eh, in a few years the only person who's going to remember I said that will be me.

And most likely, unless it was something amazing, even I'll probably forget.

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Fan-demonium

Anything goes in the ever-popular fanfiction universe ... well, almost

IMAGINE “VEGGIETALES” Bob the Tomato and Larry the Cucumber yowling songs about purple orcs to J.R.R. Tolkien’s elven lord Elrond.

Or John Watson’s mustache falling deeply in love with investigator Greg Lestrade’s hair.

Or perhaps a pregnant Harry Potter suffering from swollen cankles while Draco Malfoy tends to him lovingly.

While these strange topics seem to be worlds apart, one common thread pulls them together: Fanfiction.

The genre is defined by Urban Dictionary as “a work of fiction utilizing characters from a book, television show or movie, as opposed to original characters.” Popular “fandoms,” or kingdoms of fans, include “Sherlock,” “Doctor Who,” “Harry Potter,” “Lord of the Rings,” as well as real person fictions (RPFs)—or fanfiction based on real celebrities and stars.

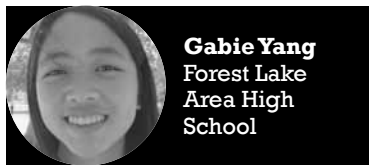
Fanfiction lovers are devoted when it comes to their fandoms, and many insist that this new breed of writing is actually better than original fiction.

“It enlarges the universe where characters live. It’s written by a fan, for a fan,” said Christine Luo, a freshman at Wayzata High School who reads “Sherlock” and “Doctor Who” fan stories.

Luo confesses that she reads fan-written works almost every night.



Mina Yuan
Wayzata High School



Gabie Yang
Forest Lake Area High School

Some may think that this is far too time-consuming for practicality, but the number of devout fanfiction lovers is widespread.

On fanfiction.net alone, the “Harry Potter” fandom hosts more than 662,000 stories and 26,000 crossovers—which are stories based

What is fair use?

United States copyright law includes a doctrine called “fair use.” It spells out various instances by which a re-purposed work could be considered fair, such as criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching and research.

It includes four factors for determining whether a work is fair:

- What’s your purpose? Are you doing this for educational or critical purposes?
- Is the work you’re borrowing from published or unpublished?
- How much of the original work are you using?
- Are you harming the market for the original work?

Before the idea of transformative fair use came to light in the ‘90s, derivative works were judged using the four fair use factors alone. Nancy Sims, copyright program librarian at the University of Minnesota, admits that “thinking about fair use that way can be really confusing, because on almost every one of those points—if you have smart lawyers—they can argue each one any different which way.”



Lyda Morehouse, a published author and passionate anime fanfiction writer based in Minneapolis, got her start in fanfiction but admits that the standards are much lower than those set for novels.

on multiple combined fandoms. Although fanfiction has existed since Shakespearean times, why has it exploded so recently?

Lyda Morehouse, a Shamus Award-winner and passionate anime fanfiction writer based in Minneapolis, credits it to our instant gratification culture.

“I think (the genre) is really popular because we go through things so fast,” Morehouse said. “You know, we want to hang onto some things that we really care about.”

Emily Deutscher, a freshman at Wayzata High School who admits to

sleepless nights spent watching old episodes of “Doctor Who,” said technology is able to “spread our art across the world and reach more people.”

“And as generations like ours are exposed to this amazing realm of possibility, we embrace it and create more like it, gaining popularity with each piece,” she said.

JOLT OF INSPIRATION

Sites like fanfiction.net and wattpad.com have been emerging stars, thousands wandering through the vast archives for hours on end. Readers and writers claim that not only are fan-driven compositions entertaining, they’re also educationally beneficial.

An author of 15 novels, Morehouse began teaching science fiction, fantasy and fanfiction classes at the Loft Literary Center in the early 2000s. Now a writer and artist in the fandom of “Bleach,” a Japanese manga series, Morehouse learned to write by crafting fanfiction for “The Dragonriders of Pern.”

“In some ways what’s nice about (being a) fanfiction writer and a new writer ... is that so many elements are established,” she said. “Characters can be hard to establish when you’re learning to write, and so can plot. So maybe being able to use somebody’s

world and somebody else’s characters can help you figure out basic plot. It can help you figure out how to show basic character.”

Teens are coming to similar realizations.

“I have definitely enjoyed writing more after I started reading and writing fanfiction,” Deutscher said. “I ... noticed myself gradually warming up more to writing and trying to improve as a writer, as well as reaching out more, joining the school writing club, enrolling in more writing classes ... improving my vocabulary to try and make my fanfictions sound more polished.”

Yet the genre is not void of drawbacks.

“One of the bad effects is that you never get out of it,” Morehouse said. “It’s partially because it’s hard to make the jump out of it in terms of kudos. It’s really hard to stop and write a novel for a year when no one is cheering you on, whereas it’s a lot easier to just write the next installment of your giant “Sherlock” fic—you know 20 people will instantly give you kudos.”

Morehouse, along with most fanfiction lovers, also knows that the standards for online fan works are much lower than those set for novels.

“I’ll skim through a fanfiction, and I’m like, ‘Hmmm,’ but if it’s good enough, sometimes I’ll keep going,” Morehouse said. “I wouldn’t do that with a novel. I would never put up with that for a novel. ‘Oh my God, bad grammar, you’re out.’”

QUESTION OF OWNERSHIP

Yet a bigger concern surrounding fanfiction is not that it is a giant black hole or encourages lax literary standards. Rather, is it a blatant violation of copyright laws?

FANFICTION *continued on page 13*

No rest for the bleary

Underestimating sleep could lead to dangerous health effects for teenagers

WITH SPORTS AND SPEECH team piled on top of rigorous Advanced Placement and Honors classes, Rachel Schmidt's crazy schedule doesn't allow much room for sleep.

If she's lucky, the 15-year-old Eastview High School student might be able to squeeze in a nap before facing a mountain of Chemistry, AP U.S. History, Honors American Literature, Algebra 2 and Spanish homework.

"I also will get up during the early morning to work after sleeping for about three or four hours. Then I will do some work and go back to bed," Schmidt said. "Depending on how much homework I have, I may do this a second time, but usually I only need to wake up once to get all of my work done."

Being habitually active at night, Schmidt typically gets her "second wind" around 11:30 p.m. For most parents, this is a time when they expect their kids to be asleep. But Schmidt has conditioned herself to follow a new routine—one where distractions and drowsiness won't lead to sloppy assignments.

"I think that it's better to break up your work," Schmidt said, "so that you aren't exhausted versus pushing through and doing poorly because the only thing that you can think



Danielle Wong
Eastview High School

about is getting in your bed."

The reason sleep can be so easily sacrificed? Schmidt has big goals for herself: Four-year-college, medical school and a future career as a crime lab technician.

By establishing a strong work ethic now, Schmidt said she's hoping "that it won't be hard to do later on in life."

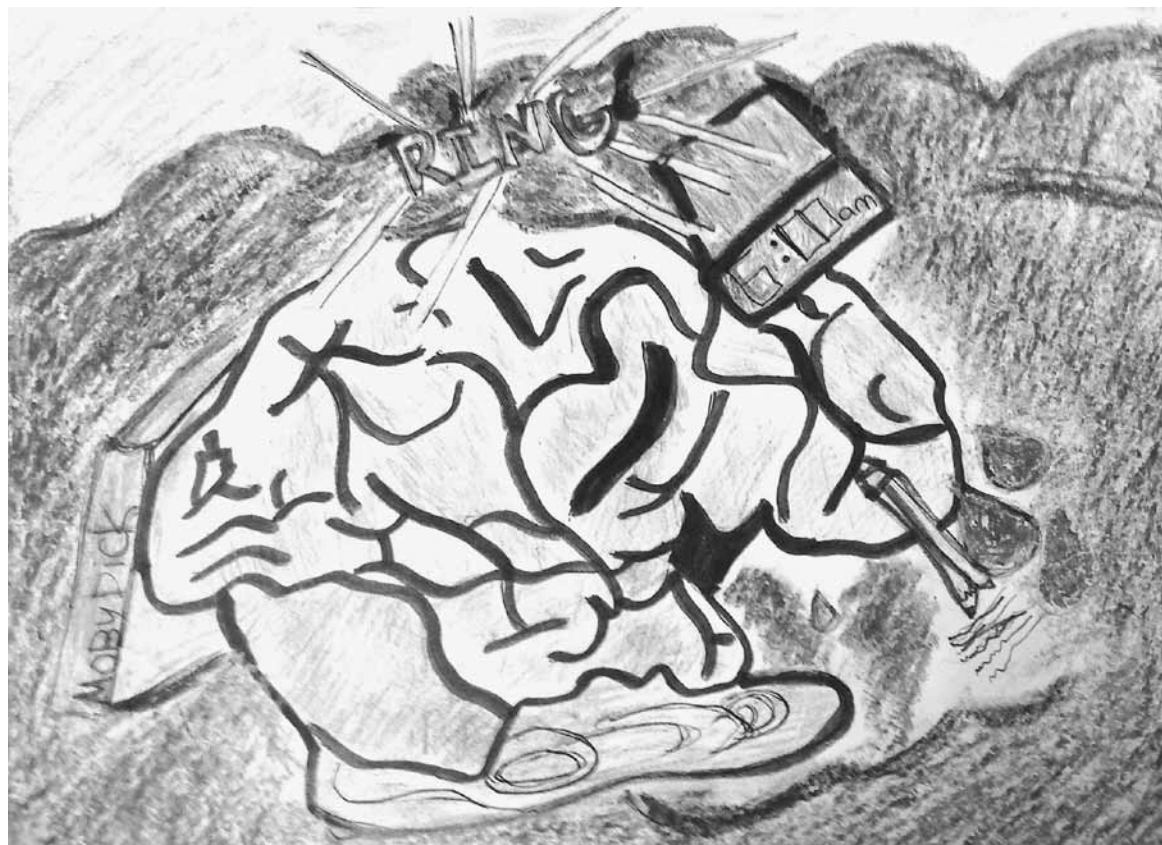
"I do it because it allows me to get done what I need to and still function," she said. "There are only 24 hours in a day and I do my best to make the most of them."

INSIDE THE TEEN BRAIN

Although this sleep schedule works for Schmidt, how well does it work for her health?

Dr. Kyla Wahlstrom, director of the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement at the University of Minnesota, said that on average, teens should be getting at least eight consecutive hours of sleep each night.

During these eight hours, the teen experiences stages of "non-Rapid Eye Movement" (non-REM),



Isaura Lira Greene

a gradual movement toward deeper sleep. After about two hours of deep sleep, the brain becomes incredibly active, leading to Rapid Eye Movement (REM).

"You have about four periods of REM sleep," Wahlstrom said. "It's where all of the processing (in) your brain (takes place) for all of the factual information you learn during the day before."

The information that your brain processes comes in as bits and fragments. So when a teen gets less than eight hours of sleep—or in Schmidt's case, divides sleep up—it cuts down the amount of time the brain is able to "file away" important information, leading to disorganization.

"It's a big bunch of spaghetti. It's a mush," Wahlstrom said.

Michelle Chen, a 15-year-old Eastview High School student, usually feels exhausted after 10:45 p.m. and can't find the motivation to finish her homework. She also said that it's very hard for her to wake up in the morning, around 6 a.m., to head off to school.

What Chen is experiencing is called the "Sleep Phase Shift." This biological phenomenon causes adolescents to release melatonin (the brain's sleep serum) around 10:45 p.m. to about 8:30 a.m., a full 90 minutes later than adults or pre-teens.

Because of this shift, teens find it difficult to fall asleep before 10:45 p.m. and completely wake up before 8:30 a.m., as their brains and bodies are still in biological sleep mode, Wahlstrom said.

CAUSE AND EFFECT

Besides natural factors, there are also external sources such as homework, exams and extracurricular activities that prohibit teens from getting enough sleep.

The demands of technical theatre often create difficulties for Chen.

"Tech reduces the amount of time I have to do homework, which in turn sacrifices the amount of time that I am able to sleep," she said.

Because teens are living in a much more technologically advanced era, electronic devices are also a

big inhibitor of sleep patterns, Wahlstrom said.

Schmidt makes sure to turn her phone ringer off before she sleeps so that it isn't distracting. However, Wahlstrom said that even if a phone is on "vibrate" or "silent," it could still wake a person up.

"The blue light that's coming off of the screen of your iPad, your computer or your iPhone is an alerting signal," Wahlstrom said. "It actually signals the brain, 'You gotta wake up, it's morning.'"

Since homework often is the reason why teens don't get enough sleep, it's not unusual to hear a teenager complaining, "Ugh. I have so much. Don't teachers know that we have lives, too?"

Having been a teacher and a principal, Wahlstrom has heard the homework complaint before. She doesn't think that teachers are necessarily at fault, but they should learn more about teens and sleep patterns.

"And maybe they might cut back a little on their homework," she added with a smile.

**think
spot**

Evaluate your own sleep patterns. Are you able to get as much sleep as you'd like? If not, what's the main cause and how could you change it?

While a few late night or early morning cram sessions might not be the end of the world, teens that consistently get less than the necessary amount of sleep could face potentially life-threatening health problems.

According to research presented at the University of Minnesota's recent Sleep and Teens Conference—a national gathering in October that included experts on human fatigue—teenagers with less than six hours of sleep drive with a reaction time equivalent to having a blood alcohol content level of .05. They're also two to three times more likely to get depression and/or experience suicidal thoughts, which makes them more susceptible to drugs, alcohol, risky behaviors and obesity, Wahlstrom said.

In addition, some teens begin to have trouble in their social lives because they are more irritable and stressed. They can also find it harder to relate with friends.

"I like being well rested because I feel better and it puts me in a good mood," Schmidt said. With the proper amount of sleep, she's also more alert and doesn't fidget or daydream as much.

MAKING CHANGES

In order to accommodate the Sleep Phase Shift and help teens get more out of their day, schools across the nation have been making changes to their start time.

Edina schools made the first change in 1996, Wahlstrom said. The school district changed the start time from 7:20 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. and found dramatic improvements



Having been a teacher and principal, Dr. Kyla Wahlstrom of the University of Minnesota knows the demands facing today's teenager. Her advice: Set a healthy sleep routine and stick with it.

in the performance of its students. According to Wahlstrom's research, students were awake and ready to learn, there was less depression—and perhaps most telling of all—92 percent of parents in Edina said their teenagers were "easier to live with."

More schools in the Twin Cities have been making modest changes, but "every bit of improvement helps kids," Wahlstrom said.

Despite those positive effects, Chen remains skeptical.

"This would only cause those who already sleep late to sleep even later, which would still cause them to be tired and not be awake anyway," she said. "Students who value sleep and want to be ready to learn will sleep earlier and ensure they are awake in the morning either way. And students who don't, will not."

Whatever the sleep pattern, Wahlstrom advised teens to remain consistent since the body loves routine. Though it might not be ideal for everyone, Schmidt's early morning method could at least allow her body and brain to adjust to interruption over time.

According to Wahlstrom, the number one way to get enough sleep is to manage your time and plan ahead.

"If you really want to do well in school, you should not be staying up late and only get four hours of sleep to get your papers done," she said. "You ought to be planning a little bit further ahead so you can get more sleep, because then you will actually do better in school."

Or look at it this way: Before you compromise a good night's rest, think about how it will make you feel the next day. Does it make sense to stay up and study for a final that you'll end up yawning through anyway?

Sleep on it.

FANFICTION from page 11

Nancy Sims, a copyright program librarian at the University of Minnesota, said the issue involves a lot of gray area. There are no defined rules, just legal opinions that can vary across the board regarding fair use.

However, an idea from the '90s called transformative fair use—taking an original work and shaping it into something else entirely—allows for a stronger argument against violating copyright, Sims said.

"If you take a story about 'Sesame Street' characters and you make them ... space-going researchers ... this is very, very different from your original 'Muppet Show,' your original 'Sesame Street,'" she said. "And then, especially if ... they don't really act a whole lot like they do on 'Sesame Street,' they're confronting completely different problems than they do on

'Sesame Street,' the more you go away from the original, the more likely it is going to be fair use."

"Twilight" fanfiction "Fifty Shades of Grey," in Sims' legal opinion, does just that by taking a "fairly quick turn away from the original." Additionally, "there are some things that aren't copyrightable, and a generic plot outline or a generic character description (aren't)."

Fanfiction readers and writers vehemently deny that it violates copyright laws, and some go to great lengths to avoid legal issues.

"It's not like these stories are being made for profit and everyone I read puts disclaimers on their stories," said Megan Hogan, a Forest Lake Area High School sophomore. "They are just stories, people writing about their favorite books, movies, etc. I don't see why that's a problem."

Profit is an important factor in the debate. One of the four fair use factors asks whether you are harming the market for the original work.

"If you're just somebody doing it as a hobby and not for profit ... you're less likely to be able to harm the market for the original if you're just doing it for fun," Sims said. "There are some really interesting arguments about fanfiction and market harm where people say fanfiction actually, usually, drives sales."

Among all the gray legality, Sims urges writers to be aware of websites' editorial policies. She cites an example from 2007 when LiveJournal wiped several fan communities stemming from copyright and pornography concerns. YouTube is also able to take content down if they have a private agreement with another company.

Popular authors also have mixed feelings about their art being re-purposed by the public.

For example, authors like Morehouse, J.K. Rowling ("Harry Potter") and Suzanne Collins ("The Hunger Games") encourage fans to write their own interpretations of original work. However, Anne Rice, author of "Interview with the Vampire," and Terry Goodkind, creator of "The Sword of Truth" series, prohibit their fans from taking such liberties.

"I do not allow fanfiction. The characters are copyrighted. It upsets me terribly to even think about fanfiction with my characters," Rice wrote on her website. "I advise my readers to write your own original stories with your own original characters. It is absolutely essential that you respect my wishes."

What does marriage mean to you?

FOR MOST TEENS, marriage is so far in the future that it can be a difficult topic to contextualize in personal terms. But, the contentious subject has been in the news a lot lately, so we were interested in your thoughts on marriage as an institution and the relationships you've witnessed that have framed your opinions.

Judges were impressed! They found a majority of the 72 submissions to be unexpectedly sensible and genuine. The four winning essays stood out in terms of varied perspectives, examples and analyses.

First place (\$100 prize)

Kitra Katz, Minnehaha Academy

Judges notes: "(Kitra) painted a picture from personal experience and used that experience to respond to the question. I thought it was very well-written and imaginative."

When Fred Katz met his future wife for the first time, he wasn't exactly Prince Charming. In fact, he was drunk. However, by the end of the night, he sobered up enough to convince her that he was actually a pretty decent guy and asked her out to dinner. From then on, Fred and Charlotte—my grandparents—went on a date nearly every single night, and quickly fell in love. So quickly, actually, that by the 17th night,



Kitra Katz

Gramps popped the big question, and they were married 25 days later. My grandparents had barely known each other two weeks—two weeks!—before they decided to get married. Married. One commitment. For life.

People probably said they were crazy. People probably said they were moving too fast, and maybe they were. But in the end, they were really just in love. Head over heels, pass the tissues, mushy-gushy love. And their love lasted through five states, three children, seven grandchildren and more than 50 years of marriage. It lasted until my grandfather passed away on June 4.

I remember sitting in the waiting room at the ICU with my grandmother, my parents and my aunt and uncle. I remember being allowed to go alone into my grandpa's room, and kissing his forehead, telling him goodbye. But one of the things I remember best was Charlotte kissing my cheek, reaching for my hand and telling me how Fred had lived a full life. And he had, with my grandmother right by his side.

Though Fred may not have introduced himself to Charlotte as her Prince Charming, in the end, that's exactly what he became. And what

he was until the day he died. She found true love, true adoration.

So two months ago, when I sat next to my grandma on her couch and she started to talk about marriage, I listened.

"I don't know why some young people

nowadays don't get married," she said. "They are missing out on so much joy. Promise me you will get married, Kitra. Will you promise me that?"

I only had one answer. "I promise."

Second place (\$50 prize)

Maren Elkins, Southwest High School

Judges notes: "(This essay) wonderfully describes the personal and cultural tensions in how marriage is defined, and (Maren) responds with a clear, engaging voice to explain her interpretation of realities that have been created for (her) by others. Wow!"

Since I was five-years-old, the word "marriage" has evoked a very distinct image for me: bride and groom, side by side, bedecked respectively in an exquisite cream gown and a smart black tuxedo. I'd frequently replicate this event with my plethora of stuffed animals throughout my preschool and kindergarten career, always crafting the iconic costumes out of paper and Scotch tape. Pairing male Dalmatian puppy with female ginger kitten, male parrot puppet with female owl, the latter of which would emit a hoot of celebration when I squeezed her plush belly. The guests, arranged in lines, would afterward enjoy all manner of plastic confections. Eventually, I grew bored, and the animals were swept away, my mind shifting to its next activity

without a thought to the gravity of the ceremony I had just reproduced.

My parents both remarried when I was in third grade, and it was only then—at age nine—that I began to understand just how marriage was defined. The weddings themselves were vastly different. My mother's took place beside a glittering lake, with scores of noisy guests trailing over verdant expanses, while my father's passed in under a half hour, within an air-conditioned government building attended only by myself and a pair of witnesses.

I began to understand at this point that what I had before trivialized in play was something of immense significance. Something that, with just a handful of words and a gesture of devotion, tied together entire families, transcending differences in culture and custom. Marriage is the ideal for a couple, the flawless union. Right?

Certainly not.

Marriage, as I learned once my mother engaged in it for the benefit of my then-unborn younger sister, is about financial welfare. Marriage, I understood when I saw my father's girlfriend assume the title of "step-mother" sans gossamer veil, is a legal contract—albeit one heavily weighted by the associations that society and pop culture heap upon it.

This isn't to say, of course, that it can't be of momentous emotional significance. For some people, marriage is the perfect choice—including, I am overjoyed to say, all the men, women and others to whom the state of Minnesota has finally allotted their proper rights. But it shouldn't be idealized. Relationships



Maren Elkins

are ultimately too fluid to ever be encompassed and defined by our laws. And so, in regards to such a

specific union, I believe that everyone should do what's right for him or herself, whether or not it fits our culture's limited expectation.

For those who spend days dreaming of the designs on their wedding cake's icing, I can only send my good wishes—but the rest should know that their desired paths of partnership are in no way lesser. Marriage is a choice to be made by the individual, based upon personal goals and values, and absolutely no one should ever feel obligated to enter into it.

Third place (\$30 prize)

Ka Vang, Harding Senior High School

Judges notes: "Ka takes a brave stance against the cultural expectations her relatives have for her future. Rather than simply rebelling for the sake of rebelling, she gives tangible reasons for her argument."

Marriage, to a small extent, is important to me, however I do not see myself getting married in the future. I clearly understand that others want to spend the rest of their lifetimes with their loved ones; however, I don't think that a ring bounded around the finger and a marriage certificate is what defines true love. Honestly, I have seen many marriages around me fail and part of me is scared to be in such a situation. Even though vows are made



Ka Vang

that clearly state both parties shall be together through the good and bad, I feel as if love never really does last. To avoid heartbreak, such as my married partner leaving me, I have decided to just not get married.

Another reason is that I want to focus on my education and my future career. Maybe because of the United States' schooling system or its economy during tough times, I have been driven to think that the only people in life who truly succeed are those with an education. When I get older, I wish to dedicate all my time to my career. It's something that I've been spending a lot of effort on, such as going to school. I feel that if I fall in love, get into a relationship, and then get married, I will be distracted from my true goal in life. And therefore, I don't see myself in a marriage at all.

Though marriage is very important in my Hmong culture, I want to be different. I don't want to be the stereotypical stay-at-home mom that defines a lot of Hmong women. I want to

show my family and all my Hmong relatives that even though I am a girl, I don't need a husband to get me far in life. That's why I spend so much time on my education and if I were to go and get married, then I would be going back on everything that I believe in. Sometimes my Hmong relatives ask: "What about starting a family?" In the Hmong culture, having a family is a big deal. The children will go on to take care of their parents when they are old and they are the ones who continue our legacy. I, however, believe that later on in life if I truly desire a family, I can just always adopt. I don't need to get married just for the reason of having children.

In conclusion, I just don't see myself getting married in the future. After all, I don't want to experience heartbreak. I can always fill the emptiness in me through the satisfaction of my work and I can finally go against all the standards that my culture has set up for me as a Hmong girl. Why? Because marriage is only a small part of true happiness.

other person that you love him a lot and you need him for the rest of your life.

Now that I have grown up, I don't think that way. I'm still thinking that marriage is a very big step in life, but it's not important to be happy or show love to the other person. Around 41 percent of first marriages and 60 percent of second marriages end in divorce. I think this happens because they don't know each other as well as they thought. They didn't spend time to talk about their thoughts or future ideas before. Or because marriage isn't the same as being in a relationship.

I won't say that I wouldn't like to get married, of course I would. However, I don't want to hurry to get married. I think to get married I would like to know the person that I am going to marry more, spend more time with the person and discuss plans and goals. I don't want to get married and then end in a divorce as many couples nowadays. As a Spanish proverb says, "It is better to wait than regret it later."

Honorable mention (\$25 prize)

Wendy Leon, LEAP High School

Judges notes: "Not only did (Wendy) include actual numbers to back up her findings, she did her research in coming to a thoughtful and informed decision on marriage."

When I was a little girl, I liked to play with my friends and pretend that I was a bride and I was going to get married to my best friend, Bryan. I liked to wear my mom's veil and hold the bouquet from her wedding because I really felt like a bride that way. I used to say to my mom that I was practicing for my real wedding ever since that moment, to make it perfect on my wedding day. My mom smiled at me and said that it was a good idea. At the time, in my mind, a wedding was very necessary and important to show the



Wendy Leon

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Personal pride

Teens, same-sex parents reflect on historic fight for marriage equality

WHEN LINDA ZLOTNICK AND Mindy Kurzer brought home their second child Anna, 5-year-old Della Kurzer-Zlotnick was not happy with the situation.

While little Della loved her new sister, she did not appreciate the abrupt shift in her parents' attention. One day, she spoke up.

"I was really concerned," Mindy Kurzer said. "I thought it sounded like she was going to say we should send Anna back. Instead, (Della) said, 'You know what we need to do? We need another mom.'"

Since Kurzer-Zlotnick, a senior at St. Paul Central High School, grew up in a world where it was normal to have two mothers, why not three?

Her parents worked throughout Kurzer-Zlotnick's childhood to create a supportive environment without negativity toward gay couples. But a life like that did not fall into their laps—it had to be painstakingly carved out bit by bit.

"We found this wonderful child care center and this wonderful elementary school where our family was totally supported," Zlotnick said.

"We joined a synagogue that was totally accepting," Kurzer added. "We went to the kids' schools—every time they had a new teacher, we talked to the teacher. When we got a pediatrician when Della was



Elena Renken
St. Paul Central

born, we interviewed a bunch of different pediatricians and said, 'How do you feel about gay people and lesbian families?'"

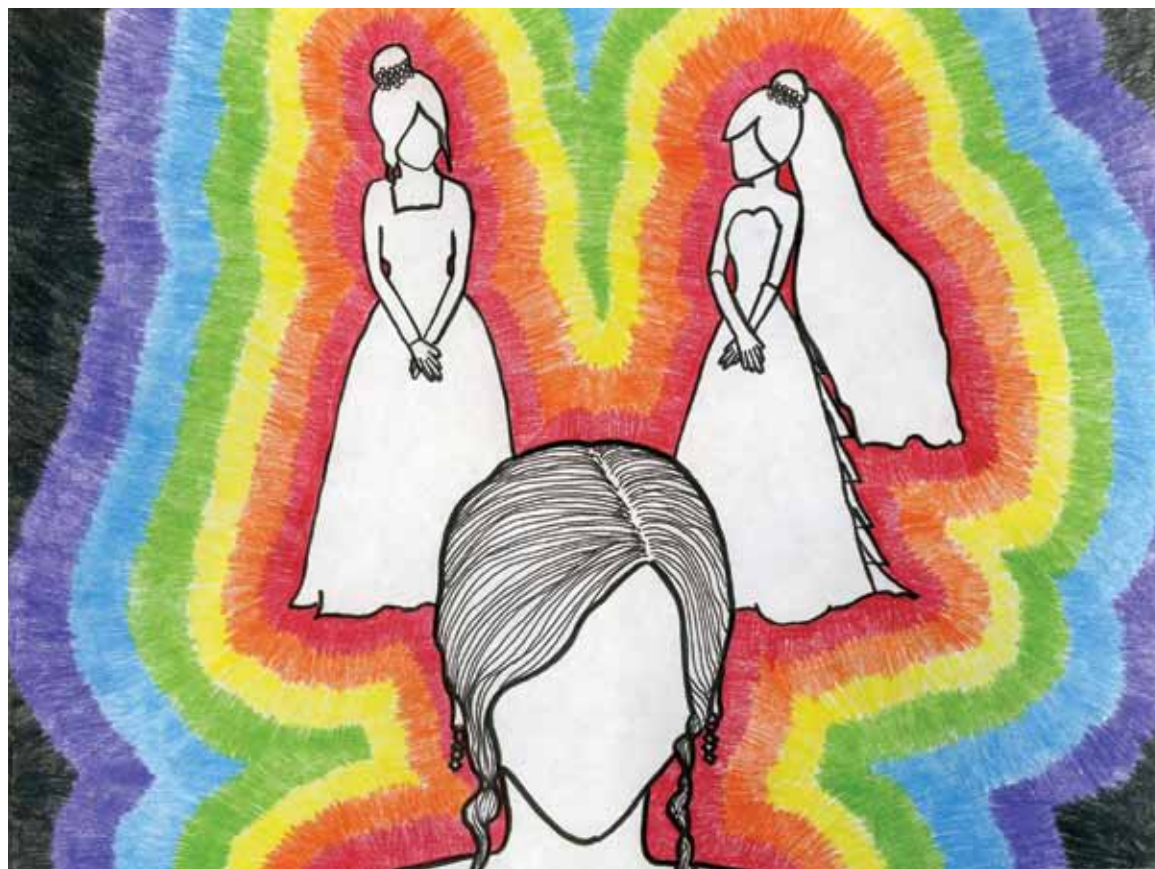
JUST MARRIED

It wasn't the only way Minnesota gay couples like Kurzer, 62, and Zlotnick, 65, modified their routines while raising a family. Together for more than 20 years, the couple never had the option to marry, let alone size rings, taste cake or send invitations.

But thanks to the passage of this year's bill legalizing gay marriage in Minnesota, Kurzer and Zlotnick tied the knot at their Minneapolis synagogue on Nov. 17.

The road to same-sex marriage for Minnesota couples stretches back to May 2011 when both the House and Senate voted to approve an amendment that would define marriage as a union between one man and one woman in the state constitution. Minnesotans voted the amendment down on Nov. 7, 2012, with 51 percent voting no.

The historic vote set the stage for the Minnesota House and Senate to pass a bill legalizing gay



Mina Yuan

marriage, which Governor Mark Dayton signed on May 14. The new legislation took effect Aug. 1.

Kurzer and Zlotnick said they were originally only going to get married for practical and financial reasons—and to please Della, who began planning a wedding before her parents ever thought a ceremony could happen. Since they were denied the freedom to marry their whole lives, the longtime couple became cynical and disconnected, even while attending weddings for close family and friends.

"You get to the point where you can't live like that. You can't live being angry and resentful and bitter and jealous all the time," Kurzer said. "A lot of our generation, we just decided, 'Who needs it?' Marriage is just a patriarchal heterosexual institution. It's just a piece of paper. It's stupid."

Attitudes quickly began to change when Kurzer and Zlotnick explored the reality of their own wedding. Sharing in a tradition they

had long been denied was a joyful breakthrough that made Kurzer and Zlotnick feel as though society had finally accepted them as a normal, loving family.

Perhaps most surprising to them was how personal their heterosexual friends and family took the victory.

"When we invited people to the wedding, they (were) so excited," Kurzer said. "At work, people (came) into my office with tears in their eyes."

ROAD TO EQUALITY

Although these recent political changes reflect a more accepting society to Kurzer and Zlotnick, it doesn't erase the intolerance they experienced to get to this moment. Their parenting philosophy was shaped by unpleasant memories of the shame and rejection they felt because of their sexual orientation.

"I'd grown up where there was something wrong with me, but I thought it's unfair to a child to

have them grow up in an environment where you're hiding, or where you feel ashamed of who you are," Zlotnick said.

Kurzer remembers her high school biology teacher speaking negatively about homosexuality, and putting her on the spot when she challenged him on his comments.

"He said to me, in front of the whole class, 'So are you homosexual?'" Kurzer said. "And I said, 'I don't know. I haven't had any experiences, so I don't know what I am.'"

When Zlotnick was in college and began to have feelings for women, she told all her friends that she might be gay. They refused to hang out with her.

"And so I lost all my friends," Zlotnick said. "I lost all that because it never occurred to me that people would reject me."

That rejection also taught Zlotnick to be far more careful with her personal information. Both

parents are still cautious about the topic, referring to each other in conversation without using gender-specific pronouns and limiting opportunities for negative reactions as much as possible.

Most of Kurzer-Zlotnick's experiences have centered around a general lack of understanding, though she admits it's getting better.

She remembers telling a peer in elementary school that she had two moms, to which the girl replied, "Oh, I won't tell anyone" before running away. The day her second grade class made Mother's Day cards also stands out. When the teacher said there were only enough supplies for everyone to make one card, Kurzer-Zlotnick started crying.

"I went up to her and just begged for more supplies," she said. "I remember thinking that (it) was such an injustice."

While those instances frustrated Kurzer-Zlotnick, they did not humiliate her. Quintin Smidzik, a senior at St. Paul Central who also has two moms, tries to respond similarly to sentiment that, intentionally or unintentionally, excludes gay people.

"Growing up, people asked questions (about) why I didn't have a dad," he said. "Of course, there are the ignorant people ... who despise gay people, but I just think it's a waste of time to worry about them."

MOBILIZING TEENS

Kurzer-Zlotnick's personal connection to the cause provided plenty of motivation to become part of Minnesota's fight for marriage equality. She volunteered with Jewish Community Action, a group that worked with youth in the Vote No campaign. Though a lot of the work was door knocking and phone

banking, she took another approach to convincing Minnesotans to vote against the amendment.

"I videotaped probably 20 or 25 high schoolers talking about why it was important to them that people vote no, because all of the people in the videos couldn't vote," Kurzer-Zlotnick said. "So the whole idea behind our specific campaign was vote no because we can't."

"It was amazing to see how teenagers plugged into this campaign," said Richard Carlbom, who led the local fight as campaign manager for Minnesotans United for All Families. "I've met person after person who, because they had a conversation with their teenage son or daughter, they came to realize that being told it's illegal to marry the person you love is just not right."

Kurzer-Zlotnick and Smidzik also recognized a noticeable shift in how their peers approached the topics of gay marriage and homosexuality.

"When the whole Vote No campaign started, all of my friends were very supportive and it made me feel like they actually noticed that my



Della Kurzer-Zlotnick was the driving force behind her two moms, together for more than 20 years, getting married in November. The St. Paul Central senior also volunteered during the political campaign and helped make youth videos.

family was considered 'different,'" Smidzik said. "And this was probably the first time that my friends actually showed interest in the cause. But it's better late than never."

Added Kurzer-Zlotnick: "Especially my friends who maybe (didn't have) such a good relationship with their parents, or who haven't talked to their parents about this. Talking to them about the Vote No campaign was really helpful and was a really good segue."

Milestones and major events in the political battle for gay marriage in Minnesota held even more

importance for those with a personal stake in the outcome.

Kurzer-Zlotnick stayed up until 3 a.m. when the constitutional amendment was overturned, texting her mother on the floor above her when the results finally came in. On the pivotal day when the Minnesota House of Representatives passed the bill to legalize gay marriage, the Kurzer-Zlotnick family stood outside the Capitol with a group from their synagogue.

May 14, meanwhile, will be hard to erase from Smidzik's memory.

"The day the bill was signed was probably one of the happiest days of my life. I had baseball practice so I couldn't go down to the Capitol, but both of my moms did and I saw videos of people crying with joy. And it made me feel good knowing that people were heard in their fight to make their love equal," he said.

For Carlbom, the most memorable moment in a long campaign occurred two months after the legislation passed. His two best friends, who had been together for 30 years, finally got married.

"It was a day I'll never forget and it was really special," he said.

Carlbom is planning his own wedding to partner Justin Schramm on December 20.

"What's cool about getting married is how excited people are for you," Carlbom said. Case in point: His niece and nephew, both 6, "are competing and angling to get a spot in this wedding like you wouldn't believe."

'GREATEST STATE EVER'

No less important are the after effects that, for gay couples and their families, continue to shine a light on tolerance and equality throughout Minnesota.

"This political battle for sure changed my mind about the government," Smidzik said. "One of my moms said to me, 'I thought I was going to die before they legalized gay marriage,' and that honestly broke my heart. But I believe that the government heard people's cries for the legalization of their love and I find that astonishing."

"I really felt like if the constitutional amendment passed that I didn't know if I could stay living in Minnesota," Kurzer said.

Now? "I think Minnesota is the greatest state ever."

Carlbom said he only needs to think back to the 2012 Minnesota State Fair when he noticed two teenagers standing near the Vote No booth.

A volunteer approached them and asked if they were planning to vote no. They responded yes, and when asked why, told the volunteer that they were dating and this was the first time they had ever told anyone.

"It was crazy that all they did was walk within proximity of this booth of people who were working to include them in society," Carlbom said, "and they felt comfortable enough to tell a stranger for the first time that they were gay."



Because Linda Zlotnick, left, and Mindy Kurzer grew bitter about marriage, it took some convincing to hold their own wedding in November. However, upon planning it, they admitted to having "a lot of fun" with the process.

Secret's out

Q&A with Richard Carlbom

RICHARD CARLBOM originally wanted to become a journalist.

But after graduating from Saint John's University in 2004, he got the political bug. Soon after, he was elected mayor of his hometown, St. Joseph.

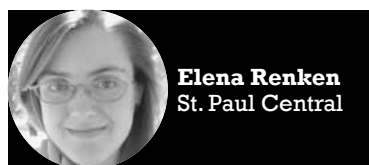
He's been "in politics ever since," most notably by leading the grassroots charge as campaign manager for Minnesotans United for All Families, which helped defeat a proposed amendment to the Minnesota constitution that would have banned same-sex marriage. Six months later, the Minnesota legislature passed a bill allowing gay couples to marry in Minnesota.

The last two years have been a whirlwind, to say the least. Carlbom has since been promoted to director of state campaigns for Freedom to Marry—a national group that aims to get similar marriage bills passed in other states. On the personal front, Carlbom is also marrying his long-time partner this month.

Carlbom, who works out of St. Paul, recently spoke with ThreeSixty reporter Elena Renken about the path to success he and gay rights supporters helped carve in Minnesota.

What made those two campaigns so successful?

We did an incredible amount of planning and research to understand exactly how we would gain the number of votes we needed to beat



Elena Renken
St. Paul Central

the amendment in November of 2012. One was to make sure that the campaign was deeply relational. We wanted people to understand that in order to win we needed to connect with people at the deepest level possible. Second, we knew we needed to bring it to massive scale. We knew that 100 volunteers or 1,000 volunteers or even 10,000 volunteers wasn't going to get the job done. In order to move the needle from 43 percent to 51 percent, we had to figure out how to make it as massive as possible. So we grew it to over 40,000 individual volunteers and 85,000 individual donors.

How do you think the legalization of gay marriage affects teens in particular?

For teens who are gay themselves, who have brothers or sisters or parents who are gay, I think it's a deep change. It's a deep, meaningful change that makes them feel like they're a full part of the state, and that their loved ones are a full part of society. Not having the freedom to marry really set a whole group of people outside of our society and separated them from everybody else. So for some teens it'll be incredibly personal. For others who don't feel

that personal change, I think that they're going to feel like our state reflects their worldview more. I didn't come out to myself until I was 21. I knew that I was gay probably as young as 10 or 11 or 12, and the reason I didn't come out until I was 21 was that I grew up in a family that wasn't exposed to the LGBTQ community at all, so I didn't feel real comfortable. I was very cautious and nervous, and that's why you stay in the closet. I think changing this law changes the way young gay teenagers, LGBT teenagers, view themselves and view their society.

How do you think people with different views on gay marriage can start to talk about this issue openly?

The first thing that everybody should understand is that everybody's on a journey when it comes to an issue like this. We have to understand that people who are opposed to the freedom to marry—they're not bad people. They're not. The second thing is they have the capacity to understand the situation differently. It might take them a long time to do so, but everybody is on a journey, and if you asked me ten years ago, when I was graduating from college and coming out, if I would ever get married, I would've said no. Absolutely not.

So I myself have journeyed to the point where I'm getting married and I'm incredibly excited about it. I'll say to you that I've met person after person who, because they had a conversation with their teenage son or daughter, they came to realize that being told it's illegal to marry the person you love for anyone is just not right, and that ultimately, the freedom to marry is a basic fundamental freedom that they wouldn't want to deny somebody else. When



Richard Carlbom, who was promoted to the national Freedom to Marry campaign after leading a successful push for same-sex marriage in Minnesota, said he was "shocked" at the scale local advocates were able to build their volunteer base.

it comes to people who disagree with you, you should just ask them, "Why did you get married?" They'll start talking about how they fell in love, made a commitment and wanted to start a family. Most of the time they don't understand that's exactly why gay people want to get married, too.

What do you say to those members of the public who are still against gay marriage?

I used to think I understood why they felt that way. I don't know if I do understand it really. What I know is that a lot of folks have very deeply held religious beliefs, and I acknowledge and accept and respect that they have religious beliefs that ultimately may prevent them from accepting the fact that two people who fall in love and want to make a commitment to one another should be able to do so. I also know that just because they're opposed to gay marriage doesn't mean that it's going to be thrust upon them. Their church will never be forced to marry two people they don't want to marry. I would defend that right. With that said, I would reassure the person that even though their rights aren't

infringed upon, now our state law ensures that others' access to taking care of their spouse and committing themselves isn't infringed upon either. It's the best of both worlds, actually.

What is it about Minnesota that allowed it to make this transformation so rapidly?

I think that people can personalize this issue very quickly. But I think more importantly than it just being unique in Minnesota, I think that the approach to how to talk about this changed so dramatically. We realized that people who get married don't get married because of rights and benefits. We've created this misunderstanding about why we, ourselves, want to get married. We have to stop talking about the legal issues and start talking from our hearts. When we did that, it actually connected with people. Normally in campaigns, when you discover a great secret, you don't talk about it because your opponents might find out. Here's the great thing: We want to talk about it more and more. We want our opponents to know about it, because there's nothing our opponents can do to prevent people from talking about love.

Test of faith

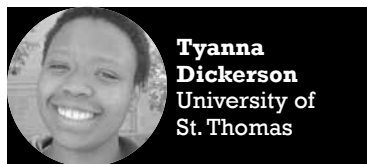
A shift in beliefs led to a difficult but affirming yes vote for the marriage amendment

A LONG PAUSE held at the other end of the cell phone.

Thoughts raced through my mind as I anxiously awaited my best friend's response to my opposition to same-sex marriage.

Will she yell? Will she end our 11-year friendship? What if she starts acting differently around me?

"Well ... I believe marriage is between love and love," she said. "Besides, it wouldn't have



happened if God didn't want it to."

Should I quote one of the many Bible verses stating that marriage was between a man and a woman? Or should I find a way to

change the subject? The second option sounded way more appealing.

I decided not to cop out. I responded not in the words of Saint Paul, but my own: "I believe that marriage is between a man and a woman. It took me awhile to accept the truth, but I am sticking to it."

This conversation marked the beginning of a new test of my Christian faith. For years I agreed with my friends. Together we went to PRIDE festivities each spring and were fans of the popular Gay 90's nightclub in downtown Minneapolis.

I had no tolerance for people who held an opposing view, especially fellow Christians. We called them homophobes, bigots and "judgmental b***hes."

Now I risked being labeled the same way. These names would hurt even more because they'd be coming from my friends.

As a college student surrounded by peers with liberal attitudes toward marriage and homosexuality, I knew what they would say. "Love is love." "This is the 21st century." "God created all things and made them beautiful."

SEARCH FOR MEANING

My conversion from a LGBTQ advocate to an opponent of gay marriage did not occur by some Road to Damascus moment. It was inspired by my personal search for a deeper relationship with God. I was no theologian or biblical scholar. I was a young, questioning Christian seeking purpose, meaning and truth in my life.

Growing up, I attended church irregularly. In the little time I spent there, I learned that there was always music, most people were friendly and they always had cookies and juice afterwards. What was not to like?

Church visits became even more sporadic as I got older. Then, in my junior year of high school, my mother and I decided to attend a church right around the corner from our home in South Minneapolis. The church was friendly, the services inspiring. So inspiring that my mother and I became baptized believers.

Things were going well. My family and I were seeing change in our lives—I even got into

the University of St. Thomas on a full scholarship. We knew this could not happen without divine intervention.

But something still seemed to be missing, so I tried to fill it with church. Church only on Sundays? Not for this girl. Prayer group on Tuesday, volunteering on Wednesday, Sunday school and regular service on Sunday morning. And did someone say something about a new committee?

The church carried the same beliefs that I held. Feed the hungry and clothe the poor? Check. Create a multicultural community? Check. No specific views of homosexuality? Check.

After two years as a baptized and declaring Christian, church had become a major part of my schedule. But behind the smile and façade of Christian perfection were depression, loneliness and confusion, along with what felt like an identity crisis as I pressed my way through college.

NEW CHURCH, NEW MESSAGE

Then one day, a friend walked by looking like she just saw Jesus himself. She told me how Jesus had transformed her life and how she'd never been happier. I was frustrated: I had been going to church longer than she had, yet I was miserable. She suggested that I come visit her church—Shiloh Temple in North Minneapolis.

This church had more foot stomping and hand clapping, along with many random outbursts of "Hallelujah!" and "Thank you, Jesus!" I clapped and stomped as if I had been attending Shiloh my whole life. To top it off, the sermons touched me in a way that light began to peek through my dark feelings of depression. This was a place where I could really get to know God.

Then on May 9, 2012, President Obama publicly declared his support for same-sex marriage. Score for the LGBTQ community!

Score for the Christian church?

I thought so. Until one Wednesday evening.

The church was full of joyful singing as the praise team led the congregation in worship. Pastor H. took the podium to lead Bible

FAITH continued on page 28

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ThreeSixty MAKING CONNECTIONS

College crisis?

The details are important, but admissions experts remind teens to enjoy the process

WHILE WALKING AROUND with an admissions rep on a college tour, your mind might begin to wander to the group of jock-ish guys playing in the quad. Or maybe to a cluster of friends, all wearing campus colors, joking around the student center. Perhaps to a dedicated few studying vigorously in the library.

For a large number of high school seniors, this is the new life they can expect in just nine short months.

But how do you know which college you can see yourself living at for four years, maybe more?

Where do you start? What do colleges really look at? What are you doing wrong before that even becomes a reality?

Welcome to the dreaded application process, one littered with challenges and stress points every step of the way.

"I'm stressing about applying to college, college essays and managing my time. Also, I'm worried about my ACT score, and actually getting accepted to a college I want to go to," said Durreti Wako, a senior at Robbinsdale Cooper High School.

"When I'm stressed, I go talk to friends who are in college. They help, but the part that makes me overwhelmed in stress is the wait. Waiting for acceptance letters. But in the end, it's totally all worth it. I get to further my education into a different stage in life. That's rewarding to me."



Dami Gilbert
Robbinsdale
Cooper High
School

The application process has become increasingly complex over the past few years thanks to options like early decision, early action, regular decision and seemingly endless requirements for students to understand. Also, with the rise of technology, a lot of applications have gone digital.

However, with a declining number of teens graduating from high school, "some would suggest



Durreti Wako



Zoey Johnson



Mark Brown / University of St. Thomas

Selective schools take "demonstrated interest" into account during the application process, said admissions director Alexa Tennyson. Colleges are looking for students that "want to be" on their campus, which is why direct contact with admissions personnel is important.

that students (might) have an easier time being admitted today than 10 or 20 years ago," said Kristin Roach, director of admissions and financial aid at the University of St. Thomas.

"For me, this makes the environment more complex and perhaps more stressful for students," Roach said. But I do not believe it is harder to get into most schools than it was 10 years ago with the possible exception of some of the 'flagship' public colleges that are trying to improve their academic profiles."

Roach's number one goal is to make sure that if a student is admitted to St. Thomas, he or she will be able to succeed in college. Success in college doesn't necessarily mean having a perfect grade point average. Instead, it means being involved, contributing to the campus community and thriving academically with a strong yet reasonable GPA.

"I want to see good grades in college preparatory courses versus seeing straight A's in things like 'underwater basket weaving' (to use a



Mike Ekern / University of St. Thomas

College admissions representatives advise that seniors visit campus more than once. Most campuses, like the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, also offer overnight stays where students can have lunch, visit with professors and get financial aid questions answered.

silly example)," Roach said.

"Secondarily, I am interested in someone who is well-rounded and who will add to the university's community. If a student has struggled, I am looking for clues about why they ran into trouble. We conduct a holistic review of each student's application, so the more a student shares with us, the better."

GET WRITING

Stressing about the essays? You're not alone.

Essays for each college vary and feature general prompts like "Why should you be part of the (insert college name) community?" or "Describe a place that has importance in your life." Others can get more creative and ask about beliefs, hopes, rituals and even embarrassing moments.

For financial aid and scholarship purposes, colleges also can recalculate costs for "special circumstances" on a case-by-case basis. Common exceptions include changes in income, high medical bills and divorce, separation or death of a parent.

"One thing I really focus on is my special circumstance essay, because through that, the colleges can come to an understanding of who I am, and how important college is to me," said Zoey Johnson, a senior at Robbinsdale.

Most colleges only ask for one writing sample. If you're applying to a more prestigious school, they might require three to five samples. Also, more than 500 schools accept the Common Application and its essay, which was designed to streamline the process for students.

While the essay process could "make or break a student's chance
ADMISSIONS continued on page 29

Something to prove

Painstaking pursuit of the IB Diploma goes beyond a simple piece of paper

TWO OUT OF 20.

With one glaring statistic from my Spanish teacher at Harding High School, all the confidence I had gained upon pursuing the International Baccalaureate Diploma slowly drained from my body.

Seven IB classes and tests, a 4,000 word paper, a required Theory of Knowledge course, all those hours of individual projects, sports and volunteering completed—and still no diploma.

Two Harding students out of 20? *Really?*

Now, the only question that ran through my head was if it would be worth it—and more importantly, if I was even able to continue to pursue the diploma with grim statistics like that. I had already put so much into the program to simply give up at the start of my senior year, though.

Then another reality check. Two weeks into this fall semester, five other students decided to drop the diploma program.

This all began my junior year when I left Park High School, where I started the IB program. I switched schools due to a change in my living situation, and because Woodbury High School didn't offer IB, I chose Harding so I could stay on track with what I already started. Except this was only supposed to be temporary and I would return to Park this year—my all-important senior year—to graduate with the class I grew up with.

But life, or at least life with strict IB requirements, has a way of ruining plans. If I went back to Park, I wouldn't have had enough time or credits to achieve the IB Diploma. I also started the paperwork to open my own local chapter of a group for Creativity, Action, Service (CAS) activities, and then there was the



Kimberly Martinez
Harding High School

start of my 4,000-word extended essay.

To stay in the running as an IB Diploma candidate, I'd have to stay at Harding.

A NEW CHALLENGE

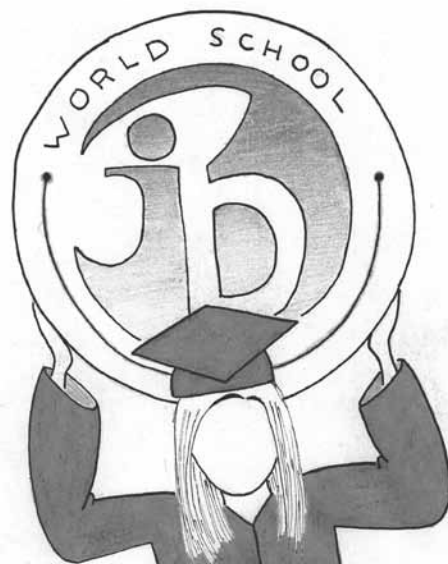
So why go through all of this pain? I ask myself that question every day.

The IB Diploma represents a challenge. Earning the diploma would mark my transformation from a once average and unknown student into someone who went above and beyond to test her limits. And while receiving recognition and a gold medal at graduation would be nice—I mean, who doesn't love a gold medal?—transferring credits to college, priority choice in college selection and the availability of scholarships will mean so much more.

I also have too much to prove. To my teachers. To my classmates. To myself.

I have always been an art student. That's how I choose to learn, preferring graphic design and world crafts to more difficult core honors courses. So I understand why others would be skeptical of my academic abilities, even once I entered the IB program.

It's why some of my classmates refuse to believe I'm attempting an extraordinary academic act, and instead question the validity of my diploma since I'm taking two IB art classes (film and visual arts) while they're double dipping in math or science. They ignore the fact that I don't strive to be a



Kimberly Martinez

doctor but instead a graphic designer, which apparently isn't as valued.

SOCIAL SACRIFICES

But quieting those doubters hasn't been nearly as difficult as trying to balance my IB requirements with the social life I once knew. Between rigorous essays, 10-minute oral presentations, investigation labs and art projects, it takes a lot of energy to schedule anything else in life.

Honestly, it becomes easier to stay home and work on papers instead of going to a football game. I'd just stress out about finishing those assignments in a shorter amount of time.

The fact that I couldn't move back to Park and rejoin my old classmates also lessened my desire to maintain a social life. I even chose to attend Park's Homecoming instead of Harding's. Except deep down I knew that I wasn't part of that world anymore. I was merely intruding.

Just a few weeks ago, I was in my Spanish

class when I received a slew of Snapchats for a panoramic senior picture taken at Park. The entire day, one thought would not escape my head.

"I'm supposed to be in that picture."

I should have been standing next to my friends, heading into an exciting, new chapter of our lives together. The feeling of nostalgia and loneliness set in deep.

NO ROOM FOR FAILURE

If I don't receive the IB Diploma, big deal, right?

At least that's what everyone keeps telling me. *As long as I tried my best.*

To me, the ramifications are much bigger than not receiving a piece of paper. It would mean failure. That all my doubters were right.

I'll have let myself down.

I try to keep this possibility as far away from my mind as I can. Instead, I focus on the good stuff—that yes, at this very moment I am on track to receive my IB Diploma.

All the papers and projects, the starting and re-starting of my extended essay, getting my CAS activities established, trying to meet all my normal graduation requirements—the obstacles in my journey have only just begun.

But enough self-reflection.

Test dates are coming in March and it's time to get studying. Good luck to all the other IB Diploma candidates in the 3,661 schools all over the world.

What is the IB Diploma?

According to its website, the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme is designed to address the intellectual, social, emotional and physical well-being of students, ages 16 to 19, as they seek higher education. Beyond curriculum, its core is centered on three parameters:

- The extended essay asks students to engage in independent research through an in-depth study of a question that relates to one of their IB Diploma subjects.
- Theory of knowledge unifies academic disciplines and asks students to examine the "nature of knowing."
- Creativity, action, service (CAS) involves a range of activities alongside student academic studies. Creativity encourages students to engage in the arts; action seeks to develop a healthy lifestyle through physical activity; and service offers community learning with new academic value.

Source: www.ibo.org

Balancing athletics and academics

Q&A with Trent Tucker

ALMOST 25 YEARS after he left the University of Minnesota as a 1982 first round pick of the NBA's New York Knicks, a nervous Trent Tucker re-entered the college classroom.

As he sat alone in class that first day, two students came in, processed his age as an older man and asked, "Are you the professor?"

No, Tucker said politely. Just like them, he was trying to get a college degree.

"To think that I was entering a whole new world, and that everyone else in the class was prepared and I was like an outcast. I had to learn things that I'd never even seen before. And that was the scary part," Tucker said.

"You ask yourself if you're capable and if you have the mental toughness to deal with this. I easily could've just walked away."

A Golden Gopher standout who later won a 1993 NBA championship alongside Michael Jordan on the Chicago Bulls, Tucker didn't need to fall back on a degree during his 11-year career. But after his retirement from the NBA, he found out just how limited his career options were.

"Even to coach college basketball, you need a college degree," Tucker said.

Upon earning his U of M degree in psychology and communications, "other things began to work



for me," Tucker said—including his current job as athletic director of Minneapolis Public Schools, where he oversees the district's athletic programs for high schools and middle schools.

At the start of the school year, ThreeSixty Journalism's Amolak Singh chatted with Tucker about the relationship between academics and athletics in his life and how it has changed since he was a kid.

When you were in high school, did you feel that your family, friends and fellow students considered athletics to be more important than academics?

Well, when you're in high school and you become good enough that college recruiters are now talking to you about life beyond high school on the athletics side, sometimes you think about sports more than academics. When I go to talk to high school athletes today—who are good and might be on the radar to be recruited by some of these universities—I tell them, "You can't get one without the other." You have to take your academics as seriously as your athletics because at the end of the day, your



Trent Tucker, a former first round draft pick and NBA champion, didn't think he needed to get his college degree en route to a successful pro career.

academic life is going to carry much farther than your athletic life can.

I was lucky enough to play beyond high school, at the collegiate level and then in the NBA, but I realized, once I had left the NBA, that there was one piece still missing. I didn't graduate the first time around when I was in college. I wanted to coach college basketball, but they require you to have a college degree to do that. So, that was a missed opportunity. And when you miss opportunities, you can't blame anybody but yourself.

When you were in college, did you think about academics?

No, no. When I was in college, the thing that I focused on was my athletics, and I took a chance. There are so many factors that can go wrong as an athlete. I was lucky for all of those things to go well. But it did come back to haunt me when I didn't finish my college degree on time.

As an NBA player, did you think about going back to school and finishing your degree?

I thought about it, especially the first year when I was drafted. I said I was going to go to school and finish my college degree. But the longer I stayed in the NBA, the

further that thought process got away from me. Most of the guys who retire at the age of 35 or 36 are very young for everyday life. And you're hoping that you're going to have 40 or so years left, and things are going to change, so you have to be prepared for challenges. Having that college education behind you is going to help.

Did you have anything you wanted to do, or planned on doing, after retirement?

When you're in the NBA, you pretty much focus on the time you're in, and opportunities pretty much come your way. Most guys think about whether they're going to get into coaching or broadcasting. That's it. You don't really need a college degree if you're going into broadcasting, but if you decide to do something different, that's where that college degree comes in handy. When people ask me if my college degree has paid off, I say yes. I worked for four years at the University of Minnesota in central administration. It gave me the opportunity to create a middle school program where we brought kids on campus and helped them visualize what college would look like for them.

How old were you when you went back to the U of M to get your degree?

45 or 46.

Was it hard for you to reboot and get back to school life?

It was scary because everything was different. When I was in school, there weren't cellphones, e-mailing, computers. Everything was hand-written. Conversations with your professor were done face to face or over the phone. I had to learn things that I'd never even seen before.

There were days when I was nervous, I was afraid. I knew that it was something I needed to do. It was something that I had to do. That gave me the confidence to know that I could do this. This was a huge change, but at the end of the day, you have to realize that change is good.

Do you think other NBA players struggled to fit academics into the big picture?

Oh yeah, because of the one-track mind. When you become good at something, there is a different type of acceptance. Kids today leave earlier to go to the NBA than when I was a kid. They just changed the eligibility rules, but the mindset is still very different. College recruiters are now coming in at a much earlier age. So, families are thinking that we can make it because of this individual, and that is a tremendous amount of pressure to put on a kid. We believe that we are good enough to do this because we have put ourselves in this position, but we don't think of all the things that could go wrong.

How does the Minneapolis Public Schools district show the importance of academics to student athletes?

TUCKER continued on page 28

The game within the game

Media scrutiny, hunt for scholarships can muddy the prep sports mission

THE SMELL OF CHEAP hot dogs and popcorn. The squeak of sneakers on the laminated gym floor. The stands, filled with spectators and supporters, cheering every back and forth point like it's do or die.

High school sports make up a significant part of many students' lives, not to mention the coaches and administrators who give time and attention to each individual athlete.

Yet as high school athletes are becoming an increasingly popular media species, are prep sports still played the way they should be played?

Dennis Stockmo, athletic director at Roosevelt High School, said high school sports are meant to teach students life lessons, whether they know their value at the time or not. Adults should teach them how to "play hard and act like young men and women," he said—which is easier said than done when winning and scholarships are on the line.

In September, Matt Labrum, a football coach at Union High School in Roosevelt, Utah, suspended his team of 80 players due to poor academic behavior. After finding out that some players had been skipping classes and cyberbullying classmates, Labrum required his athletes to return their jerseys and equipment until they "earned the privilege to



Brianna Skildum
Roosevelt High School

play."

Although it may have seemed like an extreme punishment—and a bit of a rarity to suspend an entire team—none of the student athletes fought Labrum on his actions.

"We looked at it as a chance to say, 'Hey, we need to focus on some other things that are more important than winning a football game,'" Labrum told a Utah newspaper. "We got an emotional response from the boys. I think it really meant something to them, which was nice to see that it does mean something."

GOOD INTENTIONS

Closer to home, the Minnesota State High School League is the center of judgment for high school sports. The league's governing body decides the main rules for each sport, how to staff big tournaments throughout the year and establishes a code of conduct that guides how sports should be played in the state.

Although the MSHSL decides on general rules, coaches still get to decide the consequences for their individual teams. Athletic directors



John Millea/Minnesota State High School League

High school sports can provide important life moments and lessons, which hopefully will have a positive impact on student athletes into adulthood.

and coaches maintain a lot of control, Stockmo said, and can add more rules or punishments as they see fit. At Roosevelt, there has been consideration for a school-wide code of conduct, but so far, there is only a rule sheet for a student's specific sport to sign.

Stockmo said the influence of today's professional sports culture on high school students should not be understated. Because "society views sports in the wrong way," it can create headaches for administrators who try to offer perspective or guidance.

High school athletes "sometimes see the cars and the money and the houses, and they don't see the sport itself," Stockmo said.

ONLY GETTING BIGGER

John Millea, a media specialist at MSHSL, believes that Minnesota high school sports can be a "model for the rest of the country."

from each local paper covering a game. Now bloggers, freelance reporters and national writers cover games and specific athletes, creating a storm of attention that often extends into social media and the front pages. ESPN even televises "Signing Day" press conferences at high schools.

It only serves to fuel the hunt for college scholarships and personal attention, Millea said.

"Just because you're an athlete, why should you be at any higher level than somebody who's on the debate team? Or somebody who just comes to school and does a great job, and isn't out for activities?" he said.

'LIVE LIKE A KING'

A recent example, Millea said, is the national attention surrounding Tyus Jones, a senior basketball player at Apple Valley High School. Jones is ranked as the top point guard in the country by ESPN.

As an 8th grader, Jones snagged a spot as a varsity starter for Apple Valley and received his first scholarship offer from Iowa as a freshman. He also played for USA Basketball and attended separate skill camps hosted by NBA stars LeBron James and Chris Paul.

"It's impossible to describe what that lifestyle is like ... You live like a king," said Millea, who noted that Jones has more than 20,000 Twitter followers.

In November, Jones committed to Duke in a widely televised ceremony.

"It's no fault of his that he's put up on this pedestal, as this superstar high school kid ... (but) it makes him different from any other student, just because his profile is so high," Millea said.

"I wish high school sports could just be high school sports."

Driving across the state for games, big and small, has opened Millea's eyes to the connective tissue provided by high school sports in various communities. Although venue size may be different as you move further away from the Twin Cities, Millea said "the game is still the same."

"We don't ever talk about winning. We talk about fairness, sportsmanship and overcoming obstacles. Learning teamwork," said Millea, who writes a column called "John's Journal" that acts as a spotlight for prep sports in Minnesota.

"And we've had different initiatives to stress these things over the years. It's about growth. Student growth."

Increased media attention, more than anything, has changed how society views high school sports, Millea said.

Twenty years ago it would have been common to find one person

Calling a timeout

How much is *too much* when it comes to our sports obsessed culture?

ROBERT GRIFFIN III and Dwyane Wade drinking Gatorade.

LeBron James wearing Nike.

Troy Polamalu using Head & Shoulders.

Aaron Rodgers selling State Farm Insurance.

Joe Mauer promoting Kemps.

Teenagers are often told to value hard-working Americans such as teachers and police officers over athletes. Adrian Peterson isn't paid to be your role model. Look to someone in your own life.

However, five minutes of watching TV commercials proves the opposite.

We're a sports crazed society. We go nuts over the achievements of professional athletes—even college and high schoolers—and often fail to pay attention to the boring, everyday accomplishments of those devoted to protect and teach us.

I get that it isn't an either/or proposition. Sports is a beautiful thing. It can unite people from all backgrounds and often promotes teamwork and character building. Sports organizations also commit tons of resources to community service and worthwhile causes.

Simply put, it's mind-blowing to watch the few thousand people who, in peak physical shape, can perform in a way most of us could only dream about.

I'm guilty, too. As an avid sports fan, I'd be lying if I said that sports didn't consume a large chunk of my



social time. I check scores on my smartphone as often as I can, and a good portion of my wardrobe is made up of shirts and jerseys of my favorite college and professional teams. One of the first websites I visit every day is ESPN.com. I go crazy over awesome dunks and ridiculous plays. I'm a part of this sports obsessed culture as much as anybody.

And that's the real problem—that we love sports *too* much. Our collective focus on athletes and our favorite teams is so intense that it throws our priorities out of order and sometimes causes us to do foolish (even dangerous) things.

WE'RE TO BLAME

One way to see how we value sports is to look at the paychecks of professional athletes. According to Yahoo Sports, the average NFL player gets paid \$1.9 million dollars a year. That's how much the average American would make in 45 years. Also, the average NBA player makes about \$67,000 a game—or \$3,500 a minute. The average teacher in Minnesota gets paid \$53,680 a year.

True, these athletes get paid a ton because of their highly specialized skill set. But these huge disparities

also exist because of our priorities. We consider an entertainment industry—professional sports—to be more valuable than something essential—like education or our safety—which is an unsustainable and unrealistic way to run our society.

Then again, we live in a society where most sports fans can rattle off the last 10 Super Bowl winners but might struggle to name the current vice-president. Or who are angered and frustrated more by a league lock-out than the government shutdown.

Yet while it's easy to blame super rich athletes or super rich owners that dole out loads of cash, it's still ignoring the real cause of the overwhelming importance given to athletic achievements over, say, academics.

Us.

It seems hypocritical for us to criticize athletes for making so much money, for acting so self-important, when we're the ones who spend hundreds buying apparel or attending live sporting events. We idolize them. Are in awe of them.

On top of that hero worship, think about all the time we spend watching these athletes on TV. How much we talk about them. We even have multiple 24-hour specialized sports channels, not to mention that 21 of the most viewed events on TV are Super Bowls.

NOT ROLE MODELS

In addition, we unfairly hold athletes to a higher standard of morality and treat them as role models when they aren't that different from the rest of us. Yes, they are humans who can run the mile in four and a half minutes or consistently shoot a basketball into a hoop 30 feet away. But does that mean they should be scrutinized more? That they should get away with more?

For example, take the case of Johnny Manziel, Texas A&M's Heisman Trophy winner nicknamed "Johnny Football."

Earlier this year, he was allegedly caught signing autographs for money, which is against college regulations. Yet his punishment was that he couldn't play half of a meaningless game. That accomplished nothing, but instead told him that he's important because of his athletic gifts.

Manziel is not the only one at fault for thinking he is above the system. His every move is documented on ESPN. His Twitter page is endlessly dissected. Fans buy up his college jersey and turn him into a golden god on campus. He's not even 21 years old!

This sort of entitlement culture has negative effects on our society. First of all, it encourages young kids and teenagers to adopt athletes as role models simply because of their athletic prowess. Academics almost never get talked about.

WHERE IT STARTS

The cause of such a drastic disparity starts in school. For the most part, in elementary and middle school, coaches, parents and teachers always talk about how playing sports is about having fun and developing life skills. Then, once kids enter high school, the focus completely changes. Playing sports is about performance—and therefore winning. Everything else is second. How does this change happen so dramatically?

In high school, students and coaches know that they are being watched by colleges, and that they might have a shot at being recruited or even earning a scholarship. That puts a lot of pressure on student athletes, who then focus on how to optimize their performance and win.

Earlier this year, I interviewed Rashad Vaughn, one of the top high school basketball players in the nation. At the time, he was going to Robbinsdale Cooper High School. However, toward the end of the year, he transferred to a prep school for select basketball players just outside Las Vegas.

For high schoolers with exceptional athletic talent, fun doesn't come first. Vaughn transferred because he would be surrounded by better coaches and players, the national spotlight that much brighter. He'll probably spend a few years in college. and if he's lucky, go to the pros where he'll get some expensive endorsements and contracts.

Where do academics fit in? Your guess is as good as mine.

CAN WE CHANGE?

If we really think that athletics are unfairly valued more than academics, if we think that teachers are just as important (if not more) than hockey players, then we should find a way to change that. Blaming athletes for promoting the superior status we give to athletic skills and achievements does nothing but ignore the real issues.

If we really believe that professional athletes aren't as important as educators, then we have to actually show that.

If we don't like a college kid like Manziel acting pampered, then maybe we should treat him just like any other kid on campus getting a degree.

If we want the valedictorian and the star linebacker to be equally proud of their accomplishments, then we should recognize them as equals—and not put one on national television simply because he sells tickets and makes the Alabama or Ohio State coaches drool.

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Learning to lead

Snapshot of Army JROTC goes beyond usual military misconceptions

“FALL IN!”

Everyone’s uniform is in exceptional condition.

Shoes are polished. Ties are snug. Ribbons, straight and centered.

In formation, the Battalion Commander announces today’s plan: “Knockout.” It is a game meant to test a cadet’s proficiency while executing commands in Drill and Ceremony—the detailed practice of marching from one area to another during a parade or ceremonial event.

“Right face!”

Cadets must face to the right or they will be eliminated from the competition.

“Left face!”

“About face!”

“Present arms!”

Commands must be given in a specific order during D&C. However, in “Knockout,” they may be issued in the wrong sequence to perplex cadets. Just like the classic game Simon Says, false commands may also be given to stump cadets—the goal of discipline disguised as spirited competition and fun.

It’s a typical scene in Army Junior Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (JROTC), a nationwide program that boasts three million cadets in roughly 1,700 high schools. Also typical is the misconception that joining JROTC as a teenager means you’ve signed up for a life in the military.

“I was afraid to join JROTC at first. I thought that when we get



Thomas Wrede
Cretin-Derham
Hall

into the program, we have to join the Army afterwards,” said Melody Nguyen, a Humboldt High School graduate now at the University of St. Thomas.

“Most people ... when they initially see someone in the JROTC uniform ... think it has a direct tie to some sort of military service. In fact, students learn very little about the military,” added Sergeants Major (SGM) David Berrisford, a JROTC instructor at Cretin-Derham Hall.

“Cadets learn much more about what it means to be a citizen and what it means to be part of the community.”

The core of the program’s curriculum in the classroom centers on the study of ethics, citizenship, communications, leadership, character building and civic responsibility, among other subjects designed to prepare young men and women to take their place in adult society.

According to its website, United States Army JROTC began with the passage of the National Defense Act of 1916. Under the provisions of the Act, high schools were authorized the loan of federal military equipment and the assignment of active duty military personnel as

instructors.

In 1964, the Vitalization Act opened JROTC to other services and replaced most of the active duty instructors with retired members of the Armed Forces. As a result, the Air Force, Marine Corps and Navy have JROTC units as well.

For Army JROTC, cadets—the name given to high school students enrolled in the program—are led by 4,000 retired personnel nationwide who work as instructors. They, Nguyen said, are the reason the program is successful for teenagers who are trying to discover what they want to be as they mature into productive citizens.

“I love being in JROTC. First of all, because (Lt. Col.) Howard Johnson is an awesome colonel. He’s a great resource for my endless questions about the Army and whatever else,” Nguyen said.

Nguyen and her fellow classmates at Humboldt also received nicknames.

“It might sound silly, but Colonel actually ‘re-named’ us. I was GI Jane at first, now am permanently Combat Barbie. This made JROTC become the second family to all of us at Humboldt.”

The instructors at Cretin-Derham Hall—SGM Berrisford, Master Sergeant (MSG) Kenneth Peloski and Senior Army Instructor Lieutenant Colonel (Lt. Col.) James Fischer—also aim to provide a sense of belonging to their cadets. At its core, JROTC is meant to be a program highlighting a mix of disparate backgrounds, interests and abilities—especially in more economically challenged neighborhoods or with students who seek discipline.

In the Twin Cities, there are ten high schools with JROTC units, three for the Army. JROTC



Cadets of all grade levels stand at attention before marching inside Cretin-Derham Hall. In the Twin Cities, there are ten high schools with JROTC units.

Thomas Wrede

“Cadets learn much more about what it means to be a citizen and what it means to be part of the community.”

Sergeants Major (SGM) David Berrisford, JROTC instructor

concludes when students graduate high school. However, cadets can pursue Senior ROTC in college, and many times, students are selected for ROTC scholarships.

“A lot of kids ... look at JROTC and know every single day it is something they can embrace,” said MSG Peloski, who has worked at public and private schools as a JROTC instructor. “There are several broken homes. Kids come home and there is no structure, there may not be that family bond.”

“Some of these individuals look at JROTC as that bond for them. If it weren’t for the program, a lot of kids wouldn’t be at that school. It motivates kids to come back day after day.”

Leadership Lab, specifically, occurs at least once a week and involves every high school grade level. It is the heart of team building.

“You get to see students progress as the year passes and you

build a strong relationship with everyone around you,” said Bo Bo Thao, a senior at Humboldt High School.

Leadership Lab centralizes on Drill and Ceremony. Experienced students focus on teaching the skills of marching to younger cadets so they can become self-sufficient.

“Many people see me as a leader, and after joining I’ve felt like I’m actually someone who’s important and needed for a reason. Getting to see others look up to me and follow my example (is rewarding),” said Thao, a Cadet Major.

Leadership Lab reinforces the idea that whatever stage you are at in life, someone is there to give you direction. Details are important, especially uniform inspections.

By focusing on lessons that promote structure and organization, students learn how to accomplish something special as a cohesive unit—and of course, do it right.

“They have a chance to practice leadership with one of the most difficult groups. And that’s their peers,” Lt. Col. Fischer said.

“Participating in group-oriented projects helped me become a better leader, more open-minded,” Nguyen said. “I became more efficient as a leader by using all of the help I (could) get from my group.”

Language barrier

The “R-word” campaign attempts to change hearts and minds nationwide

IT'S A COMMON RITUAL for teenagers.

The football team is horsing around, all pumped up for the game. It's Homecoming. Several girls are taking pictures on their phones.

“Gosh, we look so *retarded*,” one of them blurts out as they make faces upon seeing the Snapchat image.

Everyone agrees, so they delete the photo immediately, ashamed to have any evidence of looking that way.

But what does “looking retarded” mean? Why that specific word?

It's exactly what the “Spread the Word to End the Word Campaign” is aiming to educate the public about, and ultimately, put a stop to.

POWER OF LANGUAGE

The dictionary defines the word retarded as “less advanced in mental, physical or social development than is usual for one's age.” However, it's used so flippantly by the public that retarded has become a synonym for “stupid” or “dumb” while maintaining direct association with the developmentally disabled community.

Caty Dongoske, a schools and initiatives associate at Special Olympics Minnesota, said “using the ‘R-word’ is like using any other slur or insult. It is just as offensive and hurts a huge group of people in our society.

(An) “athlete told me that at their work they have co-workers who openly use the ‘R-word’ in a derogatory and hurtful way, often referring to their coworkers as ‘R-words’... It made the athlete self-conscious, made them hate going to work and caused them to second-guess their ability to do their job.”

Allyson Perling, a St. Paul resident, recently had a negative experience with the “R-word”



Lana Rubinstein
River Falls High School

upon bringing her 12-year-old daughter to a new eye doctor.

While there, the doctor said, “I have lots of experience with kids who are severely mentally retarded”—except she didn't know her child's diagnosis, history or intellectual capacity. That she said it in front of her daughter, who Perling said is “very smart” and understood exactly what the word implied, made it even more insulting.

“I have never, ever heard this word used in a positive way or to compliment someone,” Perling said.

Any form of the “R-word” is unacceptable according to the worldwide “Spread the Word to End the Word Campaign,” which encourages the public to sign a pledge at www.r-word.org. The campaign's goal is to eliminate its use and “(create) more accepting attitudes and communities for all people. Language affects attitudes, and attitudes affect actions.”

Or as Karleigh Jones, a Special Olympics athlete from New Zealand said on the website, “(The word) alienates and excludes. It also emphasizes the negative stereotypes surrounding people with intellectual and developmental disabilities; the common belief that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities should be segregated, hidden away from society.”

Cece Gillis, an advisor for the Connecting All Together Socially (CATS) group at River Falls High School, said “The word is **LANGUAGE** continued on page 29

“My professors are **passionate** about their subject areas and discerning of my talents. I have had **ample opportunities** to learn and grow.”



— Elizabeth Otto
Hamline University '15

mnprivatecolleges.org/possible

Augsburg College

Bethany Lutheran College

Bethel University

Carleton College

College of Saint Benedict

The College of St. Scholastica

Concordia College (Moorhead)

Concordia University, St. Paul

Gustavus Adolphus College

Hamline University

Macalester College

Minneapolis College of Art and Design

Saint John's University

Saint Mary's University of Minnesota

St. Catherine University

St. Olaf College

University of St. Thomas



MINNESOTA'S PRIVATE COLLEGES

An excellent and affordable education

TUCKER from page 22

The key is communicating. The people who are in charge have to continue to stress the importance of academics and give them a reason to understand why this is important to them. The more that we can share with young people, the more that message can be passed down to future generations.

In your job so far, have you seen any challenges regarding the relationship between athletics and academics which you hope to tackle?

I hope to continue to get the message

out, and sit down and have conversations, not only with the students but also with the parents. School, despite its challenges, is the best place for a young person to be. It's the safest place for a young person to be. If we can keep you in school, we have the chance to help you.

Do you think we emphasize sports too much? Does that trickle down to high schoolers and how they perceive the world in terms of athletics and academics?

I don't think we promote it too much. It is an opportunity for

young people to fulfill some of their goals and dreams. Everyone can't make it in the sporting world, but it does teach you a whole lot and it builds relationships for years and years ... opens up different doors for you as you move forward. There are a lot of life lessons to be learned as an athlete, especially when you're part of a team because you have to trust and depend on others, but also you have to work so that they can trust and depend on you. So, you carry a huge amount of responsibility both on the court and off the court.

FAITH from page 19

study. He talked to us as a father would to his children, warmly and affectionately. Then he began to discuss things that were going on in the nation, including Obama's announcement, and his voice became more serious.

"Jesus loves all sinners!" he shouted.

"Amen!" the congregation exclaimed.

"He loves an adulterer just as much as He loves a liar."

Louder shouts of agreement erupted.

"He loves a liar just as much as He loves a prostitute."

More shouts and claps.

"And He loves the prostitute just as much as He loves the homosexual!"

Amid the shouts of praise, I was quietly dumbfounded. What did he mean?

Homosexuality is not a sin, is it?

What about my friend Micah, who was gay and loved Jesus just as much as I did? What about all believers who were part of the LGBTQ community?

Over the next few months, I had discussions with fellow Christians, homosexual and heterosexual. I joined dialogue groups online and offline. Lastly, I tried to digest God's word in order to discover the truth for myself.

Some of my fellow Christians believed that same-sex relationships were sinful while others believed they were no different than heterosexual relationships. Some were just as confused as I was.

I looked at articles online. I went to campus dialogues. There were many interesting perspectives, and not all were black and white.

NO ROOM FOR GRAY

However, any gray area disappeared as Election Day 2012 approached. We were asked to vote on the Minnesota marriage amendment, which would define marriage in the state constitution as one man-one woman. It was important for me to vote.

I began to ask my Christian friends who were attracted to the same sex. Some thought that there was nothing wrong with it. Others were confused about their feelings and torn about how they related to their faith.

I realized that the matter of homosexuality was more than a hot topic and a political vote. It was about human beings who have been judged, hurt and discriminated against.

I decided to look at the book that first led me on this Christian walk, the Bible. I prayed for understanding. What I found was not what I wanted to hear or believe.

The Bible made clear that romantic relationships are, indeed, between a man and a woman. Same-sex relationships are wrong.

With all my strength, I tried to make sense of it. Then I remembered that I took this book in faith when I first came to Christ and was offered salvation. Did it make sense then? No, it barely makes sense now. But I took it in faith and found it to be true.

I decided to take it on faith again—not just for myself, but also for my family and friends. Faith is not just about an individual. It's about the people who surround a person.

So what does that mean for my gay friend Micah?

As the gospel reveals and as Pastor H. confirmed, God loves all. Jesus died for all. For the liar, the prostitute, the prideful, the prejudiced, the drug addict, the homosexual and the list goes on.

How do I put this faith in action through God's love and not through social prejudice?

The first act of faith was on November 6, 2012 when I voted yes for the Minnesota Marriage Amendment.

Fast forward to May 13, 2013, when the Minnesota Senate approved same-sex marriage, and sent the bill to Gov. Dayton to sign. I

This issue's artists



■ **Aamino Hirmoge** is a senior at Harding High School in St. Paul. A graduate of ThreeSixty's June Intermediate camp, she plans to pursue a career in journalism or film, all while staying wonderfully obsessed with "Harry Potter" and *My Chemical Romance*.

■ **Isaura Lira Greene** is a senior at Great River School in St. Paul. A graduate of ThreeSixty's 2011 Intro camp, she loves reading Markus Zusak and J.K. Rowling, listening to music, watching TED talks and writing poetry.



■ **Kimberly Martinez** is a senior at Harding High School in St. Paul. A graduate of ThreeSixty's June Intermediate camp, Martinez enjoys spending time on Tumblr, sketching in her journal and going to art museums. She has several career paths in mind, including journalism and graphic design.

■ **Mina Yuan** is a freshman at Wayzata High School. A graduate of ThreeSixty's July Intro camp, she plays classical piano and cello, speaks Chinese, enjoys drawing and is "far too addicted" to J.R.R. Tolkien for her own good.



sat on the phone with my best friend, a passionate LGBTQ advocate. Arguing? No, rather agreeing to disagree.

This conversation was a triumph for both of us: We talked, listened and respected a perspective very different from our own.

As a result, we are still best friends. Micah and I are friends and stay connected as much as possible. As for the rest of the LGBTQ community, my support will always be there, not for same-sex relationships but always for the individuals,

because in the end that is what faith and life are all about.

As for Christians who oppose same-sex relationships, we must make it our responsibility—with the hand of God—to educate and remind people of the evils of prejudice and discrimination in hopes of promoting valuable conversations amongst people of all kinds. And lastly, we must bring the love of Christ to all.

Tyanna Dickerson, a ThreeSixty alum and South High School graduate, is a junior at the University of St. Thomas.

ADMISSIONS *from page 20*

of getting admitted,” Roach advised not to stress out, but rather embrace the opportunity to tell their personal story in a creative way.

“I tell students what is important about the essay is a) write well ... use spell check, have someone proofread it and be sure you don’t have any offensive language in the essay, and b) write about something that will provide the admissions committee with insight about you.

“Tell a story, especially if you have gone through trials in life. It’s an opportunity to tell your story and help the admissions committee understand more about you.”

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Not every college is looking for letter of recommendations, but the ones that do want standouts. One common mistake that students make is asking for a letter from their

“favorite teacher” or the class that they are doing well in.

Colleges “are looking for those letters to be creative,” said Carol Warndahl, career center director at Robbinsdale Cooper. “Students go to teachers (for a class) that they’re doing well in, but your transcript already tells them that you’re doing well there.”

Instead, get letters of recommendations from teachers in courses where you have struggled but made an effort to get better.

“If you can get a teacher to explain that you worked hard, looked for extra support, etc., it can really help the admissions committee understand your work ethic, which is a good predictor for how you may succeed in college,” Roach said.

MAKE IT PERSONAL

A flawless math career isn’t quite enough to turn the head of a college admission officer.

Colleges want to know about you—what makes you unique and how you might have an impact on their campus. It’s also important to show colleges that you care about something, Roach said.

“I’ve been working with my College Possible coach and mentor on my special circumstance letter. I’m proud of it,” Wako said. “I feel very confident about it, too. I wrote about the story of my life and about some setbacks I’ve had that have molded me into who I am today.”

Alexa Tennyson, senior associate director of admission at Hamline University, said some students are too focused on getting into the most selective school possible. Instead, “students would be better served by focusing on the school that is the best fit for them.”

That should carry into the application process, where students are encouraged to simply “be themselves.”

“No one is like you. Don’t feel as if you have to use a gimmick to stand out—overly complicated essays, video submissions ... won’t necessarily give you an edge,” Tennyson said.

A LITTLE DREAMING

Don’t let the sticker price scare you, either. Students and parents are more concerned than ever with how they are going to pay for a college education, but it’s wise to at least explore options before writing them off because of cost.

“People make assumptions (thanks to media hype) and they eliminate options before checking things out,” Roach said. “There was a day when a person could work over the summer, save that money and use it to pay for their entire college bill. That’s not possible today, and parents should not have that expectation of their children. Paying for a college education takes a number of parties—student, parent, college/

university and also possibly the federal and state governments.”

Also, don’t make a decision without visiting colleges. Colleges have specific “visit days” or are able to accommodate students on campus for a personal visit.

“If you like what you see, come back to do an overnight stay, classroom visit, and more,” Tennyson said. “The overnight stay is the best way to find out if a school is the right fit for you. Make sure to stay overnight at your top two or three schools.”

Lastly, dream a little.

“Consider your academic interests and strengths and pursue schools that meet your needs. But ... let yourself dream about a school in a location that is appealing to you, or one you perceive to be out of your price range, or one that is far away from home or closer to home than you may have been thinking about. Pursue the dream and see what happens,” Roach said.

LANGUAGE *from page 27*

Falls High School, said “most people don’t connect the word with a group of people, and they usually say, ‘I am sorry.’ Most people, adults included, don’t have a clue the word is offensive ... (they) truly don’t know and don’t mean to be hurtful.”

Yet kids and teens hear others saying it, so they say it. Monkey see, monkey do.

Bonnie Yang, a sophomore at Johnson High School in St. Paul, has heard the “R-word” used to describe her 12-year-old brother, Matthew, who has developmental disabilities. She said it takes personal experience to understand why the word is “so offensive.”

“My relationship with my brother is really close. And actually, during the summer, my cousins came over and asked, ‘Why is Matthew so retarded?’” Yang said.

“I was like, ‘What? He’s not retarded. He just learns slower.’ I always have to tell people, ‘He’s the same as us. He just learns differently.’”

She also acknowledges that not every teenager (or adult, for that matter) “is mature enough to know how it can affect someone.”

When asked how she would educate others to describe her brother, Yang simply said, “He’s special.”

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

That CATS at River Falls is partially run by teens helps incorporate their involvement and paves the way for fellow students to take a stand against the “R-word,” Gillis said. At Special Olympics Minnesota, the “Spread the Word” campaign also encourages schools to be creative with outreach efforts.

A favorite, Dongoske said, is to hold a school-wide assembly. In November, the group held one at Forest Lake High School for 1,500 students and featured a combination of speeches from Special Olympics athletes, students with intellectual disabilities from Forest Lake, videos, live music, a banner signing and more.

“The student-driven vision of ‘Spread the Word to End the Word Campaign’ is

essential to the campaign’s message. We want our youth to be a driving force in the battle to end the use of the ‘R-word,’” Dongoske said.

RESTRICTING SPEECH

But will banning the word solve anything?

In a 2010 Washington Post editorial titled “Saying it is Hurtful. Banning it is Worse,” author and law professor Christopher M. Fairman wrote that attempting to eliminate “retarded” from all vocabulary isn’t the best way to address the problem.

“The words themselves are not the culprit; the meaning we attach to them is, and such meanings change dramatically over time and across communities,” wrote Fairman, who also noted that “gay and queer and even the N-word can be insulting, friendly, identifying or academic in different contexts.”

It’s also ironic to Fairman that “mental

retardation” and its variants were originally an attempt to convey greater dignity and respect than previous labels had. While he acknowledged that the word has taken on more negativity in the past decade, Fairman argued that “restricting speech of any kind comes with a potential price.”

“Words are ideas, and we should be reluctant to surrender any of them,” Fairman wrote. “Freedom of expression has come at a dear price, and it is not worth abridging, even so we can get along a little better.”

Dongoske disagrees. To her, the “R-word” will always promote the misconception that developmentally disabled people do not have anything in common with “normal” members of society.

“They have jobs, go to school, play sports and work hard just like everyone else. When people use the ‘R-word,’ it takes away their power, self-esteem, confidence and breaks them down,” Dongoske said.

“Working ... with our athletes has inspired me to fight harder for inclusion in our society. People with intellectual disabilities deserve the same rights, treatment and respect within our culture.”

think
spot

If you had the power to ban one word from the English language, what would it be? Why do you consider that specific word to be so powerful? What are more appropriate alternatives that can be used?

As of *ThreeSixty* press time, work at *La Fresca* was being finalized for an early-to-mid-December opening. Ruiz said the restaurant will also transform into a 36-seat, higher-scale dining experience at night. *La Fresca* is located at 4750 Grand Ave. S, Minneapolis.

Fresh, fast and for students

Hector Ruiz's new *La Fresca* targets teen eaters at nearby Washburn High School

WHEN HE WAS ONLY 13, Hector Ruiz left the comfort of Morelos, Mexico for something unfamiliar.

"My dad (brought) me to America with a loaf of bread and a glass of water—when I (caught) the bus from Mexico City to Tijuana—following the American dream. And I'm still dreaming it until I can't," Ruiz said.

His American dream? Cooking and serving culturally-focused food in his community.

Ruiz does that daily at his south Minneapolis restaurants, Cafe



Ellie Colbert
Washburn
High School



Hannah Gordon
Washburn
High School

Ena and Rincon 38. Soon to be added to that list is *La Fresca*. Ruiz is designing the new, deli-style

eatery to fit the dining desires of nearby Washburn High School students who leave school for lunch.

Citing the limited neighborhood options—chains like Subway and Brueggers—*La Fresca* will offer a unique, non-processed menu.

"That's the whole focus ... I want (teenagers) to eat healthy," he said. "And you guys wanna eat good, (at an) affordable cost."

Ruiz promises a variety of homemade sandwiches, with sides like chips and guacamole, salads or fries, and a drink for around \$7 or \$8. Understanding that students need a quick option during the lunch hour, the "press and go" style will make it easy to pop in and out, he said.

"*La fresca*," in English, translates to "fresh"—and that's exactly what all of the ingredients will be. Confessing that it's a lot of work to get local, homegrown meat and vegetables, Ruiz believes it ultimately results in the best quality and variety for the food he serves.

"(I) bring in tomatoes from this guy ... I call him 'Grandpa Bob' ... that I've been doing business with for five years. He's gonna give me the best and local draw," Ruiz said. "I like to be the best of the best. That's my problem."

For young patrons of the new restaurant, that should prove to be a good problem.

A variety of homemade, organic sandwiches with an authentic Mexican twist will be the main feature on *La Fresca's* menu. All sandwiches will be served on homemade *bolillo*, a Mexican baguette with "crunchiness." Options will range from a Cochinito—marinated pork in a dry pepper sauce, ham, avocado and a black bean jalapeño aioli—to a vegetarian sandwich with roasted red pepper, Mexican mozzarella cheese, avocado and black beans.

Ruiz expects the daytime menu to evolve. Not only does he plan to incorporate an ice cream shop after he returns from Mexico to learn the

craft, but he wants students to give him input.

"We can do soups. You don't (have) seven, you got five bucks? Soups and bread. I wanna know what students want. Somali kids? Lamb sandwich. I know the culture; Mexican, Asian, Middle Eastern, cause I want it to be for you guys," he said. "I wanna be here as long as you (Washburn students) want me to."

Along with providing whatever food students crave, Ruiz hopes to work with Washburn administration to arrange for a percentage of his *La Fresca* proceeds to go to the high school. He said his Mexican culture, and more than 20 years as a south Minneapolis resident, foster that desire.

"I think American entrepreneurs, they should give back something," he said.

Having left Mexico almost 25 years ago, Ruiz is inching closer to his fully realized American dream.

He received a formal cooking education from Le Cordon Bleu in Minneapolis and eventually studied under a master chef in France. The son of a caterer, Ruiz experimented with cooking as a child. However, before making it his life's work, he tried to ignore his calling five times, dabbling in jobs like UPS driver and helping his dad in a shipping and receiving business.

Finally, he caved. It wasn't worth the internal battle of denying his roots, and he ultimately ended up back in the food industry, staying true to his passion.

"I don't think money is the drive for me. I do it because I like it ... because I love it," Ruiz said. "Don't do (anything) because you have to or because (of) money ... Love is priceless."



Staff

Homemade guacamole (right) and the Cochinito (marinated pork in a dry pepper sauce, ham, avocado and a black bean jalapeño aioli) are just two of the options that will be offered at Hector Ruiz's new *La Fresca* restaurant.

Buggin' out

Insect world continues to amaze University of Minnesota entomologist

WHEN YOU SEE a bumblebee nestled in a purple hosta flower, Leonard Ferrington, a professor and research entomologist at the University of Minnesota, urges you to think of the positive interactions instead of the negative.

For instance, instead of worrying about the bee's stinger, think about how it plays a key role in the pollination of flowers.

Having those deeper discussions about insect life—and understanding their role as more than a creepy bug older siblings scare little sisters with—is Ferrington's field of study. It's an immense one, even bigger than he originally thought.

(Entomology entails) “everything from using insects as test organisms to understanding the molecular processes, to doing field assessments of how different types of food amounts affect insects, both positive and negatively,” Ferrington said.

“We don't like (insects) where they're not supposed to be. We don't like them in our house. I don't either. If we get away from (how they interact negatively with us), and that's just a small number of insects, there are so many out there that are really beneficial. We have to kinda look beyond the few that are most conspicuous and interact the most negatively. If you do that, you see how fascinating they are.”

For Ferrington, his natural curiosity about the insect world started



Dillan DeGross
FAIR School
Downtown

at the age of three while watching a spider's web.

“I tried to learn as much as I could all the time about insects,” he said. “I can remember my father, years ago, feeding insects to a spider on our front porch. And that was so fascinating. Of course spiders aren't insects, but it was that interaction between insects and spiders ... that really started me into looking at fine detail and what was happening.”

Ferrington spent his first three years of college thinking that he wanted to be a biochemist. After realizing that he could be paid for doing research on aquatic insects, he immediately switched orientations.

Ferrington eventually landed at the University of Kansas, where he worked for 20 years. His first job was to develop a list of aquatic insects.

“There were 35 species recorded, and when I left 25 years later, we knew about 800. So, it was actually pretty fascinating to make all those discoveries,” he said.

Thirteen years ago, he left Kansas for the University of Minnesota, though he's hardly grounded there. Ferrington's insect studies have taken him to Norway, Iceland, Argentina, South Africa, Mongolia, New



Leonard Ferrington of the University of Minnesota has devoted much of his research to aquatic insects, which “continue to fascinate” because of their vast numbers and importance to ecosystems, food webs and fisheries.

Staff

Zealand, Tasmania and Puerto Rico, among other countries.

Out of all those locations, Mongolia has a special place in his heart.

“We worked for about a month, each of two summers, in Western Mongolia. We lived in the countryside and we camped. We ate local foods, we moved around in Russian-made Jeeps, and visited with local groups of people,” Ferrington said.

“There are all these other benefits. I mean, there's a whole different way to living on this Earth than the way we do it in the United States.”

Yet traveling around the world isn't like a trip to the Kalahari for an

entomologist.

“Literally, you have to take everything with you and you have to get ready for it, get prepared and carry supplies,” he said. “It isn't like a vacation. It's work. It really is hard, but it's exciting.”

Becoming an entomologist can be a tough road, too. The University



Career advice

This is the first installment of “The Way I Work,” a regular ThreeSixty feature aimed at providing insight into unique and interesting career fields. Intrigued by this career path? Entomologist Leonard Ferrington offers the following advice to teenagers:

“Realize that if you follow your interests, then there are employment opportunities associated with insects. At the same time, keep in mind that it does take quite a bit of study and commitment to learn enough about them that you're able to really obtain a job working with insects,” Ferrington said. “I mean, if you're happy with it as a hobby, that's fine too. Insects as a hobby are great. But if you actually want to have a career, it does take quite a bit of study. You have to really be committed to being a good scientist.”

of Minnesota has an undergraduate program called Environmental Science Policy and Management. It's a great starting point for aspiring entomologists, Ferrington said, since it gives science students a better understanding of research, observation and patience.

All are vital if you eventually want to be hired as one.

“What we typically do is, students would get a degree, perhaps in environmental sciences or biology or ecology, and then they would go on to a graduate program at a masters level,” said Ferrington, who also mentors graduate students at U of M.

“So, it typically would take four years of college and the two years of graduate school to really develop a technical background to a level that you would be employed as an entomologist.”

All these years into his career, the insect world continues to surprise Ferrington—particularly how few species have been described.

Roughly 3.8 million specimens make up the University of Minnesota's impressive insect collection at the St. Paul campus. From the massive Goliath beetle and aquatic Belostomatidae (more commonly known as the toe-biter) to exotic and shimmering blue Morpho butterflies, researchers continue to fill display cases with their finds.

“That's pretty phenomenal to think that entomologists have been working for, what, 150 years describing species and to find out only about a third of the species are actually described at this point in time?”

“It takes some time to really understand what (insects) are doing, to understand their role in their ecosystem processes. They kinda speak their own language and we have to infer that from their behavior.”

Thank you,



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